



INDIANA  
REPERTORY  
THEATRE

# STUDY GUIDE

EDITED BY

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Resident Dramaturg

Sarah Geis,  
Education Manager

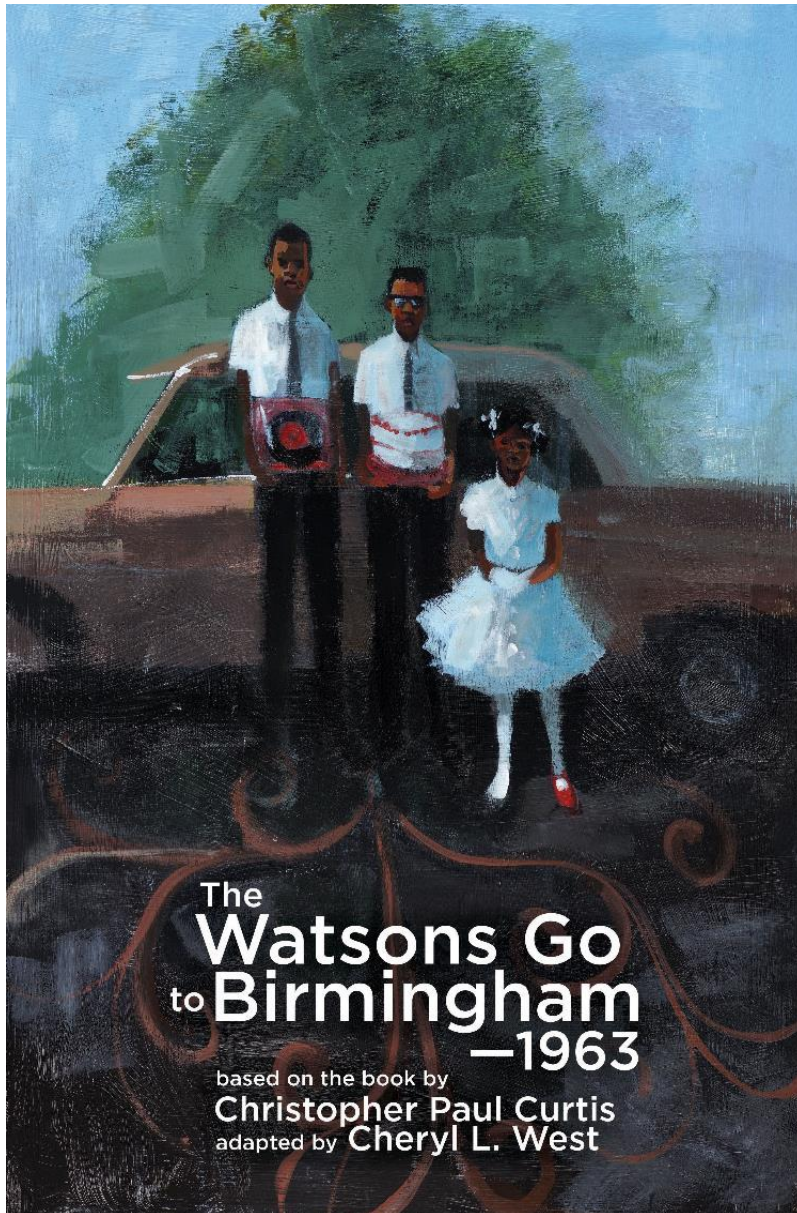
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### *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963* based on the book by Christopher Paul Curtis, adapted by Cheryl L. West

An adaptation of the novel by Christopher Paul Curtis, one of America's leading authors for young readers! When the Watsons load their young children into the car for the long drive from Michigan to visit family in the Deep South, they take their Green Book to help plan for the prejudice encountered by black people traveling in Jim Crow America. What they don't expect is to find themselves caught up in an act of violence that will go down in Civil Rights history. Strength and love help them face their struggles and find a path forward in this powerful drama for the whole family.

#### COVER ART BY KYLE RAGSDALE

**STUDENT MATINEES** 10:30AM on January 28, 29, 30  
9:45am and 12:00pm on January 31 and February 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28

**ESTIMATED LENGTH** Approximately 90 minutes

**AGE RANGE** Recommended for grades 5-12

**CONTENT ADVISORY** *The Watsons Go to Birmingham--1963* is a civil rights-era family drama that contains mild onstage violence and references to the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing. It is recommended for grades 5-12.

#### STUDENT MATINEES AND ARTIST IN THE CLASSROOM

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#### HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

To enrich your students' experience at the IRT production of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*, this guide provides an overview of the materials available to you and your students. It is designed to aid you in accessing materials on companion websites as well as design lesson plans that can be used both prior to and following the performance.

The guide is divided into two sections:

- Information about the Production: includes a synopsis of the play, statements by the director and the designers, and a guide to the role of the audience
- Educational Materials: Focusing on materials on the history of the Trail of Tears and lessons you can use in the classroom

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## THE STORY OF *THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM - 1963*

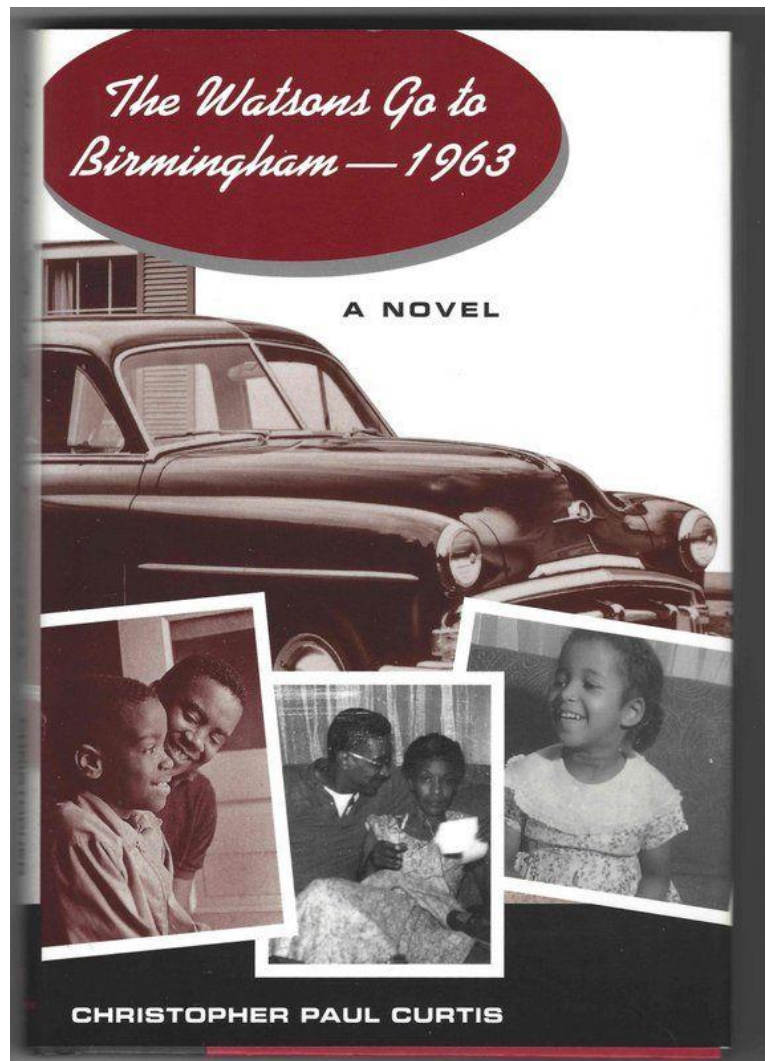
The IRT's production of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* features a script by Cheryl L. West. The play tells the story of an African American family from Flint, Michigan, who take a road trip to Alabama during a fateful time in American history. The stage is not where this story started, however; it was originally an acclaimed children's novel.

Christopher Paul Curtis was born in Flint, Michigan, in 1953. After graduating from high school, he worked for many years as a manual laborer, in auto assembly and grounds keeping. In 1995, he wrote his first novel, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*. Curtis wove some of his own childhood memories in with American Civil Rights history to create his fictional story. In fact, he would have been ten years old, just like the lead character, Kenny, when the events of this story took place.

Kenny's older brother, 13-year-old Byron, continually gets into trouble—lying, rudeness, playing with matches, skipping school. Finally his parents decide to take him and the rest of the family to Birmingham, Alabama, to visit Grandma Sands, in hopes that she might be able to straighten up Byron's behavior.

As a black family in the 1960s, heading into the American South could be a dangerous undertaking. The family carries their Negro Travelers' Green Book, a guide book of hotels, rest stops, restaurants, and gas stations that were welcoming to African American travelers at that time. Without such knowledge, a family risked stopping somewhere that was hostile, and being denied service or worse.

Despite the hazards, the Watsons aim to make their road trip a fun family adventure. As they listen to music and joke with each other all the way to Alabama, their joy and love for each other shines through. Grandma Sands welcomes the Watsons with open arms, but then Kenny nearly drowns in a local pond. When Grandma's church is bombed, the family experiences one of the most horrific acts of terrorism of the Civil Rights era. Kenny is traumatized by these events, but eventually the love of his family helps him to recover, and the Watsons are stronger than ever.





## HISTORY BECOMES PERSONAL

BY JANET ALLEN, EXECUTIVE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Many of us who have raised children in the last 20 years will know the source material of this play. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* is a piece of youth historical fiction that was published in 1996 and quickly became a staple of junior high reading lists. Its warm heart and deep and often amusing plunge into family dynamics almost keeps us from remembering what the Watsons are headed into. Their car journey from their home in Flint, Michigan, to the Deep South of the early 1960s—the pre-Civil Rights era South, the Jim Crow South—also moves them directly into an historic hotspot of violence. It is in part the surface normalcy of this story—what could be more human and ordinary than taking a cross-country car ride to visit Grandma?—that allows us to see how very un-normal this and many journeys have been and continue to be for African American people in our country.

It is much to the credit of both Christopher Paul Curtis (the novelist) and Cheryl West (the playwright-adaptor) that the play stays focused on a child's view of the events. Ten-year-old Kenny, the middle child in the Watson family, serves as the play's lodestar. It is his curiosity and growing fear that move us from the literal geographic journey into an emotional journey of awakening into the real perils of racism. Much of what Kenny observes as the family gets into the South—and he is a keen observer—is at first simply odd to him. It is the perception of his parents' fears that moves the journey from one of delight to one of deep concern for his and his family's safety. And of course, as is true in any defining historic moment, the people caught up in it often don't realize the magnitude of what they are witnessing until long after the fact. This is true for adults, and doubly true for children, whose survival instincts are tied to their parents.

The Watsons do survive—and thrive. When they return to Flint, we see some new-found family cohesion, some maturing in the kids, deep relief from the parents, and a profound awakening of the racial divide in this country—particularly for the audience. What we sometimes forget is that the Civil Rights Movement was not only adults marching, it was not only the heroic acts of Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, and other icons of the time. It was also children: specifically, four girls in a Birmingham church who were martyred by the Klan in a horrific crime against all humanity. The Watsons' fictional nearness to this event is what provides the historic backdrop of this story. Their love for one another is what we take away as indelible.

**DIRECTOR NOTE | “THE FRONT SEAT”**

BY MIKAEL BURKE, DIRECTOR

Growing up.

One day, you’re a kid, and then suddenly you’re not. How did it happen? When did it happen? How do you know when you’ve grown up? Are you grown when you graduate high school? When you get your driver’s license? After your bar mitzvah? When your facial hair starts to grow? When you have the talk? When you’re no longer afraid of the dark? Or, perhaps, when you sit in the front seat of the car with your dad on the family road trip for the first time?

My dad loved road trips. Loved. Them. Every summer we’d go somewhere wild and new and strange, involving being in the car for hours or days. But looking back, one particular trip sticks out to me. I don’t remember where we were going, but the getting there I’ll never forget. I was probably 11 or 12, and I was sitting in the front seat for the first time. My dad and I were talking, and all of a sudden I realized we weren’t just talking about nothing, or one of us talking while the other just half listened. We were having a real conversation, about music and school and “being while black” and pressure and “the man,” and I remember suddenly feeling so mature, so grown up. In a way it felt like a rite of passage, I had transitioned from boy to man through riveting conversation and the sacredness of the front seat.

When I first read this play, it was Kenny’s similar front seat rite of passage that immediately struck me, and became my touchstone for the whole play: This is a story about growing up. It is a rite of passage in which we see Kenny go from childhood innocence to the beginnings of adolescence and manhood, against a backdrop of monsters—both seen and unseen, imaginary and all too real. The

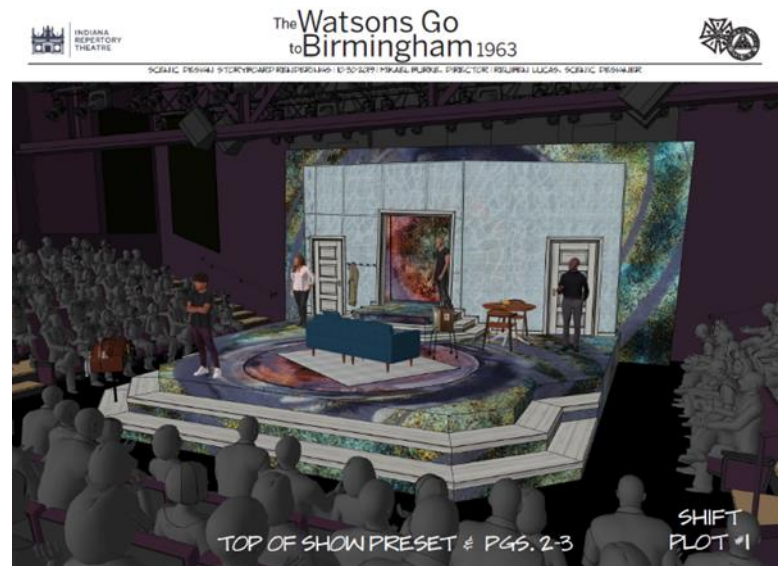
whole weird Watson tribe wants nothing more than to keep one another safe, and in this pursuit, Kenny and his family find themselves in the midst of our country’s most monstrous legacy: racism. And this monster forces Kenny to grow up. He cannot unsee what he’s seen or unlearn what he now knows. But as he moves through his trial by fire, he learns that his family is the sword and shield that allows him to overcome the monsters that haunt him.



## DESIGNERS' NOTES

### REUBEN LUCAS | SCENIC & PROJECTIONS DESIGNER

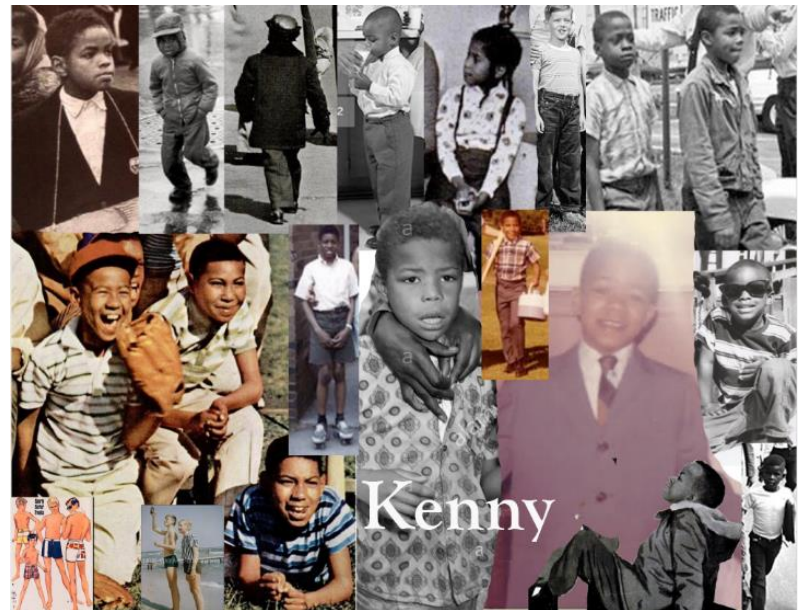
The design is approached from the viewpoint of Kenny and the trauma that has affected him so terribly. This world is structured but askew and delicately asymmetrical to create a sense of unease. Memories tend to become jumbled or cloudy over time, with only the strongest visuals being remembered vividly. This idea is used within the design, along with selective realism, to create a world that we both recognize and don't recognize. The couch, the bathroom fixtures, the dashboard of the Brown Bomber, and other essential elements of the Watsons home may or not be items that Kenny remembers quite clearly. The safety and warmth of the Watsons home is interrupted by a disorienting paint treatment on the floor, representing the emotional whirlwind within Kenny. It is only with the support and love of his family that Kenny can begin to heal.



*Preliminary rendering by scenic and projections designer Reuben Lucas.*

### ALEXIS CARRIE | COSTUME DESIGNER

This design started where all good designs should: with the story we want to tell. Who are the Watsons? What do they want? What are their hopes and fears? And how do those ideas show themselves in their clothing? Once you have an idea of the character of the character, you hit the books. Family photo albums from my own family and back issues of Ebony and Jet magazine were priceless resources to help me discover what black families in Detroit and Birmingham would look like. The research, combined with character and script analysis, answers questions about color, texture, pattern, fit—all essential to costuming a show. What you see on the stage is the product of a large-scale collaboration that helps the actors embody their characters, and lets them look and feel right to the audience.

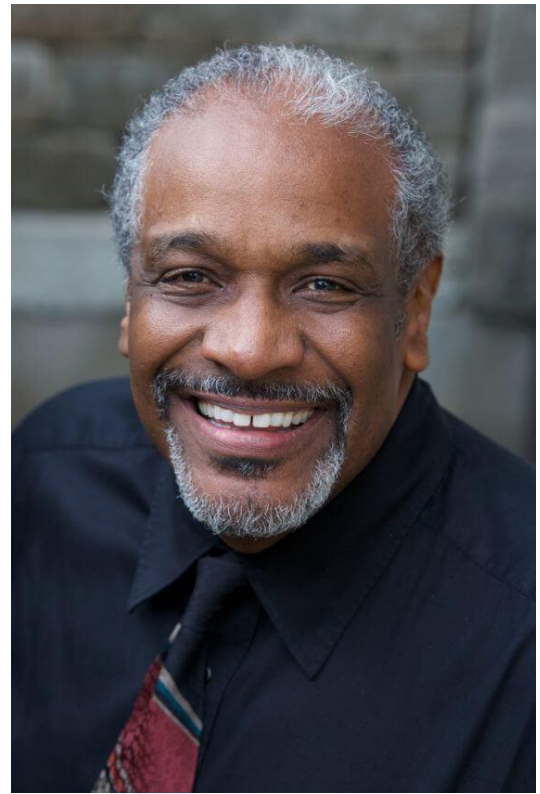


*Preliminary costume collages for Kenny by costume designer Alexis Carrie.*



## AUTHOR CHRISTOPHER PAUL CURTIS

Christopher Paul Curtis was born in 1953 in Flint, Michigan, where many of his books are set. In 1967, he was the first African American student to be elected to the student council in his school's history. He graduated from Flint Southwestern High School in 1972 and became involved in local theatre. He spent the next 13 years working on the Fisher Body assembly line. He later worked as a groundskeeper, a political campaign manager, a customer service representative, a temp worker, and a warehouse clerk. In 1995 he published his first children's book, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*. The book was a runner-up for the Newbery Medal and was selected as a top book of the year by many publications and organizations. In 2013, it was named as one of the New York Public Library's 100 Great Children's Books of the Last 100 Years. Curtis has written a total of nine books, including *Bud, Not Buddy* (1999), winner of the 2000 Newbery Medal; *Bucking the Sarge* (2004); and *Elijah of Buxton* (2007). Curtis earned a degree from the University of Michigan–Flint in 2000.



## PLAYWRIGHT CHERYL L. WEST

Cheryl L. West was born in Chicago in 1965. With a degree from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, she worked as a social worker and taught school before turning to playwriting. In 1990, she attended the Group Theatre's Multicultural Playwrights Festival in Seattle, where she won the opportunity to workshop her play *Before It Hits Home*. That play went on to win the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, the AUDELCO Award, and the Helen Hayes Charles McArthur Award. She received a National Endowment for the Arts Playwriting Award in 1995. Her other plays include *Puddin' 'n Pete* (1993);



*Holiday Heart* (1994), which was adapted for Showtime in 2000 starring Ving Rhames and Alfre Woodard; *Jar the Floor* (1995), winner of the NAACP Best Play Award; *Play Or!* (1997), a Broadway musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* with songs by Duke Ellington; and *Pullman Porter Blues* (2012). West's stage adaptation of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* was co-commissioned by Seattle Children's Theatre, Launch Pad—UC Santa Barbara, and Chicago Children's Theatre, where it premiered last spring.

## MEET THE CHARACTERS

### Kenny

Kenny is a very smart 10-year-old in the fourth grade. He has a vivid imagination. He can be very perceptive about the people and the world around him, particularly his family. But he can also be very gullible: although he is sometimes aware when his brother Byron is trying to fool him, he sometimes misses the clues. He has a tendency to see himself as a victim.

### Byron

Byron is 13, but he's failed a couple of grades—not because he's not smart enough, but because he doesn't apply himself. He skips school often and gets into a lot of trouble. He is a bully. He is so difficult to handle that his parents decide to send him away for the summer. But when his family is in danger, Byron steps in and does the right thing. There is good under his tough exterior.

### Joey

At the age of 6, Joey—short for Joetta—is the youngest Watson. She loves her family and she always pleads for her brothers when they are in trouble. But she can also be a goody-two-shoes, a tattletale, and a bit of a crybaby.

### Mama

Mama is the one member of the family not born in Flint; she was born and raised in Alabama. So her southern roots show sometimes, especially when she is angry or excited. She is a stay-at-home mother, which was very common in the 1950s and 1960s. Mama is very practical and serious. She is the disciplinary parent in the family. And she is a very careful planner.

### Daddy

Daddy has a factory job in the auto industry in Flint. He is the jokester of the Watson family. Although underneath it all he is thoughtful in his choices, he almost always presents himself with a humorous outlook and a playful attitude. His purchase of a record player for the car is an example of how he thinks: although it may be expensive and is certainly not necessary, it is good for family morale.

### Grandma Sands

Grandma is Mama's mother. She lives in Birmingham, Alabama. Byron hasn't seen her since he was 4, and Kenny and Joey have never met her. To the children, she is only a legend of fierce strictness. And Mama and Daddy expect that a summer with her will teach Byron some discipline. But when the children meet her, she turns out to be sweet and loving—if also stern and commanding.

### Buphead

Buphead is Byron's best friend and sidekick, his partner in crime. Mama thinks Buphead is a bad influence on Byron, while Daddy thinks it's the other way around. In any case, when Byron is in trouble, Buphead is usually involved.



## THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

Cell phones, tablets, watches, and other electronic devices should remain silent and dark during the performance. This is distracting to those around you and to the actors onstage.

Recording or photography of any kind is not allowed inside the theatre.

Gum, food and drink must stay in the lobby.

The house lights dimming signal the audience to settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors onstage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom during intermission or after the show.

Focus attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

When the show is over, you are welcome to applaud as a way to thank the performers.

Remain at your seat after the performance and IRT staff will dismiss your group to your busses if you are not staying for a post-show discussion.



*Busses lining the IRT curb during a student matinee.*

## STANDARDS ALIGNMENT GUIDE

We recognize that teachers aim to align their lesson plans with standards and that it is important to be able to align your experience at IRT with curriculum standards. Seeing IRT's production of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963* is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of the text and key elements of US History. Some standards to consider on your trip would be:

### US HISTORY

- USH.2.5 - Summarize the impact industrialization and immigration had on social movements of the era including the contributions specific individuals and groups.
- USH.7 – Students examine the political, economic, social and cultural development of the United States during the period from 1960 to 1980.
  - Sample USH.7.1: *Explain the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s by describing the ideas and actions of federal and state leaders, grassroots movements, and central organizations that were active in the movement.*
- USH.9.1-5 - Students conduct historical research that incorporates information literacy skills such as forming appropriate research questions; evaluating information by determining its accuracy, relevance and comprehensiveness; interpreting a variety of primary and secondary sources; and presenting their findings with documentation.
  - Sample USH.9.2: *Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past; discover possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary opinions.*

### ETHNIC STUDIES STANDARDS

- Strands 1 – 4: Cultural Self-Awareness, Cultural Histories within the U.S. Context and Abroad, Contemporary Lived Experiences and Cultural Practices, Historical and Contemporary Contributions.
  - Sample Strand 2, Standard 2.3: *Students compare and contrast how circumstances of ethnic/racial groups affected their treatment and experiences (indigenous, voluntary, forcible) as a response to the dominant culture of the time.*

### READING - LITERATURE

- RL.1 – Read and comprehend a variety of literature independently and proficiently
- RL.2 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by analyzing, inferring, and drawing conclusions about literary elements, themes, and central ideas
  - Sample: 9-10.RL.2.2: *Analyze in detail the development of two or more themes or central ideas over the course of a work of literature, including how they emerge and are shaped and refined by specific details.*
- RL.3 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature, using knowledge of literary structure and point of view
  - Sample: 11-12.RL.3.2: *Analyze a work of literature in which the reader must distinguish between what is directly stated and what is intended (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement) in order to understand the point of view.*
- RL.4 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by connecting various literary works and analyzing how medium and interpretation impact meaning

### READING - VOCABULARY

- RV.3 – Build comprehension and appreciation of literature and nonfiction texts by determining or clarifying figurative, connotative, and technical meanings
  - Sample: 9-10.RV.3.3: *Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyze their role in the text.*

## THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

In 1963, the United States was in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, a struggle to ensure basic human rights for all people, regardless of color. The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal,” and after the Civil War the U.S. Constitution was amended to include African Americans as citizens; but people’s behavior does not always change when laws change. Discrimination against African Americans occurred throughout the nation, but it was particularly prevalent in the South. Southern states and cities enacted laws and regulations that created unfair practices in jobs, housing, and schools; that prohibited marriages between races; and that mandated segregation with “separate but equal” facilities that were anything but equal.

Throughout most of the South, African Americans were forbidden to attend the same schools as whites. They could not use the same parks and pools, playgrounds, public restrooms, or drinking fountains. Many hospitals, restaurants, hotels, and stores would not serve African Americans. Whites sat in the front of buses and movie theatres, while African Americans were required to sit in the back. White children attended large, modern, well-equipped schools, while African American students attended one-room schoolhouses without enough books or teachers. Bogus regulations and “tests” prevented African Americans from voting.

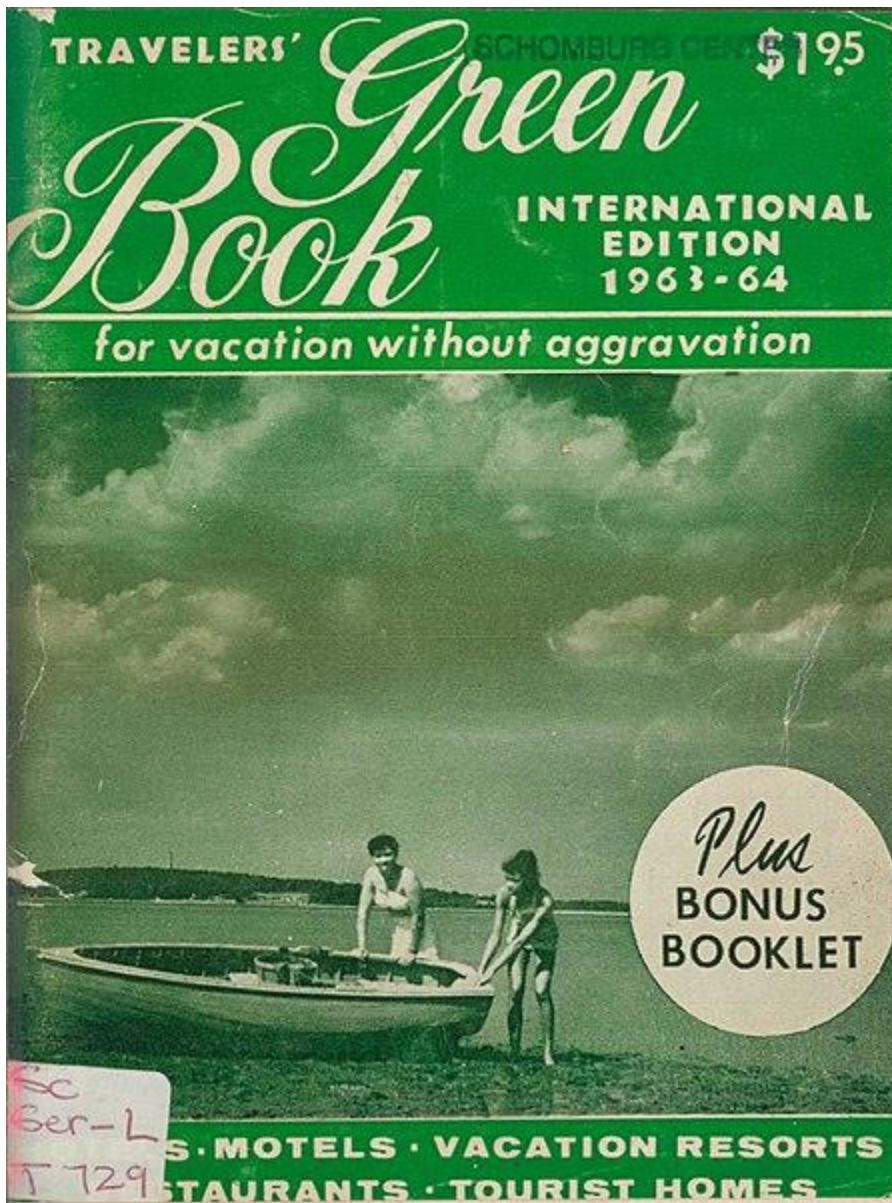
The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People worked to end these practices. Martin Luther King Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Medgar Evers, Ralph Abernathy, Rosa Parks, and many others provided leadership for the movement—often at great personal sacrifice. They focused on non-violent protests: sit-ins and boycotts of stores and public transportation to create economic pressures. Black students attempted to enroll in segregated schools. Protest marches raised public awareness. White supremacists fought back with guns, bombs, and other violence.

In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Bill; the next year he signed the Voting Rights Act. These were major steps forward, but they did not by any means solve the problems of racism in this nation. In recent years there has been a resurgence of white supremacists. In 2013, the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act. The struggle continues for equal opportunity and equal rights for all peoples.



*A Civil Rights march in Birmingham in 1963.*



THE *GREEN BOOK*

The Green Book was an annual guidebook for African American road trippers. It was created and published by black New York City mailman Victor Hugo Green from 1936 to 1966, during the era of Jim Crow laws, when open and often legally prescribed discrimination against African Americans and other non-whites was widespread.

Although pervasive racial discrimination and poverty limited black car ownership, the emerging black middle class bought automobiles as soon as they could. Many African Americans took to driving, in part, to avoid segregation on public transportation. They faced other hardships as drivers, such as white-owned businesses refusing to serve them or repair their vehicles, being refused rooms or food by white-owned hotels and restaurants, and threats of physical violence and forcible expulsion from whites-only “sundown towns.”

Green founded and published the Green Book to help travelers avoid such problems, compiling resources “to give the Negro traveler information that will keep him from running into difficulties and embarrassments and to make his trip more enjoyable.” From a New York-focused first edition published in 1936, Green expanded the work to cover much of North America, including most of the United States and parts of Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda. The Green Book became “the bible of black travel during Jim Crow,” enabling African American travelers to find lodgings, businesses, and gas stations that would serve them along the road. It was little known outside the African American community. Shortly after passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, demand for the book fell off, and publication ceased.

## THE BOMBING OF THE 16<sup>TH</sup> STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

The 16th Street Baptist Church was organized in 1873, the first black church in the city of Birmingham, Alabama, which had been founded just two years before. The current structure, built in 1911, was designed by a black architect and built by a black contractor. As one of the primary black institutions in Birmingham, the 16th Street Baptist Church has hosted prominent visitors throughout its history. W. E. B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, Paul Robeson, and Ralph Bunche all spoke at the church during the first part of the 20th century. During the 1950s and 1960s, the church was a center for Civil Rights activism.

On Sunday, September 15, 1963, white terrorists, members of the Ku Klux Klan, planted a bomb at the church, set to explode as people gathered for Sunday worship. The explosion blew large holes in the church's walls, destroyed the rear steps to the church, and blew a passing motorist out of his car. Several other cars parked near the site of the blast were destroyed, and windows of properties located more than two blocks from the church were also damaged. All but one of the church's stained-glass windows were destroyed in the explosion.

Dozens of people were seriously injured in the blast, and four girls were killed:



*(pictured, left to right)*  
*Denise McNair, age 11*  
*Carole Robertson, age 14*  
*Addie Mae Collins, age 14,*  
*Cynthia Wesley, age 14*

Across the country, people were outraged by the loss of these young lives. Today, many historians contend that the church bombing was among the pivotal events that helped the nation to focus on the need to protect the rights of all its citizens, leading to passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Although four suspects were identified by the FBI within nine months of the bombing, there were no trials or convictions in the case until 1977, 2001, and 2002. A fourth suspect died of cancer in 1994 without ever coming to trial.



## THE WORLD IN 1963

### EVENTS

Martin Luther King writes Letter from Birmingham Jail

NAACP worker Medgar Evers slain in Mississippi

Patsy Cline dies in a plane crash

President John F. Kennedy speaks at the Berlin Wall: "Ich bin ein Berliner"

Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, DC →

President Kennedy assassinated

Lyndon Johnson sworn in as president

### NEW IN 1963

first African American graduates of U.S. Air Force Academy

first African American students at the University of Alabama

first woman in space: Russian cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova

zip codes

touch-tone telephones

the instant replay

FM radio in cars

### THEATRE

Exit the King by Eugene Ionesco

She Loves Me by Bock, Harnick, & Masteroff

Barefoot in the Park by Neil Simon

The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore by Tennessee Williams

Marat/Sade by Peter Weiss

### BOOKS

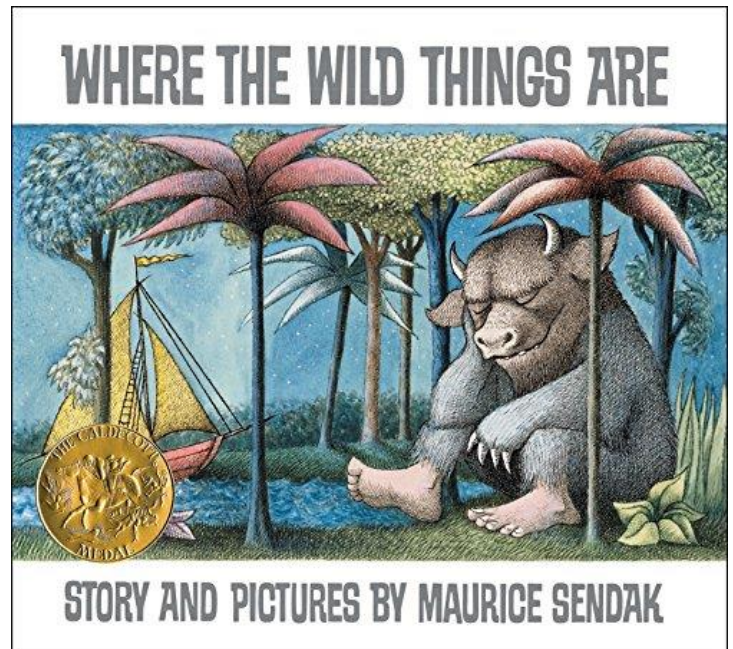
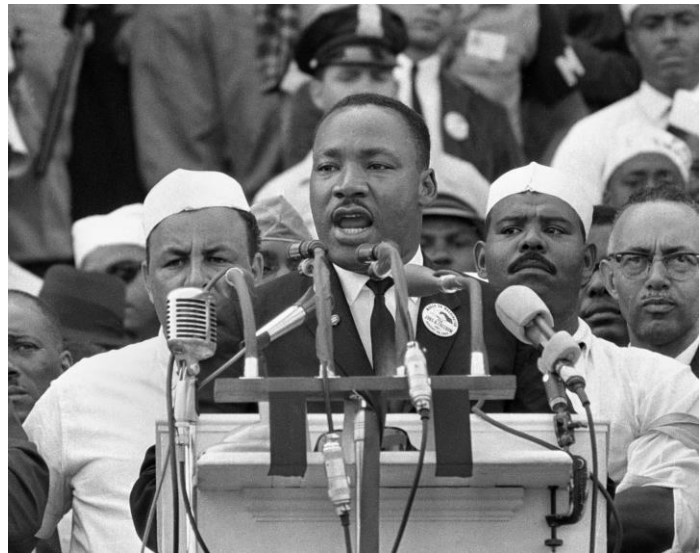
The Fire Next Time by James Baldwin

The Feminine Mystique by Betty Friedan

The Group by Mary McCarthy

Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak →





**MOVIES**

- Cleopatra
- Tom Jones
- Dr. No
- The Birds →
- How the West Was Won

**TELEVISION**

- The Judy Garland Show
- General Hospital
- The Fugitive
- Petticoat Junction
- Let's Make a Deal

**MUSIC**

- “Surfin’ USA” by the Beach Boys
- “She Loves You” & “I Want to Hold Your Hand” by the Beatles
- “Blowin’ in the Wind” by Peter, Paul, and Mary
- “Walk like a Man” by the Four Seasons
- “Heat Wave” by Martha and the Vandellas (*pictured below*)

**PRICES**

- loaf of bread—22 cents
- gallon of gas—29 cents
- movie ticket—85 cents
- average new car—\$3200
- average new house—\$19,000



## INTERACTIVE CIVIL RIGHTS TIMELINE

When we hear the term Civil Rights, many of us often think exclusively of African Americans. But Civil Rights is a broad term that covers people of all races, genders, and sexualities.

- 1863    Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured\\_documents/emancipation\\_proclamation/](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/)
- 1865    13th Amendment ratified—slavery abolished  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/13thamendment.html>
- 1865    Reconstruction begins (through 1877)  
<http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/exhibits/reconstruction/timeline.html>  
<http://www.shmoop.com/reconstruction/timeline.html>
- 1868    14th Amendment ratified—equal protection under the law  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/215201/Fourteenth-Amendment>
- 1875    Civil Rights Act of 1875 (ruled unconstitutional in 1883)  
<http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/35889>  
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/turnerbd/summary.html>
- 1876    First Jim Crow laws  
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/civil-rights/>
- 1888    First Black-owned banks  
<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/true-reformers-bank-1888-1910>  
<https://www.fedpartnership.gov/minority-banking-timeline/capital-savings-bank>  
[https://www.richmondfed.org/~media/richmondfedorg/publications/research/region\\_focus/2007/Spring/pdf/economic\\_history.pdf](https://www.richmondfed.org/~media/richmondfedorg/publications/research/region_focus/2007/Spring/pdf/economic_history.pdf)
- 1896    Plessey v. Ferguson—separate but equal ruled constitutional  
<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=52>  
[http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC\\_CR\\_0163\\_0537\\_ZS.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0163_0537_ZS.html)
- 1870    15th Amendment ratified—right to vote  
<http://www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/african-americans-and-the-15th-amendment>  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/grant-fifteenth/>

- 1909 [NAACP founded](#)  
<http://www.naacp.org/pages/naacp-history>
- 1916 [The Great Migration](#)  
<http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/great-migration>  
<http://www.inmotionaame.org/print.cfm;jsessionid=f8302664861457417887695?migration=8&bhcp=1>  
<http://www.blackpast.org/aah/great-migration-1915-1960>
- 1936 [Blues legend Robert Johnson makes his first recording](#)  
<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/blues-legend-robert-johnson-makes-first-ever-recording>  
<http://www.biography.com/people/robert-johnson-9356324>  
<http://blues.about.com/od/earlybluesessentials/a/10earlybluesart.htm>  
[http://www.theblustrail.com/artists/mus\\_jal.htm](http://www.theblustrail.com/artists/mus_jal.htm)
- 1936 [Jesse Owens wins at Berlin Olympics](#)  
<http://www.jesseowens.com/about/>
- 1939 [Marian Anderson sings at Lincoln Memorial](#)  
<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/marian-anderson-sings-at-lincoln-memorial>  
<http://www.npr.org/2014/04/09/298760473/denied-a-stage-she-sang-for-a-nation>
- 1946 [The integration of the NFL](#)  
<http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/forgotten-story-of-four-who-broke-color-barrier-in-pro-football-to-screen-at-royce>  
<http://www.sikids.com/si-kids/2016/01/12/forgotten-four-who-integrated-nfl>  
<http://nflfootballjournal.blogspot.com/2016/02/four-men-who-broke-nfl-color-barrior.html>
- 1947 [Jackie Robinson breaks the color line in Major League Baseball](#)  
<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/jackie-robinson-breaks-major-league-color-barrier>
- 1948 [President Harry Truman desegregates the armed forces](#)  
<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/anniversaries/desegblurb.htm>  
<http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/civilrightsstruggle1/a/order9981.htm>
- 1954 [Brown v. Board of Education—separate but equal ruled unconstitutional](#)  
<http://www.uscourts.gov/educational-resources/get-involved/federal-court-activities/brown-board-education-re-enactment/history.aspx>  
<http://www.naacpldf.org/case/brown-v-board-education>  
[http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC\\_CR\\_0347\\_0483\\_ZO.html](http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0347_0483_ZO.html)



*Jesse Owens in the 100m race at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.*



- 1955 [Montgomery, Alabama begins year-long bus boycott](http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/)  
<http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/>
- 1955 [A. Phillip Randolph, father of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, becomes vice-president of the AFL-CIO's Executive Council](http://apri.org/387-3/)  
<http://apri.org/387-3/>  
<http://www.aphiliprandolphmuseum.com/>  
<http://www.aflcio.org/About/Our-History/Key-People-in-Labor-History/Asa-Philip-Randolph-1889-1979>  
<http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/174.html>
- 1955 [Death of Emmett Till](http://www.biography.com/people/emmett-till-507515)  
<http://www.biography.com/people/emmett-till-507515>  
<http://time.com/4008545/emmett-till-history/>
- 1957 [Southern Christian Leadership Conference \(SCLC\) founded; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. elected president](http://sclcnational.org/our-history/)  
<http://sclcnational.org/our-history/>
- 1957 [Civil Rights Act of 1957](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/civil_rights_act.html)  
[http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online\\_documents/civil\\_rights\\_act.html](http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/civil_rights_act.html)
- 1957 [Nine Black students integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas](http://life.time.com/history/little-rock-nine-1957-photos/#1)  
<http://life.time.com/history/little-rock-nine-1957-photos/#1>  
<http://littlerock9.com/History.aspx>
- 1960 [Lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, Nashville, and elsewhere](http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/6-legacy/freedom-struggle-2.html)  
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/6-legacy/freedom-struggle-2.html>
- 1963 [Medgar Evers killed on his front porch](http://www.everstribute.org/house_tour.php)  
[http://www.everstribute.org/house\\_tour.php](http://www.everstribute.org/house_tour.php)
- 1963 [March on Washington—Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech](http://www.archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf)  
<http://www.archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>
- 1964 [Civil Rights Act of 1964](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/)  
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/civil-rights-act/>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q11kvbJy0cs>
- 1964 [Affirmative Action](http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1970.html)  
<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1970.html>



*Elizabeth Eckford, attends her first day of school at Little Rock Central High School. Elizabeth was one of the students to integrate the school, known as the "Little Rock Nine".*

- 1965 [Voting Rights Act is signed](#)  
by President Lyndon B. Johnson  
[http://www.core-online.org/History/voting\\_rights.htm](http://www.core-online.org/History/voting_rights.htm)
- 1968 [Dr. King’s speech, “I Have Been to the Mountaintop”](#)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDl84vusXos>  
<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/martin-luther-kings-final-speech-ive-mountaintop-full/story?id=18872817>
- 1968 [Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike](#)  
<http://www.afscme.org/union/history/mlk/1968-afscme-memphis-sanitation-workers-strike-chronology>  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2011/02/all-labor-has-dignity-martin-luther-king-jrs-fight-for-economic-justice/71423/>
- 1968 [Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated](#)  
<http://history1900s.about.com/cs/martinlutherking/a/mlkassass.htm>  
[http://mlkkpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc\\_kings\\_assassination\\_4\\_april\\_1968](http://mlkkpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_kings_assassination_4_april_1968)
- 1968 [Shirley Chisholm is the first African-American woman elected to Congress.](#)  
<http://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/37113?ret=True>  
<http://atyourlibrary.org/culture/shirley-chisholm-her-historic-run-congress-and-president-influenced-generations>



*Shirley Chisholm speaking at a press conference.*

[The Civil Rights movement beyond the 60s](#)  
<http://abhmuseum.org/2012/06/turning-the-tables-on-civil-rights-the-1970s-and-1980s/>  
[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline/modern\\_01.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline/modern_01.html)

[Black Women in the Civil Rights Movement: 1960-1970](#)  
[http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/tiffany\\_joseph\\_thesis.html](http://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/FreedomNow/tiffany_joseph_thesis.html)

[Gay Rights Movement](#)  
<http://time.com/184/gay-rights-timeline/>

[Latino Civil Rights Movement](#)  
<http://www.tolerance.org/latino-civil-rights-timeline>

[The Women’s Rights Movement 60s and 70s](#)  
<https://tavaana.org/en/content/1960s-70s-american-feminist-movement-breaking-down-barriers-women>

## THE FLINT WATER CRISIS

BY KRISTEN CARTER, YOUTH PROGRAM COORDINATOR

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* takes place in an era when Flint, Michigan, was a booming, successful industrial center. General Motors was founded in Flint in 1908. In the 1960s the city was the centerpiece of GM's Buick and Chevrolet divisions at a time when American cars ruled the road. Most people in the city worked for or knew someone who worked for GM. Flint has struggled economically since the 1980s, however, when General Motors downsized and largely pulled out of Flint. The result was a huge downward spiral that the city is still trying to recover from. In 2014, in an effort to save money, the city's water source was switched from Detroit/Lake Huron to the Flint River.

When this switch was made, the correct balance of anti-corrosive chemicals was not added to the water, so lead from the pipes began to enter the water supply. Water ran brown in some places, and doctors began noticing higher levels of lead in children. There was an outbreak of Legionnaires' Disease, and people began speak out. The government denied the situation for far too long, but ultimately switched back to Detroit/Lake Huron water in December 2015. This was too late, however, and the damage had already been done. Lead continued to enter the water supply.

A state of emergency was declared for the city in 2016, and cases and cases of water began to be donated, as well as government-supplied water filters for each Flint residence. Plans and finances were put in place to begin replacing the city's pipes and infrastructure, which is still an ongoing project.

One of the issues Flint is still facing today is that individual citizens are responsible for the replacement of the pipes in their own private residences, but many of them cannot afford to do that, nor can they afford to move. There is also a lot of ongoing distrust because both the city and state government ignored and dismissed the problem for so long. Today, nobody is really sure who or what to believe about the state of the water. The water to this day has not been officially "cleared" by the mayor. Results have been improving, but testing continues. There are ongoing lawsuits concerning the government response to the situation, both with the water crisis overall and the outbreak of Legionnaires' Disease.

Below is a timeline from CNN of the Flint Water Crisis, which began in the spring of 2014 and has been updated as recently as October 2019:

<https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/04/us/flint-water-crisis-fast-facts/index.html>

For information on the current status of water in Flint: <https://www.michiganradio.org/post/does-flint-have-clean-water-yes-it-s-complicated>

—Kristen Carter is the IRT's Youth Program Coordinator  
For three years she was an educator at  
Sloan Museum, a Flint History center.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY

What do you already know about the Civil Rights Movement in America during the 1960s? What were some of the struggles, both in daily life and in larger society, faced by black Americans?

Think of a road trip that you have gone on in your life. Where were you going? Why were you going there? Were the challenges of getting there worth it? What kinds of things did you learn about the people you were traveling with?

How to discipline children has been a consistent issue in our culture, with each generation offering new perspectives. What did your parents do to help guide you to the right path? How would you respond if your child was constantly acting out?

### AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

Think about all the extra precautions and troubles the Watsons went through on their trip to Alabama due to their race. If you had to deal with these dangers, how might you approach a long road trip like this? Would you consider alternate routes, or perhaps not going at all?

Record players like the one Daddy buys for the car were expensive novelties in the 1960s. Why does Daddy buy the record player for the car? What does he hope this will do for his family? How might music help bond a family or pass the time on a long trip better than anything else?

Byron's behavior actually straightens out rather quickly once they arrive at Grandma Sands. Why might this be? What influence does an extra voice of reason have when helping parents raise their children?

Why do you think Kenny sees the Wool Pooh at the church after the bombing? How might this play into his memories being jumbled and confusing? How might our memories differ from the truth and influence us?

Although Byron sometimes makes fun of Kenny, deep down Kenny knows his brother loves him and is proud of him. Why is Byron proud of Kenny, and how does he show Kenny that he loves him? In what ways are you proud of your family members, and how do you show them your love?

Despite the Baptist Church Bombing and the Civil Rights Movement being things of the past, we still see the effects these events had today. What influence do these events still have on our country? Do we still see violence and hatred like this in other parts of the world?

It takes a lot of courage to stand up for what's right or to do what's right despite disapproval and negative peer pressure, or even to take risks that are for our own good. What do you think stops people from taking a stand against something they know is wrong? Describe a situation in which you demonstrated courage. What was hard about it? What did it accomplish? How did people respond before you took your stand? What did they say to you afterwards?

## WRITING PROMPTS

Choose one member of the Watson family: Mama, Daddy, Byron, Kenny, or Joey. Write a letter from that character to Grandma Sands, several months after they return to Flint from Alabama. What has happened in the family? How has Kenny recovered from his traumatic experiences? How has Byron been behaving? How are the children doing in school? What's going on with Mama and Daddy. Try to make your story fit the realities of the family and the time, but use your imagination. What are the possibilities?

When the Watsons go to Birmingham, Byron, Kenny, and Joey have little idea what to expect. What do people expect when they come to your town for the first time? Write a travel article for people your age who might be visiting your home town for the first time. What is the town like? What are the people like? What are the exciting things to do? Where are the fun places to go? What are the interesting things to see? What do you want to be sure not to miss? What do you want to avoid?

Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects—scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting— as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? To share your reviews with others, send to: [education.irt@gmail.com](mailto:education.irt@gmail.com)



*Martin Luther King, Jr. leading a march from Selma to Montgomery of voting rights for African Americans.  
Beside King is John Lewis, Reverend Jesse Douglas, James Forman and Ralph Abernathy.*

## LITERATURE CIRCLES

Consider the following novels as a resource for a Literature Circle unit connected to your trip to see *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*. Reading Levels have been included when available to help scaffold your assignments.

Title	Author	Guided Reading	Lexile	DRA Level
<i>Through My Eyes</i>	Ruby Bridges	X	860L	60
<i>A Friendship for Today</i>	Patricia McKissack	U	670L	50
<i>Promises to Keep</i>	Sharon Robinson	W	1030L	60
<i>Witness</i>	Karen Hesse	Z	NP	70
<i>Bud, Not Buddy</i>	Christopher Paul Curtis	U	950L	50
<i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i>	Mildred D. Taylor	W	920L	60
<i>Meridian</i>	Alice Walker	W	1010L	N/A
<i>Mississippi Trial, 1955</i>	Chris Crowe	Z	870L	70
<i>Birmingham, 1963</i>	Shelley Tougas	N/A	980L	N/A
<i>Ghost Boys</i>	Jewell Parker Rhodes	U	HL360L	N/A
<i>Stella by Starlight</i>	Sharon M. Draper	V	740L	50

## LITERATURE CIRCLE RESOURCES

From the Literature Circles Research Center:

*In literature circles, small groups of students gather together to discuss a piece of literature in depth. The discussion is guided by students' response to what they have read. You may hear talk about events and characters in the book, the author's craft, or personal experiences related to the story. Literature circles provide a way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books. Collaboration is at the heart of this approach. Students reshape and add onto their understanding as they construct meaning with other readers. Finally, literature circles guide students to deeper understanding of what they read through structured discussion and extended written and artistic response.*

For more information on literature circles and how to implement them in your classroom:

Literature Circles Resource Center - <http://www.litcircles.org/>

Read Write Think - <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/literature-circles-getting-started-19.html>

EduTopia - <https://www.edutopia.org/literature-circles-classroom-book-discussion-how-to>

The Teaching Channel - <https://www.teachingchannel.org/video/literature-circles-in-action>

Children's Literacy Initiative - <https://cli.org/2017/05/11/literature-circles-important-part-student-learning/>



## SEPTEMBER 15, 1963

The following resource is excerpted from the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Further information is available at <https://www.bcri.org> and the unit plan can be found in full at this link:

<https://www.bcri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/16th-Street-Church-Bombing-Lesson-Plan-Updated-7.7.16-4.pdf>

### OVERVIEW

In this unit for grades 6 – 12, students explore resources and participate in discussions about the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing. Starting with open discussions, the unit focuses on students gaining an understanding of the event through the analysis of images and historic documents describing what happened. Students will use online and print resources to further learn about this moment in Civil Rights history.

The lesson includes reference texts, online sites, and extension activities that allow teachers to customize the lesson to fit their classroom.

### STUDENT OBJECTIVES

Students will

- Have a deeper understanding of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing as it relates to Civil Rights history.
- Be able to analyze primary documents to unearth data
- Evaluate and summarize their findings through worksheets and small group discussion

To prepare students for this lesson, teachers should find a short video clip to introduce students to the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing. Suggestions for videos can be found in the reference section.

In this lesson, students will learn about the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing through discussion of the event and the video they have just watched. Teachers will ask students about what they know about the event, the children who died as a result of the bombing. Students will discuss the significance of this event and how it affected the people in the community. Teachers will then ask students how someone who didn't live in the area might have learned about what happened.

Teachers will then distribute a newspaper article from the New York Times, the photo that was used in the article, and photos of the children who died on the day of the bombing. Teachers will instruct students to independently analyze the documents using the analysis worksheet provided. After students have completed their analysis independently, allow them to work in small groups to compare their observations. To wrap up, have students discuss out loud their findings with the whole class.

### FEATURED RESOURCES

- [“Bombingham”](#): A video from the History Channel about the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing.
- *Birmingham Sunday*: Written by Larry Dane Brimner, this book details the history of bombings in Birmingham, Alabama in the 1960s, the fatal bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, and its impact on civil rights legislation.
- [New York Times](#): The NYT Article that was printed on the front page describing the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing and the lives of the children who were killed that day.

## WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM – 1963 GRAPHIC MAP

In this activity, students will deepen their understanding of the story *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963* and their knowledge of plot and dramatic structure by creating a Graphic Map. Graphic Maps enable students to deepen their understanding of a text through further comprehension and evaluation of what’s happening in the story.

Begin the activity by leading the class in an initial discussion of plot. Ask students about key elements of a plot (beginning, rising action, climax, falling action, and conclusion). How do the moments in *Watsons* correlate to the elements of plot? Create a plot diagram of the suggestions provided.

Facilitate a discussion about the idea of using symbols to represent events in life. Examples:

- The first day of school could be a school bus.
- Winning a soccer game could be a trophy or ribbon.
- A birth of a new family member could be a story or a baby.

Using the plot diagram ideas shared by the class, ask students to assign positive or negative values to each. Make a visual representation of this, using a symbol for each of the events. Once completed, inform the students that they have created a Graphic Map. Open up a conversation about similarities and differences between a plot diagram and a graphic map:

- A plot diagram tells the story sequentially.
- A graphic map also tells the story sequentially, but also allows for emotions and judgments to be recorded in relationship to each plot event.

Inform students that they will now create a Graphic Map of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*. Use the map linked here to see a [Graphic Map Example](#) from Kenny’s point of view. Explain to students that they will work in small groups and choose another character in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963* to create a graphic map, following that character through the story. The groups of students will not only retell key events from the story, but they will also assign a value to each event. Using the [Graphic Map](#) tool, a maximum of 15 entries can be entered. In the box labeled **Scene**, record the page number of the section you will be documenting. The **Topic** box is for a title of the scene. There is an additional box to add a description of the event. The final step is to choose a picture to represent the event.

After each group is done, present your Graphic Maps to the class for discussion:

- What points were impactful for your character?
- Was there a positive event for one character that was a negative event for another?
- Did anyone gain a new perspective on characters?

For more information about Graphic Maps and how they can be used in your classroom:

ReadWriteThink - <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/graphing-plot-character-novel-869.html?tab=4#tabs>

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/graphic-30039.html>

## AN INTRODUCTION AND EXPERIMENT IN UNFAIR TREATMENT/PREJUDICE

adapted from: [http://www.education-world.com/a\\_tsl/archives/04-1/lesson006.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_tsl/archives/04-1/lesson006.shtml)

### MATERIALS

- Ribbons, one per student (an equal number of two colors of ribbons, with safety pins)
- List of very easy spelling words for spelling bee
- List of very difficult words for a spelling bee

### ACTIVITY

1. Prepare two sets of ribbons—equally divided between two colors—one for each student.
2. As each student enters the class, hand them a ribbon (*make sure colors are mixed up between boys and girls, and groups of friends*) and ask them to pin the ribbon to their shirt (*students who prefer to not wear the ribbon pinned to their shirt can display it in some other way*).
  - a. When students have settled down and taken their seats, ask them if they would like to take part in an experiment.
3. Set up a spelling bee, with students forming teams based on the color of their ribbons.
4. As the spelling bee begins, and without telling the students what the experiment is just yet, make sure to give all simple words (*such as: bat, car, school, desk, etc.*) to one team and extremely challenging words (*such as: atrocious, fiasco, jalapeño, vacuum, magnificent, etc.*) to the other team.
  - a. As the spelling bee progresses, you might award a simple prize, such as a lollipop or pencil, to each student who correctly spells a word (*If you do that, however, you should be prepared to give all students the same reward at the end of the activity*).
5. Very quickly, students should notice what is going on. When they do, give them an opportunity to address how this inequality makes them feel. Ask students who were on the team given difficult words how they felt knowing they would get a difficult word because they were wearing a certain color ribbon. Ask the others how they felt.
6. Once this introductory activity is complete, begin a discussion on the Civil Rights Movement and how African Americans were treated unjustly because of the color of their skin, and what they did to combat this injustice.

### DISCUSSION STARTER

Martin Luther King Jr. believed we should try to solve problems peacefully rather than use violence. Brainstorm with students some examples in the classroom and on the playground where problems arise. Talk about and role-play solving the examples constructively rather than destructively.

Write a response to the following statement, made by Alpha Robertson, the mother of Carole Robertson, one of the girls who died in the 16th Street Church bombing: “You can’t waste a life hating people because all they do is live their life, laughing, doing more evil.” What is your philosophy for dealing with painful events? Compare your philosophy to Ms. Robertson’s.



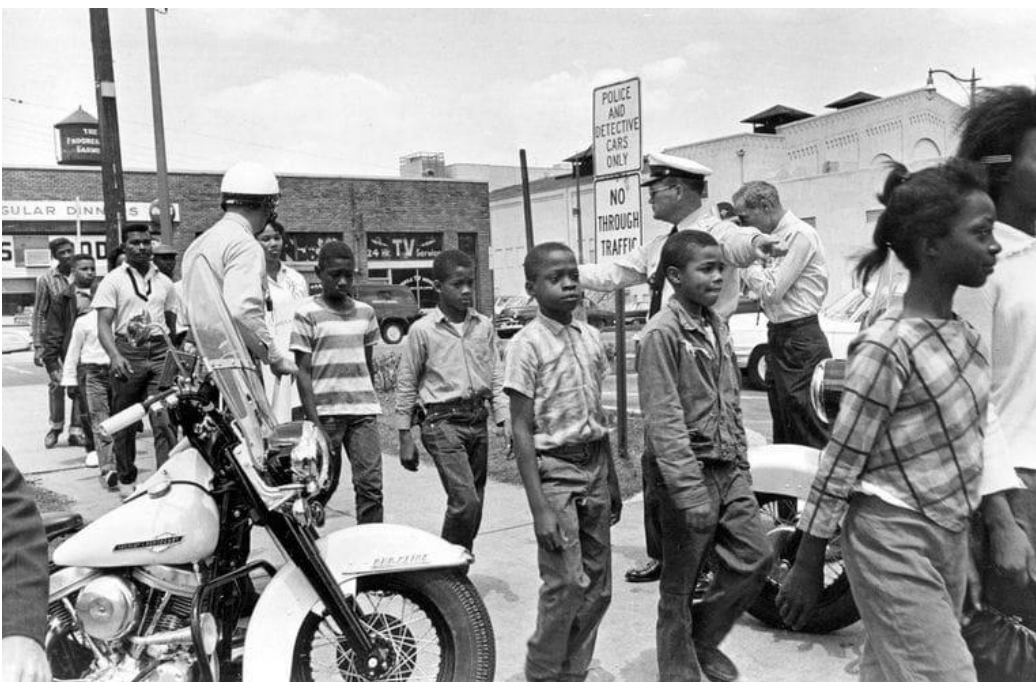
## COURAGE TO STAND—MAKING A GOOD DECISION

The purpose of this lesson is to teach students how courage can help them take a stand for what's right when they have to make tough decisions.

### ACTIVITY

1. Discuss the definition of courage with students this could be:
  - a. Being strong even though you are afraid.
  - b. Thinking things through even though you may be in a scary situation.
  - c. Trying your best even though you may be facing a difficult situation.
2. Ask students to share stories with the class about times in their life when they displayed courage. Discuss the role courage plays in making tough decisions.
3. Have students pair up and give them one of the two Making a Good Decision worksheets to read and fill out, using their best judgment. This exercise will require students to analyze a situation and consider the different decisions that could be made regarding the problem, and their resulting outcomes. *(Before beginning, remind students that outcomes can affect many people and that making a good and safe decision is not always easy, but it is always important).*
4. Once pairs have finished going through their worksheet, hold a discussion with the class about the decision making process and what role courage plays in this process.
5. Allow students to share their decisions and their correlating advantages and disadvantages. Write these responses on the board.
6. Once all the decisions for both of the problems have been recorded, compare and contrast the decisions *(as well as the advantages and disadvantages of those decisions)* the students' came up with, and have them identify the courageous decisions and explain why these decisions are considered courageous and the others are not.

activity courtesy of First Stage Theatre Company



Police in Birmingham, Alabama take a group of schoolchildren to jail on May 4, 1963, after their arrest for protesting against segregation.

### COURAGE TO STAND—MAKING A GOOD DECISION: Student Worksheet 1

#### SITUATION

A girl is playing outside with her friends. Her father tells her that she must stay close to home while she is playing. Her friends decide to go down the street to play. They ask her to go with them.

Decision #1: The girl decides to obey her father’s instructions.

Disadvantages:

1. Her friends tease her.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages:

1. She does not get in trouble for disobeying her father.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Outcome:

1. Her father knows that he can trust her.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Decision #2: The girl decides go with her friends down the street to play.

Disadvantages:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Outcome:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## COURAGE TO STAND—MAKING A GOOD DECISION: Student Worksheet 2

### SITUATION

A group of boys are playing near a ditch. The ditch is deeper than the boys are tall and has many rocks in it. One boy dares everyone to run and jump across the ditch. The boys take turns jumping across and so far everyone makes it across. The last boy is standing there trying to decide if he wants to jump or not.

Decision #1: The boy decides to give it a try.

Disadvantages:

1. He slips and barely makes it across, and badly hurts his leg.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages:

1. His buddies think he's cool.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Outcome:

1. He is badly hurt and needs to go to the hospital.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Decision #2: The boy decides not to jump.

Disadvantages:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Outcome:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_



## PLAY GLOSSARY

### 2 Flint, Michigan

Flint is a mid-sized city located 70 miles northwest of Detroit, midway between Detroit and Saginaw Bay. In 1963 the city had around 195,000 people and was at the height of its success.

### 2 Birmingham

By the 1960s, Birmingham's population was around 340,000. In the 1950s and 1960s, Birmingham gained national and international attention as a center of activity during the Civil Rights Movement.

### 2 the Brown Bomber

The Watsons probably chose "the Brown Bomber" as a nickname for their car in honor of African American world champion boxer Joe Louis (1914-1981), who was known as the Brown Bomber.

### 3 Rocky and Bullwinkle

Rocky and Bullwinkle were the central characters of an animated television series that aired under various titles from 1959 to 1964; in later syndication it was called *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*.

### 5 Plymouth

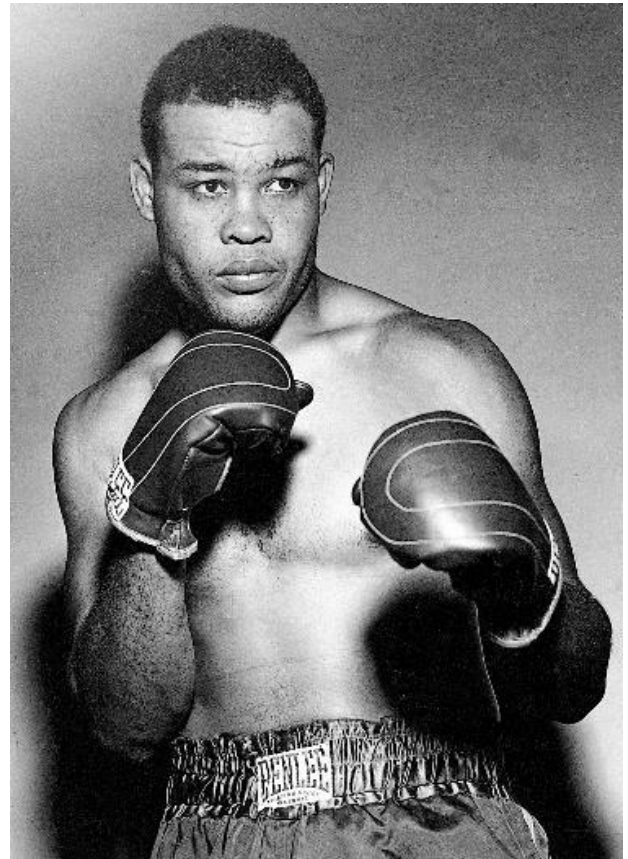
In Christopher Paul Curtis's book, the Watson's car is a 1948 Plymouth. In 1948 the only Plymouth model was the DeLuxe sedan. The Plymouth Suburban, a station wagon, was introduced in 1949.

### 7 liver lips

Liver lips is a derogatory phrase used to describe large, dark lips. The expression dates back to the late 1800s and should no longer be used.

### 12 stratosphere

The second major layer of the Earth's atmosphere, located between about 6 miles above the Earth's surface to about 30 miles above the Earth's surface.



## 13 Negro

The word negro, literally meaning “black”, was used in the 1400s by Spanish and Portuguese explorers to refer to the Bantu peoples of southern Africa. Etymologically, negro, noir, and nègre derive from nigrum, the stem of the Latin niger (black). The term colored appeared in North America during the colonial era. The first 12 U.S. census counts counted “colored” people. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in 1909. Eventually, the word negro returned to fashion, as some began to see the word colored as generic and demeaning. Beginning in 1900 the census counted “negroes.” The United Negro College Fund was founded in 1944. In the 1960s, many began to favor the word black, associating negro with slavery and segregation. Black continued as the most popular term until the 1990s, when African American became popular. In today’s diverse world, many different terms are used.

## 16 infraction

A violation of a law or agreement.

## 17 conk ... butter ... process

The conk or butter was a hair process popular among African American men from the 1920s to the 1960s. A man with natural hair would have it chemically straightened using a homemade relaxer mixed from lye, eggs, and potatoes. The process often caused chemical burns.

## 22 true-tone AB-700 Model, the Ultra Glide

Before CDs and cassette tapes, vinyl records were the predominant way to listen to music. The Ultra Glide, used in the 1950s and 1960s, could be used in a moving car without skipping.

## 22 45

A 7” vinyl record that typically plays one song per side. The 45 refers to the speed at which the record is played: 45 revolutions per minute.

## 34 Appalachia

While the Appalachian Mountains stretch from Belle Isle in Canada to Cheaha Mountain in Alabama, the term Appalachia typically refers to the central and southern portions of the range, from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, southwesterly to the Great Smoky Mountains.

## 36 Smoky Mountains

The Great Smoky Mountains lie along the Tennessee–North Carolina border. They are a subrange of the Appalachian Mountains, and are mostly contained within Great Smoky Mountains National Park.



## 40 Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan is a white supremacist hate group that was started after the Civil War ended in 1865. Its original purpose was to frighten newly freed African Americans and to deny them their rights as citizens. Over time, the Klan's hate has expanded to include Catholics, Jews, and immigrants. The Klan has sought to promote "white power" by creating fear through violence, including bombings, hangings, and destruction of property. Klan members often commit their terrorist acts at night and wear white robes and hooded masks to hide their identities.

## 40 Oakman, Alabama

Oakman, Alabama is a small town located 40 miles northwest of Birmingham.

## 40 Confederate flag

The modern display of flags associated with the Confederate States of America started in opposition to the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s and continues today. A modified version of the "Southern cross" used as the battle flag of General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia has become the most widely recognized symbol of the Confederacy. Displays of such flags has long been controversial. Many Southerners associate the Confederate flag with pride in Southern heritage, states' rights, and historical commemoration of the American Civil War; opponents associate it with historical revisionism and glorification of the Civil War, racism, slavery, segregation, white supremacy, attempted intimidations of African Americans, and treason.

## 41 Einstein

Albert Einstein (1879–1955) was a German-born Nobel Prize–winning theoretical physicist. His intellectual achievements and originality have made the word "Einstein" synonymous with "genius."

## 41 segregation

Segregation refers to the separation along racial lines of facilities, services, and opportunities such as housing, medical care, education, employment, and transportation. At one time in the United States, signs were used to indicate where African Americans could legally walk, talk, drink, rest, or eat. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1897), so long as "separate but equal" facilities were provided, a requirement that



was rarely met in practice. This doctrine was overturned unanimously by the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Earl Warren in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and in the following years the Warren Court further ruled against racial segregation in several landmark cases that helped bring an end to Jim Crow laws.

44 hydrangeas

Hydrangeas are large, showy flowers that grow on shrubs. They grow in flowerheads, with several clusters of larger petals surrounding a much smaller cluster of tiny flowers.

44 magnolia tree

Magnolias come in a wide number of varieties, with flowers of various sizes. They are a popular symbol of the South.

50 Collier's Landing

fictional

51 Winnie the Pooh

Winnie-the-Pooh is a fictional anthropomorphic teddy bear created by English author A. A. Milne in four children's books written in the 1920s.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### BOOKS

*Why We Can't Wait* by Martin Luther King Jr.

*Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli

*Holes* by Louis Sachar

*Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis

*Through My Eyes* by Rudy Bridges

*Freedom Walkers* by Russel Freedman

*One Crazy Summer* by Rita Williams-Garcia

*Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan

*The Slave Dancer* by Paula Fox

*Fox Soup* by Robert Newton Peck

*Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry

*Lily's Crossing* by Patricia Reilly Giff

*The Civil Rights Movement for Kids: A History with 21 Activities* by Mary C. Turck

*We Shall Overcome: The History of the American Civil Rights Movement* by Reggie Finlayson

*A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle

*Black Books Galore!: Guide to More Great African American Children's Books* by Donna Rand and Toni Trent Parker

*One-Hundred-and-One African-American Read-Aloud Stories* by Susan Kantor

*100 African Americans Who Shaped American History* by Chrisanne Beckner

### MOVIES

*Crooklyn* (1994)

*Soundtrack for a Revolution* (2009)

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (2013 TV movie)

*Selma* (2014)

*Fences* (2016)

*Green Book* (2018)

### WEBSITES

<https://www.britannica.com/event/American-civil-rights-movement>

<https://www.history.com/news/the-green-book-the-black-travelers-guide-to-jim-crow-america>

<https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/interview-with-christopher-paul-curtis/>

