The Economic and Social Transitions of Twentieth Century Virginia

1. The twentieth century was a time of transition for Virginia. During this time Virginia changed from a rural, agricultural society to a more urban, industrialized society. There were two reasons for these changes: farming began to change and cities began to grow.

2. Farming Changes
At the beginning of the twentieth century, life was not easy for Virginia’s farmers. Old-fashioned ways of farming were too slow and required too many workers. Virginia’s farmers also found themselves competing with large farms out west and in the south. Because of the expanding railroad system, these newer, larger farms were sending their goods to Virginia to sell. This caused crop prices to fall and Virginia’s farmers were having a hard time making a living. These problems caused many Virginian’s to give up their farming jobs and move to the growing cities.

3. Growth of Cities
City populations began to grow as more and more people moved away from the rural farmlands looking for jobs and a better future for their families. Improvements in transportation also caused Virginia’s cities to grow. Improved roads and railroads brought lots of goods and raw materials to city factories and businesses, while streetcars moved people quickly from home to work. As the factories and businesses grew, more and more Virginians moved to cities in search of job opportunities. Improved methods of transportation also spurred the growth of coal mining in western Virginia. Trainloads of coal were shipped east to growing port cities such as Norfolk and Newport News.

4. Moving to Virginia
During the Twentieth Century people moved to Virginia from many other states and nations looking for jobs, freedom, and a better quality of life. The natural beauty of the state also drew many here. Since the end of World War II, Northern Virginia has experienced much growth due to the large number of government jobs located in that region. People from many nations now call Northern Virginia home. Both Northern Virginia and the Tidewater region have also grown due to an increase in computer technology industries.
VS.9a Economic and Social Transitions of 20th Century
Name: _______________________________________________________________________

Directions: Read the paragraphs carefully. Answer each of the questions below in complete sentences. Use the wording of the question to help you write your answer.

Paragraph 1
1. What led to Virginia’s transition from a rural, agricultural society to more urban, industrialized society? ____________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Paragraph 2
1. Why was farming becoming a difficult way to make a living for many Virginian farmers? ____________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Paragraph 3
1. Why did city populations begin to grow? ____________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
2. How did improvements in transportation cause Virginia’s cities to grow? ____________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Paragraph 4
1. Why did people move to Virginia from other states and nations? ____________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
2. What kind of jobs became available after World War 2? ____________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
3. Why has Northern Virginia and the Tidewater region grown in population and jobs? ____________________________________________________________________________________________