

**A TEACHER'S RESOURCE** *for*

# WARRIORS DON'T CRY

WSP  
WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS



*A Searing Memoir of the  
Battle to Integrate Little  
Rock's Central High*

Commemorating  
the 40<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary

## MELBA PATTILLO BEALS

"Riveting...monumentally important...a rare and eloquent behind-the-scenes look at the 1957 integration of Central High...."—Patricia Holt, *San Francisco Chronicle*

PART OF THE "WITNESSES TO HISTORY" SERIES PRODUCED BY

FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES & VOICES OF LOVE AND FREEDOM

A TEACHER'S RESOURCE *for*

# Warriors Don't Cry

by Melba Pattillo Beals

Part of the "Witnesses to History" series produced by  
Facing History and Ourselves & Voices of Love and Freedom

# Acknowledgements

Voices of Love and Freedom (VLF) is a nonprofit educational organization that promotes literacy, values, and prevention. VLF Teacher Resources are designed to help students:

- appreciate literature from around the world
- develop their own voices as they learn to read and write
- learn to use the values of love and freedom to guide their lives
- and live healthy lives free of substance abuse and violence.

*Voices of Love and Freedom* was founded in 1992 and is a collaboration of the Judge Baker Children's Center, Harvard Graduate School of Education, City University of New York Graduate School, and Wheelock College.

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**Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc. (FHAO)** is a national educational and teacher training organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry.

By studying the historical development and lessons of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives.

For more information, contact FHAO, National Office, 16 Hurd Road, Brookline, MA 02445; 617-232-1595; <http://www.facing.org>.

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# Witnesses to History

It has been said that memory is the imprint of the past upon us as individuals and as members of a family, an ethnic or religious group, a community, even a nation. Our memory is also the keeper of what is most meaningful to our deepest hopes and our greatest fears. *Voices of Love and Freedom* and *Facing History and Ourselves* have created teacher resources for six literary works that focus on individual encounters with history in ways that deepen our understanding of the connections between past and present. Each also reveals the importance of confronting history in all of its complexity, including its legacies of prejudice and discrimination, resilience and courage.

*Voices of Love and Freedom* and *Facing History and Ourselves* have developed a Teacher Resource for each of the following titles:

*The Giver* by Lois Lowry—a futuristic novel that explores the relationship between past and present, between identity and memory. **The Central Question:** How do our individual and collective memories shape who we are today and influence our futures?

*Night* by Elie Wiesel—a memoir that focuses on the final year of the Holocaust—a year the author spent at Auschwitz, a Nazi death camp. **The Central Question:** What is the relationship between our stories and our identity? To what extent are we all witnesses of history and messengers to humanity?

*Farewell to Manzanar* by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston—an account of a young girl’s experiences at an internment camp in the United States during World War II. It reveals how the time Jeanne Wakatsuki spent at Manzanar shaped her identity—her sense of who she is and what she might become. **The Central Question:** How do our confrontations with justice and injustice help shape our identity? How do those confrontations influence the things we say and do?

*Warriors Don’t Cry* by Melba Pattillo Beals—a first-hand account of the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. The book explores not only the power of racism but also such ideas as justice, identity, loyalty, and choice. **The Central Question:** What can we do alone and with others to confront racism? How can we as individuals and as citizens make a positive difference in our school, community, and nation?

*Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth’s Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* by Mark Mathabane—a first-person narrative about the impact of racism and segregation on a young black South African in the 1970s. The book can be used to deepen an understanding not only of racism but also of such concepts as identity, resilience, and resistance. **The Central Question:** What are different ways we struggle for freedom?

*The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan (coming in fall, 1999).

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## Teacher Resources

Each teacher resource is organized around a central theme or question related to the theme of the work. The following strategies are used to develop the central question and related ideas and promote literacy and social skills.

### Central Theme or Question

While several themes from the story are explored in the teacher resource, the central theme has been selected to assure that activities build upon one another and provide students with a deep understanding of a key aspect of the story.

### To Connect

The activities in the *To Connect* sections of the resources are pre-reading activities. They include suggestions for introducing the central theme, using teacher and student stories to encourage a connection with the central theme, discussing key concepts, and providing an historical and conceptual context for understanding the literary work. One of the primary purposes of these activities is to help students *to connect* their own personal experience to the issues raised in the story prior to reading the story.

### To Discuss

After reading the story or a section of the story, a variety of discussion questions help teachers foster a lively conversation that deepens comprehension and widens students' perspectives. These questions also encourage interpretation of the text and develop important concepts as well as reinforce speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills.

### To Practice

After students have read and discussed a story (or section), a variety of interactive activities provide practice in key literacy and social skills. Some of these activities involve the whole class in reenactments of key scenes, role playing, and debates. Others are partner or individual activities that provide opportunities to practice literacy skills (listening and speaking) and/or social skills (perspective taking and conflict resolution).

### To Express

Students are encouraged to reveal their understanding of the story through the use of journals and structured writing activities. These activities help students appreciate the author's craft as well as develop their own writing skills. At the end of each Teacher Resource, the Final Writing Activity helps students express their understanding of the book and their responses to the Central Question.

### To Participate

Some teacher resources contain suggestions for engaging students in community service projects at school, in the home, or in the neighborhood. These activities build on insights and values developed through reading and discussing the story.

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### **Voices of Love and Freedom**

Voices of Love and Freedom is a K–12 educational organization that helps students appreciate literature from around the world, develop their own voices as they learn to read and write, learn to use the values of love and freedom to guide their lives, and live healthy lives free of substance abuse and violence.

### **Facing History and Ourselves**

Facing History and Ourselves is an educational organization that helps teachers and their students find meaning in the past and recognize the need for participation and responsible decision making. By providing an interdisciplinary framework for examining the meaning and responsibilities of citizenship, Facing History expands knowledge, challenges thinking, and stretches students' imagination.



# About the Book

## Story Summary

In May of 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka et al* that racial segregation in the nation's public schools is unconstitutional. *Warriors Don't Cry* is a first-person account of one attempt to turn that ruling into a social reality. Melba Pattillo Beals was one of nine African American students chosen to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the fall of 1957. Her memoir chronicles the terror and fear that marked her experiences and those of the other eight African American students who attended the high school that year. The book also documents their courage and determination.

## Critical Responses to the Book

*Warriors Don't Cry* has received much critical acclaim. In 1995, the American Library Association chose the book for its annual Notable Book award. *The New York Times* described the book as “vivid and moving, a reminder, as [the author] writes, that ‘the task that remains is to cope with our interdependence—to see ourselves reflected in every other human being and to respect and honor our differences.’”<sup>\*</sup> David Holmstrom, a critic for *The Christian Science Monitor* called it “a powerful, chilling account of what it was like to endure howling, redneck mobs, to be attacked physically and verbally, to be shot at, and to be continually hated and threatened.”<sup>\*\*</sup>

Donna L. Cole, a reviewer for the *Library Journal*, was particularly impressed with the way Melba Pattillo Beals “re-creates a time of fear and tenaciously held hopes. The horrors the nine black students faced are told in a teenager’s voice, simply and sadly.” Cole recommends the work as a “highly readable tale of courage that deserves to be read, especially by young people.”<sup>†</sup>

Marvin Hoffman, a teacher and a reviewer for the *Houston Chronicle*, was struck by not only Beals’s courage but also the choices she and others made at Central High School. He notes, “The teachers, who could have modeled the ultimate civics lesson by checking the violence, turned a blind eye to it instead. One white student risked himself by feeding her information about imminent attacks in nightly phone calls. A handful of soldiers and police officers protected her; their human faces provided momentary relief from the angry sneers of the mob. Otherwise, she endured alone.”<sup>††</sup>

## About the Author

Born in 1941, Melba Pattillo Beals was 15 years old when she enrolled at Central High School for her junior year. At the end of that year, Governor Orval Faubus closed all of Little Rock’s high schools rather than allow integration to continue.

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\* “Warriors Don’t Cry,” *The New York Times Book Review*, June 19, 1994

\*\* David Holmstrom, “Growing Up with the Script of Racial Segregation,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 7, 1994.

† *Library Journal*, May 15, 1994.

†† *Houston Chronicle*, January 14, 1996.

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Beals spent the 1958–1959 school year waiting for the schools to reopen. By late summer, she and a number of other teenagers in Little Rock felt that they had waited long enough. They left the city to complete their high school education. As a result of a request that the NAACP made to its members, Beals finished high school in Santa Rosa, California. She stayed with a white family, the McCabes. After high school, she remained in California to attend San Francisco State University. After college, she earned a graduate degree from Columbia University in New York.

Beals has worked as a reporter for NBC, a communications consultant, and an author of books on public relations and marketing. She lives in San Francisco and is the mother of three—an adult daughter and twin boys whom she adopted when they were three.

### The Context of the Story

Melba Pattillo was born at a time in history when in the words of historian Lerone Bennett, Jr., “America was two nations—one white, one black, separate and unequal.” He likens the segregation that marked that era to “a wall, a system, a way of separating people from people.” That wall did not go up in a single day. It was built—“brick by brick, bill by bill, fear by fear.” In the 1940s and early 1950s, when Melba Pattillo was growing up in Arkansas, that wall seemed almost impenetrable. Yet during those years, a few Americans, both black and white, were chipping away at segregation—little by little, step by step. A major victory came on Monday, May 17, 1954.

On that day, Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the U.S. Supreme Court’s unanimous decision in a case known as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The ruling overturned nearly 60 years of forced segregation in many of the nation’s schools. The justices argued that separating some children from others solely on account of their race “generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.” They declared that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. . . . Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated . . . are . . . deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.”

The Fourteenth Amendment was passed in 1866 and ratified in 1868, three years after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery. The Fourteenth Amendment was added to the Constitution to protect the rights of formerly enslaved African Americans. For the first time in American history, they were regarded as citizens of the United States equal to any other citizen. The amendment defines a U.S. citizen as a person “born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof.” It declares that no state may pass laws that “abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States,” deprive “any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law,” or deny “to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

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### The Growth of Segregation

Despite the Fourteenth Amendment, the rights of African Americans in the late 1800s were constantly under attack almost everywhere in the nation, but most particularly in the South. For example, in 1883, the Supreme Court ruled that the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which outlawed discrimination, was unconstitutional because it violated the right of businesses, institutions, and civic organizations to choose their customers, employees, and/or members. The justices claimed that the Fourteenth Amendment applied only to state governments.

A few years later, an African American named Homer Plessy challenged segregation on streetcars in Louisiana, his home state. He claimed that they violated his rights as a citizen of the United States. In 1896, in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the United States Supreme Court ruled against Plessy. Eight of the nine justices maintained that separate facilities for blacks do not violate the rights of black Americans as long as their facilities are equal to those provided for whites. Only one justice disagreed. In his dissent, John Marshall Harlan, a former slaveholder from Kentucky, wrote: "In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful. The law regards man as man, and takes no account of his surroundings or of his color when his civil rights as guaranteed by the supreme law of the land are involved." Nearly 60 years would pass before the Supreme Court heeded Harlan's words.

The decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* permitted the growth of a system of state and local laws, known as "Jim Crow" laws. They established racial barriers in almost every aspect of life. In many places, black and white Americans could not publicly eat, travel, or sit side by side. Churches, schools, movie theaters, even cemeteries were segregated.

### Challenging Segregation

Over the years, Americans formed a number of organizations to oppose segregation. Among them was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (the NAACP). Its founders included both black and white Americans. In 1935, the group set into motion a plan to systematically challenge Jim Crow in court by inviting Professor Charles Houston of Howard University Law School to become its chief counsel. Soon after, Thurgood Marshall, a former student, joined him. The two lawyers along with other civil rights attorneys initially focused their efforts on segregation in higher education, because they knew that few states could afford "separate but equal" legal, medical, and other professional training for their black and white students.

Slowly, the NAACP's legal team made progress. In 1949, the Supreme Court ruled that a Texas law school set up only for African American students did not meet the standard of equality because of "those qualities which are incapable of objective measurement but which make for the greatness in a law school" [*Sweatt v. Painter*]. In a 1950 decision [*McLaurin v. Oklahoma*], the justices concluded that an African American student at the University of Oklahoma was not receiving an education equal to that of white students as long as he was segregated in the classroom, cafeteria, and library. The court ruled that "such restrictions impair and inhibit his ability

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to study, engage in discussions and exchange views with other students, and in general, to learn his profession.”

Little by little, ruling by ruling, the wall that separated Americans was coming down. After chipping away at segregation in higher education, NAACP lawyers turned their attention to segregation in the nation's public schools. This time they supported cases filed in four states and the District of Columbia. Each challenged the constitutionality of separating children by race. In late 1952, the justices decided that the cases were so similar that they should be heard together. So they combined them into a single case which came to be known as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka et al.* The Supreme Court's decision came in May of 1954. The following September, the first African American students enrolled in formerly all-white schools in Washington, D.C., and 150 school districts in eight states, including Arkansas. At the same time, a number of people in the South organized groups opposing integration.

When the Supreme Court issued its decision in the *Brown* case, the justices did not provide guidelines for ending segregation in the nation's public schools. They waited until May 31, 1955, to rule that the federal courts were to decide whether a school district was acting in “good faith” by desegregating its schools “with all deliberate speed.” Among the few Southern governors to applaud the decision was Orval Faubus of Arkansas.

Some school boards in Arkansas issued plans for desegregation even before the Supreme Court issued its second decision. Others, like the Little Rock School Board, drew up its plan in response to the ruling. As required by the Supreme Court, a federal district court reviewed the Little Rock plan and approved it as a “good faith” effort. Between 1955 and 1957, the year it was to go into effect, Virgil Blossom, the superintendent of schools, presented the plan to dozens of civic groups, PTAs, and other organizations in the white community. Voters had a say in the plan as well. In the spring of 1957, it was an issue in the election of the Little Rock School Board. For the most part, the winners in that election supported the plan. Despite the protests of a few noisy segregationists, many people in Little Rock and elsewhere were confident that the plan would be implemented peacefully, with little or no conflict.

# About the Teacher Resource

## Exploring the Central Question

**Q:** What can we do alone and with others to confront racism? How can we as individuals and as citizens make a positive difference in our school, community, and nation?

*Warriors Don't Cry* focuses on Melba Pattillo Beals's confrontation with racism. It describes the choices she and other students made in Little Rock during the 1957–1958 school year. On page 222 of the abridged edition (page 312 of the unabridged edition), Melba reflects on what she learned from the choices she made that year:

I look back on my Little Rock experience as ultimately a positive force that shaped the course of my life. As Grandma India promised, it taught me to have courage and patience.

If my Central High School experience taught me one lesson, it is that we are not separate. The effort to separate ourselves whether by race, creed, color, religion, or status is as costly to the separator as to those who would be separated. . . .

The task that remains is to cope with our interdependence—to see ourselves reflected in every other human being and to respect and honor our differences.

*Warriors Don't Cry* describes how she learned those lessons. It also raises important questions about what each of us can do to confront and ultimately overcome racism today.

## Resource Overview

This teacher resource explores the central theme by focusing on several connected ideas, including justice, identity, loyalty, and choice. In a pre-reading activity, students are asked to define the words *race* and *racism*. In doing so, they discover that race is a social invention rather than a meaningful scientific term. The activities in this resource and the book itself deepen students' understanding of racism by exploring its impact on Melba and her family. Students also consider how Melba's decision to confront racism changed her life, altered the lives of others in her community, and ultimately impacted an entire nation. At the end of the book, students consider the task that remains.

This resource divides *Warriors Don't Cry* into six readings, each keyed to the abridged and unabridged editions of the book. The first reading introduces the central theme and places the book in an historical context. The next four readings focus on the choices Melba and others made and the consequences of those choices. In the sixth and final section, students consider the legacies of those choices. Students are also encouraged to consider what they can do to confront racism. A number of special activities labeled "Historical Sidelights" accompany each reading. They explore

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events described in the book from other perspectives or relate those events to the larger history of the United States.

## Literary Analysis

In *Warriors Don't Cry*, Melba Pattillo Beals uses a variety of literary techniques in telling her story. Many of the discussion questions, activities, and journal suggestions explore those techniques in greater detail.

**Genre:** *Warriors Don't Cry* is a memoir. Unlike an autobiography, which is the complete story of a person's life, a memoir focuses on a particular time in a person's life—in this case, one school year. It contains not only a detailed account of the key events of that year but also the author's thoughts and feelings about those events. To highlight the emotions evoked by that time in her life, Melba Beals has reprinted entries from the diary she kept that year. To underscore the accuracy of her account, she has punctuated her story with newspaper headlines that appeared during that year.

*Warriors Don't Cry* can also be viewed as an initiation story—a story of discovery, growth, and change. In an initiation story, a youngster goes through difficult trials to discover something new about himself or herself, people in general, or the world. But unlike most initiation stories, there is no closure to the one Melba Beals tells. At the end of the book, racism still exists. In fact, Little Rock is in many ways a more polarized community than it was before she and the other black students enrolled at Central High. Beals presents her story as one battle in a larger struggle against racism.

**Theme:** The theme of the book is highlighted during an exchange between Melba and her grandmother and reiterated in its title. After Melba bursts into tears over the frightening turn her life has taken, her grandmother tells her: "You'll make this your last cry. You're a warrior on the battlefield for your Lord. God's warriors don't cry, 'cause they trust that he's always by their side . . . we act with courage, and with God's help we ship trouble right on out." Other themes include:

- The impact of racism on individual and group identity
- Family
- Friendship
- Loyalty—how it is created and the ways loyalties can conflict
- Obedience and conformity
- Courage and commitment
- Resilience and fortitude

**Point of View:** *Warriors Don't Cry* is written in the first person, and is presented as a flashback—from 1987 to 1957. The story is told in a way that preserves the voice of young Melba Pattillo who struggled to be heard at a time when many people in Little

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Rock tried to silence and disparage her. The author underscores the importance of that young woman's voice by including entries from her diary. She uses newspaper headlines in a similar way to validate the story she tells.

**Style:** The book is written with few literary embellishments to highlight the shock, pain, and uncertainty central to the story.

### **Social Skills and Values**

The social skills and values emphasized in this guide are perspective-taking and cultural sensitivity and social awareness. The book itself promotes empathy and a deeper understanding of courage.

**Perspective taking:** Throughout this guide students are encouraged to develop empathy by viewing events from more than one perspective. Many of the questions and activities invite students to consider the events she describes from other points of view.

**Social and cultural awareness:** The activities in this guide explore not only Melba Pattillo's identity as an African American in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the 1950s but also those of other Americans. Thus they develop insights into the ideas, attitudes, events, and experiences that shaped individuals and groups during that time in history. They also come to appreciate the courage it took to bring about change.

# Defining Segregation

*Chapters 1–3, pages 1–32 (abridged)*

*Chapters 1–4, pages 1–45 (unabridged)*

## Overview

*Warriors Don't Cry* begins with a series of incidents that introduce the reader to Melba Pattillo's family—her grandmother India, her mother and father, who divorced when Melba was very young, and her brother Conrad. Many of those incidents detail the injustices and humiliations that Melba and her family experience in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the 1940s and early 1950s. The author recalls in particular the day the Supreme Court rules that separate public schools for black and white students are illegal. As she walks home from school that day, a white man, angry about the decision, tries to rape her. She is saved by an older girl who helps Melba get home safely. After much debate, the adults in Melba's family—her parents and grandmother—decide to keep the attack secret. They fear that reporting the matter to the police might result in “something worse” happening.

The author also recounts the day in 1955, when a teacher asks if anyone living in the Central High School district would like to attend the school in the fall of 1957. Melba volunteers without consulting her family. At first she worries about how her parents will respond to the news. But after reading about attempts to stop integration, she decides that nothing will come of the plan. To her surprise and her family's amazement, Melba is one of the students chosen to integrate Central High School. Although her parents fear the consequences of her participation, they allow Melba to make her own choice.

In preparation for the opening of school, Melba meets with school officials and community leaders like Daisy Bates, the Arkansas president of the NAACP. She also renews her friendship with the eight other African American students who will also be attending Central High. On Monday, September 2, the day before school is scheduled to begin, Governor Orval E. Faubus suddenly announces that he is sending the Arkansas National Guard to Central High. He claims that the soldiers are needed “to maintain order and protect the lives and property” of the citizens of Little Rock. The Governor's action delays the arrival of the black students by a single day. That day is spent in court securing an order for integration to proceed as planned. Fearful for the safety of Melba and the other black students, Daisy Bates asks a few ministers, both black and white, to accompany the students on their first day of school.



## Teaching Focus

The whole-class activities introduce the Central Question and place the book in an historical context. The other activities focus on concepts important to understanding the Central Question.

## To Connect

*Pre-reading activities that help students to connect their personal experiences to the story*

### Whole Class Discussion: *Defining Racism*

In 1998, the American Anthropological Association issued a statement summarizing the findings and conclusions of anthropologists, biologists, and other experts on the meaning of “race.” Today most define *race* as “a worldview, a body of pre-judgments that distorts our ideas about human differences and group behavior.” The organization notes that race has no scientific meaning and research based on racial categories has resulted in “countless errors. At the end of the 20th century, we now understand that human behavior is learned, conditioned into infants beginning at birth and always subject to modification and change.”

If race is a myth about human differences, what is *racism*? Explain to students that racism is a form of prejudice that often leads to discrimination. Remind students that the word *prejudice* comes from the word *pre-judge*. We pre-judge when we have an opinion about a person because of a group to which that individual belongs. A prejudice has the following characteristics:

1. It is based on real or imagined differences between groups.
2. It attaches value to those differences in ways that benefit one group at the expense of others.
3. It is generalized to include all members of a target group.

Not all prejudices result in discrimination. Discrimination occurs only when prejudices are translated into action.

Ask students to create a working definition of the word *racism*. A working definition is one that grows and changes as students encounter new information and develop new insights. To help students develop a working definition, ask them to list examples of racism and then determine what they have in common. Begin by sharing with students a racist act that you have experienced, witnessed, or read about. Explain not only what happened but also how you or others responded to the incident. Did someone take a stand, speak out, or come to the aid of the victim?

Invite students to recall a racist incident they have witnessed, read

about, or experienced. Ask them to tell a partner about the experience. Have them describe the incident, how they felt about it, and the ways they or others responded to it. (See Writing Activity on page 7.)

Invite students to share their examples of racism with the class as a whole. Discuss what each example adds to students' understanding of the term. What do the incidents have in common? To what extent is each unique? What do they suggest about how racism can be overcome? How important are small acts—supporting a friend who is being harassed or refusing to listen to racist jokes or comments—in ending racism?

## Introduce the Central Question



**Q: What can we do alone and with others to confront racism? How can we as individuals and as citizens make a positive difference in our school, community, and nation?**

Introduce the Central Question by explaining to students that they will be reading about a young African American who braved daily harassment when she took a stand against racism by enrolling at an all-white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September of 1957.

## Whole Class Viewing: *Introduction to Warriors Don't Cry*

To provide students with a context for *Warriors Don't Cry*, you may wish to share the material provided in The Context of the Story. You may also wish to show Episode 1, *Awakenings (1954–56)* of the video *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*. If there is not enough time to show the entire episode, focus on the general introduction which describes segregation (the first seven minutes after the titles). Then ask students what the documentary adds to their understanding of racism and of what can be done to end it. At the end of the discussion, remind students that they will be revisiting these questions as they read the book.

## To Read

Encourage students to preview the book by studying the introduction. Ask volunteers to read aloud pages xi–xii in the abridged edition (pages xvii–xviii in the unabridged edition) and then consider the sources of information that Melba Pattillo Beals used in writing her memoir: the diary she kept as a teenager, newspaper accounts from the period, her own recollections, and those of her mother. Ask students to identify the likely strengths and the possible weaknesses of each source. Which sources are

most likely to provide a general view of the events of that time in history? Which are most likely to contain the feelings and emotions that accompanied those events? Discuss what the author means when she writes that her book “conveys my truth of what it was like to live in the midst of a civil rights firestorm.” How might her truth differ from other truths? After discussing these questions, assign the first three chapters in the abridged version of the book (the first four in the unabridged version).

*Open-ended questions that help students **to discuss** the most important themes and issues*

## To Discuss

After students have completed the reading, ask for their questions or comments about what they have read so far. Help them find answers to their questions and address their concerns before considering the questions that follow. These questions have been grouped to focus the discussion on particular themes or sub-themes. As students respond to the questions, encourage them to refer to passages or examples from the book to support their ideas.

## Historical Sidelights

### Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Boycott

At a time when Melba Pattillo believed that it would take a miracle to end segregation in Little Rock, such a miracle was taking place in Montgomery, Alabama. On Thursday, December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old African American, boarded a city bus at the end of a hard day’s work. As the seats in the white section filled up, the driver ordered blacks near the front of the bus to move further back. Only Parks refused. The driver responded by calling the police who immediately placed her under arrest.

Rosa Parks was not acting on a whim. As a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (the NAACP), she and others were actively seeking opportunities to challenge segregation. When news of Parks’s arrest quickly spread through the black community, a number of individuals and groups quickly took action. The first to do so was the Women’s Political Council, a black professional organization. Members organized a boycott of the city buses to show support for Parks and opposition to segregation. The women worked through the night making 35,000 copies of a leaflet that urged blacks to stay off the buses. That same day, a group of black ministers and other leaders met to consider their response to Parks’s arrest. They decided to support the women’s boycott.

On Monday, December 5, over 90 percent of the African Americans in Montgomery who regularly rode the buses walked, joined car pools, or drove horse-drawn wagons to get to work. That evening a young Baptist minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded

**Examine the ways segregation defines and confines Melba Pattillo and other African Americans in Little Rock in the 1950s.**

- Melba writes, “Black folks aren’t born expecting segregation. . . . Instead the humiliating expectations and traditions of segregation creep over you slowly stealing a teaspoonful of your self-esteem each day.” (page 3, abridged; page 6, unabridged) How does Melba learn those expectations and traditions? What does she know about segregation by the time that she has reached the age of eight? What has she learned by the age of twelve?
- How do the “humiliating expectations and traditions of segregation” shape the attitudes and actions of the adults in Melba’s family? How do those “expectations and traditions” affect the way Melba views their ability to protect her and themselves from mistreatment?
- In 1954, when Melba is just thirteen, a white man tries to rape her. How do the adults in Melba’s family respond to the incident? Why do you think they decide not to call the police? What do they fear?

a crowd of over 5000 blacks that “first and foremost we are American citizens.” He told them, “The only weapon we have . . . is the weapon of protest,” and “the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right.” That right to non-violent protest is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution.

For 383 days, African Americans in Montgomery refused to take the bus. They ignored harassment, threats, and intimidation. They also supported a lawsuit that charged that Rosa Parks should not have been arrested, because segregated public buses are unconstitutional.

The boycott finally ended on December 20, 1956, when city officials officially received a direct order from the United States Supreme Court that called for an end to segregation on public transportation in the city. The next morning, Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks were among the first African Americans to board Montgomery’s newly integrated buses. Against all odds, African Americans in Montgomery had challenged the system and won.

*What does the boycott suggest about the power of ordinary people to make a difference? A boycott is one example of a non-violent protest. Name other examples. How important are these forms of protest in a democracy? Why do you think Melba experienced a “surge of pride when I thought about how my people had banded together to force a change”? What connects African Americans in the two cities?*

How do those fears keep the family from bringing the attacker to justice? How do they affect the way Melba sees herself and others?

- What does Melba's account suggest about the way racism affects everyone in a society—those who are considered privileged as well as those who are victims of racism? What does it suggest about the way racism threatens democracy?

**Examine Melba's decision to attend Central High.**

- What prompts Melba to raise her hand when a teacher asks who would like to attend Central High? Why do you think she does not tell her family that she has volunteered? What does she fear?
- How did Melba's parents and grandmother respond to the news that she had been chosen to attend Central High? What did they fear? Why do you think they allowed her to attend despite those fears?
- Superintendent Virgil Blossom and other school officials chose Melba and the other eight African American students to desegregate Central High from dozens of applicants. What did these students have in common? What qualities may have prompted school officials to decide on these particular students?
- How did school and community leaders prepare for the desegregation of Central High? Whom did they consult? Whom did they leave out of the process? How important do you think these omissions will be?
- On September 3, 1957, Governor Orval Faubus told the people of Arkansas: "I must state here in all sincerity, that it is my opinion, yes, even a conviction, that it will not be possible to restore or to maintain order and protect the lives and property of the citizens if forcible integration is carried out tomorrow in the schools of this community." (abridged, page 28; unabridged, page 38) What effect do you think his words will have on black and white citizens of Little Rock? On people in surrounding communities? What does his statement suggest about the way he defines his role as governor?

**Consider how the author uses stories to introduce readers to members of her family.**

- How does Melba use anecdotes and other stories to introduce her family to readers?
- Which members of the family seem the most real to you? Which would you like to know more about?

- Why do you think that so many of Melba's stories focus on her mother and grandmother?

## To Practice

### Partner Activity: *Metaphors and Merry-Go-Rounds*

Remind students that a *metaphor* is a figure of speech that compares two seemingly unlike things without the use of such comparative words as *like* or *as*. When Melba writes, “For me, Cincinnati was the promised land,” she is using a metaphor. To what is she comparing Cincinnati? How are the two places alike in her view?

Tell students that the poem “Merry-Go-Round” by Langston Hughes (Reproducible 1.1) uses a carousel as metaphor. Ask a volunteer to read the poem aloud. Then have students work with a partner to decide to what the poet is comparing the merry-go-round. Students might also consider how the incident described in the poem is like Melba's encounter with the operator of a carousel (abridged, page 4; unabridged, page 8). What do the two encounters add to our understanding of a segregated society? To our understanding of racism?

*Interactivity activities that help students **to practice** literary skills, social skills, and values*

## To Express

### Writing Activity: *Describing a Racist Act*

Ask students to write a paragraph describing an act of racism they have experienced, witnessed, or read about. Be sure that they include in their paragraph how they personally felt about the incident and how they or others responded to it.

*Writing activities that help students **to express** the personal meaning of what they have read and learned*

### Journal Suggestions

Encourage students to keep a journal as they read *Warriors Don't Cry*. Unlike a finished work, a journal documents the process of thinking. Much like history itself, it always awaits further entries. A journal also allows students to witness their own history and consider the way their ideas grow and change. Suggest the following writing activities to your students.

- Write your responses to the story so far. You might also list questions and comments that come to mind as you read this part of the book.

- Create a timeline to show what has happened so far in the story. Pay particular attention to the events that take place at the beginning of the 1957–1958 school year. Add to the timeline as you continue reading.
- List the ways the author and her family confront racism in Little Rock in this section of the book. Which strategies are most effective? Least effective?
- As Melba prepares for her first day at Central High, what does she seem to be most excited about? What does she fear? What do you think her first day will be like?

### Related Readings and Videos

You may wish to explore the themes and sub-themes in this section with videos and related readings.

- For a discussion of the way ideas about racial differences shaped scientific thinking in the United States in the early 1900s, invite students to consult *Confronting the Forgotten History of Eugenics*, published by Facing History and Ourselves, and share their findings with the class.
- Ask students to read “Legacies” in Chapter 1 of the *Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book*. It contains portions of an interview with writer Maya Angelou, who grew up in Arkansas in the 1940s. In it, she tells of one of the people who shaped her identity and his legacy. Compare Angelou’s uncle to Melba’s grandmother. How are they alike? What differences seem most striking?
- Invite students to read “America’s Best Self” in Chapter 11 of the *Facing History and Ourselves Resource Book*. It contains excerpts from a book by Marian Wright Edelman that describe how segregation shaped her childhood. Ask students to compare and contrast her memories of segregation with those of Melba Pattillo Beals. What do the two accounts suggest about the part families played in lessening the effects of segregation? In instilling a sense of self-worth despite the negative messages of the larger society?
- Encourage students to read and report on an autobiography of an African American who grew up in the 1940s and 1950s. Possibilities include Julius Lester, Marian Wright Edelman, Gloria Wade, Maya Angelou, and Malcolm X. Discuss how the experiences of the individual they researched were similar to those described in *Warriors Don’t Cry*. What differences seem most striking?

# Becoming a “Warrior”

*Chapters 4–8, pages 33–68 (abridged)*

*Chapters 5–9, pages 45–105 (unabridged)*

## Overview

On Wednesday, September 4, Melba and the other eight African American students are to walk to school with several ministers. As Melba and her mother head for the place where the group is to meet, they spot one of Melba’s friends, Elizabeth Eckford, standing alone with a line of soldiers in front of her and an angry mob at her back. Unable to get past the soldiers, Elizabeth retreats to a bus stop even as the crowd continues to heckle and taunt her. When a few men in the crowd threaten Melba and her mother, the two quickly flee the area.

Melba’s shaken mother tells Melba to keep their experience a secret. She also urges her daughter to return to her segregated school, but Melba’s grandmother counsels persistence. As Melba gives way to her own fears and disappointment, her grandmother tells her: “You’re a warrior on the battlefield for your Lord. God’s warriors don’t cry, ’cause they trust that he’s always by their side.” Melba decides to remain at Central High, but it will be 17 days before she is able to do so.

For well over two weeks, city and state leaders argue over whether integration ought to proceed as planned. Although Melba feels lonely and uncertain, she finds comfort in the support of her church and the many volunteers who keep her and the others from falling behind in their studies. Finally, on Friday, September 20, a federal judge orders the governor to stop interfering with integration. Faubus responds by removing the National Guard. The following Monday, Melba and the other eight students are to return to school.

## Teaching Focus

The activities that accompany this reading offer insights into the Central Question by focusing on the immediate effects of a confrontation with racism.

## To Read

You may wish to have individual students read chapters aloud to the class as a whole or have pairs of students read to each other. Alternately, you may wish to invite a volunteer to read the first few pages aloud and then have students continue reading on their own in class or as a homework assignment.



## To Discuss

After students have completed the second section, ask for their questions or comments about what they have read so far. Help them find answers to their questions and address their concerns before considering the questions that follow.

### Discuss how secrets affect Melba's view of herself and her family.

- Why does Melba's mother insist that she and Melba keep their encounter with the mob outside Central High School a secret, even if it means telling a "white lie"? What is a "white lie"? How is it different from other lies?
- How does keeping the secret affect Melba in the weeks that follow?
- What other secrets has Melba kept over the years? How do those secrets shape the way she sees herself and her family?

### Consider what it means to be a "warrior on the battlefield for your Lord."

## Historical Sidelights

### Why Little Rock?

In the summer of 1957, Little Rock, was considered "a moderate city in a moderate Southern state." In the late 1940s, city officials voluntarily ended segregation in local colleges and the local branch of the University of Arkansas. Melba's mother was one of many African Americans who took advantage of the decision by enrolling at the University of Arkansas Graduate Center. By 1957, about half of the students there were black. In the 1950s, the city also integrated parks, libraries, and public buses. Although only a third of its black citizens were allowed to vote, the city had more African American voters than most cities in the South.

Early in the summer of 1957, most people in Little Rock thought that integration would proceed without incident. When Governor Orval Faubus called out the Arkansas National Guard to "maintain or restore order," Woodrow W. Mann, the mayor of Little Rock, told reporters:

The governor has called out the National Guard to put down trouble where none existed. He did so without a request from those of us who are directly responsible for preservation of peace and order. The only effect of his action is to create tension where none existed. I call the Governor's attention to the fact that after almost a week of sensational developments brought about by his own actions, the Little Rock police have not had a single case of interracial violence reported to them.

- Melba's grandmother likens Melba to a "warrior on the battlefield for your Lord." What is a *warrior*? How is a "warrior for one's Lord" different from other warriors?
- In what sense are Melba and the other eight students "warriors"? What qualities do warriors have? Which of those qualities do you think they will need to make it through the school year?
- Do you agree with the advice Melba's grandmother gives her? When is crying a sign of weakness? A sign of strength? Who decides? Is it different for men? For women? For children?

**Describe how the crisis in Central High School affects people in Little Rock and other places.**

- How does Melba characterize the way that individuals and groups in Little Rock, both black and white, respond to the crisis?
- What role does the media seem to play in the crisis? How important is that role?

People who knew Faubus claim that he was not a racist. They point out that he was elected governor with the support of African American voters and during his time in office he appointed more African Americans to state offices than any governor before him. Historians also note that his father, sister, and wife opposed the stand he took in Little Rock. Why then did he call out the Arkansas National Guard? According to Harry Ashmore, the editor of the Arkansas *Gazette*, and others in Little Rock, the governor believed it was the only way to win re-election and he wanted to be re-elected. So, in Ashmore's words, Faubus decided to become "the hero to the mob," while "the nine courageous black children he failed to keep out of Central High were heroes to the world."

*Why do you think Governor Faubus tried to stop integration in Little Rock rather than in one of the other communities in the state that had already desegregated or was planning to do so?*

*Ashmore implies that Faubus was a hero only to the mob, but polls taken in 1957 indicate that he was one of the 10 most admired men in the United States. In 1958, he was elected to a third term as governor. He would go on to serve an unprecedented three more terms. What does his popularity suggest about the "silent majority"—the people who did not harass or threaten Melba and the other African American students?*

- On page 52 of the abridged edition and page 83 of the unabridged, Melba describes an ad created by a white man from a small town in Arkansas. What is the message of his ad? At whom is it directed? How do you explain Melba's response to it? How do you think others in the community may have responded?

**Explore the way Melba uses comparison and contrast to show the effects of segregation.**

- What qualities does Melba attribute to Thurgood Marshall? Which of these qualities does she most admire?
- To what adults does she compare Marshall? What does that comparison suggest about the way she views those adults?
- What does her comparison suggest about the effects of segregation?

## To Practice

### Whole Class Viewing:

#### ***Examining a Confrontation with Racism***

Ask a volunteer to read aloud Melba's account of Elizabeth Eckford's ordeal on September 4, 1957 (abridged, pages 36–7; unabridged, pages 49–50; ). Then show the first 30 minutes of *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years*, Episode 2: Fighting Back (1957–62). It uses interviews and TV film footage to tell Elizabeth's story. After watching the video, discuss the similarities and difference between this account and the one in *Warriors Don't Cry*. How do students account for differences? What questions would they have asked had they been reporters at the school that day? (For a related activity, see the Writing Activity on page 13.)

#### **Whole Class Activity: *Interviewing Witnesses to Racism***

Millions of Americans watched Elizabeth Eckford's confrontation with the mob on television. Many never forgot what they saw that day. Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin was a high school student in Rockville Centre, New York, in 1957. In her autobiography, *Wait Until Next Year*, she devotes a chapter to the crisis in Little Rock. She was moved by a young woman she had never heard of from a place she had never been. The crisis in Little Rock was a turning point in Goodwin's life and in the lives of her classmates. She writes:

My classmates and I, children of the fifties, were entering upon a change in attitude. . . . Not satisfied to be observers of injustice, we

undertook to right it. In a few years another decade would begin, one very different from the relatively calm span of my childhood. And we would all be part of it. The school children of the fifties would become the young men and women of the sixties.

Encourage students to interview adults in their community who watched Elizabeth Eckford on TV in the 1950s. What do they recall about the crisis in Little Rock? How did it affect them? Have students share their findings with the class. What do those findings suggest about the legacies of the crisis in Little Rock?

## To Express

### Writing Activity: *What If?*

In 1987, Elizabeth Eckford said of her ordeal: “I remember this tremendous feeling of being alone and I didn’t know how I was going to get out of there. I didn’t know whether I would be injured. There was this deafening roar. I could hear individual voices, but I was not conscious of numbers, I was conscious of being alone.”

Ask students to take a second look at the TV footage of Elizabeth Eckford in *Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years*, Episode 2: Fighting Back (1957–62). How did the crowd physically and emotionally isolate Eckford? What part did the soldiers play in her isolation? Then have students write a paragraph describing what might have happened if various individuals or groups had come to Elizabeth’s aid. For example, what if the principal or a group of teachers had opened the doors of the school and escorted Elizabeth into the building? Elizabeth lived in an integrated neighborhood near Central High School. She knew a number of white students. What if a few of those students had joined her as she sat on the park bench? What if the mayor of Little Rock or the superintendent of schools had accompanied her to school that day? Would it have altered the outcome that day? Would Elizabeth have felt as alone?

### Journal Suggestions

Suggest the following writing activities to your students:

- Write your responses to this section of the book. You might also record any questions or comments you have about the reading.
- Continue adding information to the timeline you started in the first reading.

- Continue your list of the ways the author and her family confront racism in Little Rock in this section of the book.
- List the ways the author and her family confront racism in Little Rock in this section of the book. Which strategies are most effective? Least effective?
- In this section of the book, Melba reflects on the meaning of the word *freedom*. How are her experiences at Central High altering or deepening her understanding of the term? What does the word *freedom* mean to you? What experiences have shaped your understanding of the term?
- What changes do you detect in Melba in this part of the story? To what extent is she finding her voice?
- Write an account of the events that take place at Central High on the morning of September 4, 1957, from the viewpoint of someone who follows those events on TV.
- What do you think Melba's first day of classes at Central High will be like? Record your predictions and then check them as you read the next section of the book.

### Related Readings and Videos

You may wish to explore the themes and sub-themes in this section with videos and related readings.

- *Choosing to Participate* is a study guide to an exhibition of the same name sponsored by Facing History and Ourselves. Several of the readings in the guide explore the crisis in Little Rock from a variety of perspectives. Discuss with students the similarities and differences between these accounts and the one Melba Pattillo Beals provides. Ask why Elizabeth Eckford's ordeal made such a deep impression on both black and white Americans. Students might also be interested in touring the Little Rock portion of the exhibition on Facing History's Web site ([www.facing.org](http://www.facing.org)). It tells the story from Elizabeth Eckford's perspective.
- Encourage interested students to follow the events in Little Rock through the eyes of an adult who was there at the time. Daisy Bates, the president of the Arkansas NAACP; Elizabeth Huckaby, a vice-principal at Central High; Harry Ashmore, the editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*; and Virgil Blossom, the Superintendent of the Little Rock Public Schools, have all written books about that year. Hold a panel discussion to compare and contrast their perspectives with Melba Beals's.

# Inside Central High

*Chapters 7–8, pages 69–106 (abridged)*

*Chapters 10–13, pages 106–145 (unabridged)*

## Overview

On Monday morning, September 23, Melba and the other eight African American students enter Central High School for the first time. They are hurried in through a side entrance to avoid the mob that has gathered in the front of the school. Once inside the building, the nine are sent their separate ways. Melba is harassed in some of her classes and supported in others. Her school day ends abruptly when the police can no longer control the mob outside the school. To protect the nine, Assistant Police Chief Gene Smith leads them through the basement of the school to two waiting cars. Only after she arrives safely home does Melba learn from news broadcasts that the mob went on rampage just after she and the others left the building, attacking reporters, and breaking windows.

Outraged by the violence, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sends federal troops to Arkansas to protect the nine students. On Wednesday, September 25, soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division escort Melba and the others to school. A soldier is assigned to guard each student during the school day. Danny, Melba's bodyguard, is a reassuring presence as she makes her way to and from classes. But he cannot prevent the harassment she experiences during classes, in study hall, or inside the girls' washroom.

## Teaching Focus

The activities that accompany this reading offer insights into the Central Question by focusing on the role of bystanders.

## To Connect

### Whole Class Discussion: *Bystanders*

Only a handful of students harassed the African American students. A famous photograph of Elizabeth Eckford shows one of those students. (Refer students to the pictures in the insert after page 108 in the abridged edition and the opening pages of the unabridged edition.) Photographer Will Counts captured fifteen-year-old Hazel Bryan with her mouth open and her face distorted with hate. Elizabeth Huckaby, the vice-principal at Central High, was haunted by the photo. She later wrote:

No one seemed to be able to identify the girl—and small wonder.

We were not used to seeing our students look like that. But by noon on Friday, I discovered she was someone I knew, and I sent for her in the afternoon. When she readily admitted she was the screaming girl I told her how distressed I was to hear it since hatred destroys the people who hate. She shrugged. Well, that was the way she felt, she said. Undeterred by her shrug, I said that I hoped I'd never see her pretty face so distorted again, that I never would have recognized that ugly face in the picture as hers. Wasted breath.

Five years later, in 1962, Bryan apologized to Eckford. Bryan later told an interviewer:

I don't know what triggered it, but one day I just started squalling about how she must have felt. I felt so bad that I had done this that I called her . . . and apologized to her. I told her I was sorry that I had done that, that I was not thinking for myself. . . . I think both of us were crying.

The vast majority of students did not harass Eckford or the other African American students. They were bystanders. Ask students to read Reproducible 3.1 and answer the questions that follow the short reading. Many sociologists believe that bystanders can influence an event through the attention they pay to that event. What messages were students like Marcia Webb sending through their silence? To what extent were they cooperating in the violence? Have students compare Webb's response with that of Robin Woods. What similarities do they notice? What differences seem most striking? What if other students had followed Woods's lead, could they influenced events? Broken the silence?

## To Read

You may wish to have individual students read chapters aloud to the class as a whole or have pairs of students read to one another. Alternately, you may wish to read aloud to the class the first few pages of this reading and then have students read the rest as a homework assignment.

## To Discuss

After students have completed the third section, ask for their questions or comments about what they have read so far. Help them find answers to their questions and address their concerns before considering the questions that follow.

### Explore the role of leaders in a crisis.

- What are the qualities of a good leader? Which of those qualities are particularly valuable during times of crisis and change? Who do you think displays those qualities during the crisis at Central High?
- How do the adults at Central High—the principal, vice principal, teachers—respond to the arrival of the African American students? What effect do their responses have on Melba and the other African American students? What effect do you think they have on white students at Central High?
- At the end of her first day at Central High, Melba decides to include two white men in her prayers. Who are the two men? What distinguishes them from the other white men and women Melba encounters that day?

### The President vs. the Governor

Dwight Eisenhower was born in 1890. He grew up in a segregated society and served for over 30 years in a segregated army. Not long after the *Brown* decision, he told reporters, “You can’t change people’s hearts merely by laws.” He also informed them that he could not imagine a situation in which he would use federal troops to enforce integration. His words delighted segregationists.

Yet after watching the rioting in Little Rock on TV on September 23, Eisenhower ordered federal troops to the city to enforce the law. He told the American people: “Our personal opinions about the [*Brown*] decision have no bearing on the matter of enforcement. . . . Mob rule cannot be allowed to override the decisions of our courts.”

On October 5, 1957, the editors of the *Amsterdam News*, an African American newspaper in New York, said of Eisenhower’s decision:

It is not too difficult for a man to stand up and fight for a cause with which he himself believes to be right. But it is quite another thing for a man to stand up and fight for a cause with which he himself does not agree but which he feels it is his duty to uphold.

President Eisenhower is a battle-scarred veteran of many a campaign who has been hailed from one end of the world to the other. But we submit that his victory over himself at Little Rock was indeed his finest hour.

*How did the President define his responsibilities? What prompted his decision to send in the troops? Why did the editors of the Amsterdam News regard Eisenhower’s decision as “his finest hour”? What are they suggesting about the role of a leader in a democracy? What do you think is the role of a leader in a democracy? The role of a citizen?*



- It has been said that some leaders make history; others are made by history; and still others are run over by history. Into which category would you place President Eisenhower? Governor Faubus? What qualities does each show in the crisis?

**Explore the various ways individuals respond to change.**

- Describe the range of responses to integration among the white students at Central High.
- What part do you think peer pressure plays in determining how the white students respond to the African American students?
- Describe the range of responses among the adults at Central High. What factors may be prompting their responses? For example, what part may prejudice play? Fears of the mob outside the school? Peer pressure?

**Consider how Melba was beginning to change.**

- What do Melba's remarks about feeling both proud and sad while being escorted into the school by federal troops (abridged page 95; unabridged page 132) indicate about her sense of herself as an individual and as a citizen?
- How do Melba's dealings with the press help her find her voice? What other experiences contribute to a feeling that she can make a difference? That her opinions matters? What experiences undermine that feeling?

## To Express

**Writing Activity: *Revising an Essay***

Ask students to review their working definition of the word *racism*. (See Reading 1, pages 2–3.) How has their reading of *Warriors Don't Cry* deepened their understanding of the term? Encourage students to add to their definition. Then have them use what they have learned about racism to revise the paragraph they wrote describing the racist act they experienced, witnessed, or read about. What additional details would they like readers to know? What might they or others have done to alter the outcome of the situation they described? To make the victim or victims feel less alone?

## Journal Suggestions

Suggest one or more of the following writing activities to your students:

- Write your responses to this section. Record questions or comments about the reading.
- Add to the timeline you started in the first reading.
- Write a summary of Melba's first days at Central High. What has she gained? What has she lost?
- Suppose someone like Robin Woods had been in one of Melba's classes. What difference might it have made to Melba? To the white students?
- List the ways the author and her family confront racism in Little Rock in this section of the book. Which strategies seem most effective? Least effective?
- How do you think you would feel if soldiers or police officers had to guard you on your way to school? Protect you while you were in school?

## Related Readings and Videos

You may wish to explore the themes and sub-themes in this section with videos and related readings.

- *The Civil Rights Movement: An Eyewitness History* by Sanford Wexler (Facts on File, 1993) contains a chapter on the integration of Central High School. Ask interested students to use the book to find out what the newspapers around the country were saying about the events Melba describes in this section of the book and then report their findings to the class.
- Invite students to research and report on the way other students at Central High, both black and white, viewed the events Melba describes. Students will find helpful interviews in *The Civil Rights Movement* and Chapter 3 of *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*.

# Responses to Desegregation

*Chapters 9–12, pages 107–150 (abridged)*

*Chapters 14–20, pages 146–220 (unabridged)*

## Overview

During Melba's first few weeks at Central High, she is spat on, kicked, threatened, and choked. Danny, the soldier who serves as her bodyguard, urges her to learn how to defend herself. He reminds her that he will not always be at her side.

Just before the Thanksgiving break, Danny and the 101st depart, leaving the Arkansas National Guard in charge. By December, the harassment is becoming more organized. Melba is also finding herself more and more isolated not only at school but also at home. Because she now rarely sees even longtime friends, Melba looks forward to her birthday party. She is disappointed when only her boyfriend, Vince, attends. Her other friends are afraid to come to her house.

As Melba reflects on the ways she and the other eight African American students respond to the isolation as well as the daily heckling and harassment, she expresses particular concern for her friend, Minnijean. Just before Christmas vacation, two boys constantly taunt Minnijean and hassle her in the cafeteria. She manages to ignore them for a time. Then one day she is unable to continue to disregard the harassment. She retaliates by dumping a bowl of chili over the boys. She is promptly suspended from school.

## Teaching Focus

The activities that accompany this reading offer insights into the Central Question by exploring how we as individuals and as members of groups grow and change.

## To Read

You may wish to have individual students read chapters aloud to the class as a whole or have pairs of students read to one another. Alternately, you may wish to read aloud to the class the first few pages of this reading and then have students read the rest as a homework assignment. For further suggestions, see Whole Class Activity: Reader's Theater on page 24.

## To Discuss

After students have completed the fourth section, ask for their questions or comments about what they have read so far. Address their concerns before considering the questions that follow.

### **Consider why change at Central High was a slow, often painful, process.**

- Study the entries from Melba's diary. What does it suggest about the way attitudes begin to change? How important are small gestures—a smile, a friendly gesture—in that process?
- Two confrontations are described in this section of the book. The first is a meeting with the superintendent of schools. The second is the roundtable discussion for black and white students. Compare and contrast the two encounters. In what respects are they similar? What differences seem most striking? Which is the more likely to widen perspectives? Shatter stereotypes?

### **Trace the effects of Melba's experiences at Central High.**

- Ask a volunteer to read aloud the entry from Melba's diary on page 109 of the abridged version and page 150 of the unabridged. What does it suggest about Melba's feelings about school? About the choices she has made?
- Find at least two examples of the way those feelings are beginning to change.

### **Consider the effects of integration on Melba and the other African American students.**

- How does Melba's enrollment at Central High School affect her relationship with her old friends? Why do you think they are no longer willing to socialize with her?
- How do Melba and the other eight African American students respond to the stresses at Central High?
- How do NAACP officials want Melba and other students to respond to harassment? Why do you think they advise the students to avoid retaliating? How successful are Melba and the other students in following those instructions?
- How do you explain Minnijean's response to the boys who taunt her? Is it an act of defiance or desperation? A victory or a defeat? What is the short-term effect of her action? What do you think the

long-term effect will be? Why do you think the school authorities respond as they do?

**Explore the meaning of the word *integration*.**

- What does Melba mean when she writes that “integration is a much bigger word than I thought (page 113 in the abridged and page 154 of the unabridged)?
- Identify the various ways the word *integration* is used in this reading. What does the word *integration* mean to Melba? To the other African American students at Central High? To white students there? How do you define the word?

**Consider how the author uses newspaper headlines and diary entries to underscore the importance of various events and experiences.**

- How do the quotations from the author’s diary relate to the story the author tells?
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud an incident or experience that includes a diary entry. Have a second volunteer read aloud the same passage without the diary entry. What does the entry add to our understanding?

## Historical Sidelights

### The Teachers at Central High

Melba describes her teachers, with a few exceptions, as uninterested and unsympathetic. Daisy Bates, president of the Arkansas NAACP, viewed them from a different perspective. In her autobiography, she says of them:

Many of the teachers—particularly the younger ones—did everything within their power to protect the nine students. Some went out of their way to help the students catch up with work they had missed when they were barred from entering the school in the first weeks of the term. Concerned over the lack of protection given the Negro students within the school, the teachers took it upon themselves to oversee the hallways in between the class breaks.

At the end of the school year, when segregationists took over the school board, 44 teachers—many of whom taught at Central High—were fired for perceived support of integration.

*How do Daisy Bates’s observations and the firings complicate your view of the teachers at Central High?*

- How does the author use newspaper headlines? What do they add to our understanding of the events she describes?
- How is the author's use of newspaper headlines similar to her use of diary entries? What differences are most striking?

## To Practice

### Whole Class Activity: *Reader's Theater*

In October, just a month after school opened, NBC asked a number of Central High students to participate in a roundtable discussion moderated by Jorunn Ricketts. It was to be aired nationally. Melba Patillo Beals describes it on pages 125–127 of the abridged edition and pages 179–181 of the unabridged edition. Invite seven students to read aloud from the transcript of the discussion (Reproducible 4.1). Encourage the rest of the class to participate in the discussion by asking the volunteers questions based on their reading of *Warriors Don't Cry*.

Tell the class that this conversation was one of the few opportunities Central High students had to discuss their concerns about integration.

- To what extent does the discussion help students understand each other? What reservations does Melba have about the event?
- What does the discussion suggest about the role adults played in events at Central High? How do you think the white students might have acted had the adults been less involved?
- What fears do the white students articulate? What concerns do the African Americans voice?
- Suppose the school had organized a series of informal discussions between black and white students. Who might have benefited? What might students have learned from one another?

## To Express

### Journal Suggestions

Suggest the following writing activities to your students:

- Write your responses to this section of the book, noting any questions or comments you may have.

- Continue to add information to your timeline. Include the major developments as the school year proceeds.
- Imagine that you had been asked to participate in the roundtable discussion. What questions would you have liked to ask? What would you have liked the other participants to know?
- Think of a time when you were insulted. Write about the experience, explaining what you decided to do and why you made that choice. Do you think you made the right choice?
- List the ways the author and her family confront racism in Little Rock in this section of the book. Which strategies seem most effective? Least effective?

### Related Readings and Videos

You may wish to explore the themes and sub-themes in this section with videos and related readings.

- *The Civil Rights Movement: An Eyewitness History* by Sanford Wexler (Facts on File, 1993) contains a chapter on the integration of Central High School. Ask interested students to use the book to find out how newspapers reported the incidents described in this section of the book.
- Suggest volunteers research and report on the way other students at Central High, both black and white, viewed the events Melba describes. Students will find helpful interviews in *The Civil Rights Movement* and Chapter 3 of *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*.
- Invite interested students to watch *Crisis at Central High*, a film based on the experiences of Elizabeth Huckaby, the school's vice-principal. (The video is available at many libraries and video stores. It may also be obtained from Facing History and Ourselves.) Discuss what her perspective adds to our understanding of what happened and why it happened. Ask students to consider what their knowledge of Melba's story adds to their understanding of the film.
- *The Klan Youth Corps*, a CBS News Special Report produced in 1982, documents the efforts of the Ku Klux Klan to recruit young people. It is available from the Facing History Resource Center. It offers insights into the ways the Klan has used propaganda to indoctrinate young people.

# Responding to Harassment

*Chapters 13–16, pages 151–182 (abridged)*

*Chapters 21–25, pages 221–261 (unabridged)*

## Overview

During Christmas vacation, Melba worries that Minnijean's suspension will give segregationists the issue they need to drive all nine African American students from Central High. Still she enjoys the break from school and the family get-togethers, including a visit from her father. However, she remains isolated from old friends. She also feels increasingly distant from Vince, her boyfriend.

When school reopens, the harassment begins again. As Melba becomes more and more depressed, her grandmother advises her to respond to her tormentors with a smile or even a thank you. Melba also studies Mahatma Gandhi's teachings on non-violence. Minnijean, who is readmitted with the understanding that she will not respond to harassment in any way, remains stoic even when soup is dumped on her. But when the attacks continue, she retaliates verbally and is expelled. The NAACP arranges for Minnijean to attend a private school in New York.

Melba continues to discipline herself to face each new school day. The one day she lets down her guard, she becomes the target of an attack. A white student named Link unexpectedly comes to her rescue, secretly warning her of an impending attack and lending her his car to make her escape. In the days that follow, Link joins those who heckle and threaten her at school. Yet at the same time, he warns her of future attacks. Although Melba's mother and grandmother doubt Link's motives, Melba comes to trust him.

## Teaching Focus

The activities that accompany this reading offer insights into the Central Question by considering the various ways the "Little Rock nine" respond to the harassment they face at school day in and day out. A number of questions and activities also focus on the role of bystanders, an exploration begun in Reading 3.

## To Read

You may wish to have individual students read chapters aloud to the class as a whole or have pairs of students read to one another. Alternately, you may wish to read aloud to the class the first few pages of this reading and then have students read the rest as a homework assignment.



## To Discuss

After students have completed the reading, address their questions and comments. Then direct the discussion to the questions that follow:

### Compare and contrast the strategies Melba develops in response to the growing harassment at school.

- Identify the strategies Melba and the other students develop in response to harassment at school. What are the advantages of each? The drawbacks?
- How does Melba's grandmother suggest that Melba disarm her attackers? How effective is that strategy?
- In 1997, Elizabeth Eckford was asked why she returned to Central High after her experience with the mob. She replied, "Somewhere along the line, very soon [staying at Central] became an obligation. I realized that what we were doing was not for ourselves." What is that obligation? How do you think it shapes Melba's determination to remain at Central High despite the hostility and injustice she experiences?

## Historical Sidelights

### Minnijean Brown in New York

After Minnijean Brown was expelled from Central High, the NAACP arranged for her to go to school in New York. The editors of the *New York Post* welcomed Minnijean to New York with these words:

When a Negro girl is so drastically penalized for reacting as a human being under fire, it is no wonder that white youngsters in the school feel safe to resume the business of bullying. . . .

Minnijean will find the [racial] demarcation line here less obvious. But part of the education she gets in Our Town will be the knowledge that we too practice racial discrimination, though more subtly than the folks back home. We hope it doesn't come as too much of a shock to her to discover the difference between New York and Little Rock is not as great as it should be. Possibly her arrival will inspire us to be worthy of her and the cause for which and other Southern Negro children have stood so stoically and so valiantly. Little Rock's loss is our proud acquisition.

*What are the editors suggesting about the similarities between New York and Little Rock? About the differences between the two cities?*

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**Discuss the importance of community support to Melba and the other African American students at Central High.**

- How do some individuals and groups in the African American community show their support for Melba and the other eight students? What does that support mean to Melba?
- Why are other individuals and groups in the African American community critical of the efforts of the nine students to integrate Central High? What does their lack of support mean to Melba?

**Consider what it means to take a stand against injustice at Central High School.**

- Why do you think Link secretly helps Melba elude her attackers?
- What risks is Link taking in offering Melba his friendship? What risks is Melba taking in becoming friends with Link?
- Why are Melba's mother and grandmother suspicious of Link's motives in befriending Melba?
- Consider earlier incidents in the book when Melba has to keep a secret because of prejudice and discrimination. What does Melba's secret friendship with Link have in common with those incidents? What differences seem most striking?
- Why does Link want Melba to tell the press that the situation at Central High School is improving. What does he hope the results of such a statement will be? How does she respond?

## To Express

### Writing Activity: *Responding to a Poem*

Ask students to read the poem on Reproducible 5.1 and answer the questions. Then have students use those answers to write a paragraph comparing Melba with the narrator in the poem. Have students share their answers with the class. Encourage students to think of a time when they too felt that they were walking the tightrope. How did they keep their balance? Where did they find support?

## Journal Suggestions

Suggest the following writing activities to your students:

- Write your ideas about this section of the book. Record any questions or comments you may have.
- Continue to add to your timeline, noting the important events that take place as the school year continues.
- List the ways the author and her family confront racism in Little Rock in this section of the book. Which strategies are most effective? Least effective?
- What does it mean to have a friend? To be a friend? How do secrets affect friendships?

## Related Readings and Recordings

You may wish to explore the themes and sub-themes in this section with videos and related readings.

- *The Civil Rights Movement: An Eyewitness History* by Sanford Wexler (Facts on File, 1993) and *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (Penguin, 1991) describe the civil rights movement in other cities. Have students focus in particular on the young college students who organized sit-ins and freedom rides. Like Melba Pattillo, they too were deeply influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. Compare and contrast their experiences with those of Melba and her friends.
- Invite interested students to gather information about the music associated with the Civil Rights Movement and then share it with the class. What role did the music play in inspiring people? In uniting them?

# Legacies

*Pages 183–226 (abridged)*

*Pages 262–312 (unabridged)*

## Overview

Melba continues her friendship with Link despite her family's concerns about his motives. At his urgent request, she goes with him to see his former nanny, an elderly African American woman. Melba not only helps Link find a doctor for the ailing woman but also persuades her grandmother to help care for her.

As the school year draws to a close, segregationists step up their efforts to force the remaining African Americans from the school. This time they focus on the students' families. Melba's mother is told that her teaching contract will not be renewed unless Melba withdraws from Central High. She keeps her job only after an African American bishop in her church intervenes on her behalf.

Throughout that spring, Ernest Green, the only senior among the African American students, is the focus of much of the harassment. The segregationists want to keep him from graduating. Although they fail, the only African Americans allowed to attend the ceremony are members of Ernest's family. Melba listens to the graduation on the radio.

Link, distraught over the death of Mrs. Healy, asks Melba to accompany him to school in the North. Melba refuses, telling him she is going to remain at Central High. But she never gets the opportunity. Despite a Supreme Court ruling that integration must continue, Governor Faubus closes all of the high schools in Little Rock in the fall of 1958. To continue her education, Melba goes to live with a white family in California. With the support of her adopted family, she finishes high school there and goes on to college.

## Teaching Focus

The activities that accompany this reading return to the Central Question by considering the consequences of a confrontation with racism. A number of questions and activities also consider the legacies of efforts to overcome racism.

## To Read

You may wish to have individual students read chapters aloud to the class as a whole or have pairs of students read to one another. Alternately, you may wish to read aloud to the class the first few pages of this reading and then have students read the rest as a homework assignment.

## To Discuss

After completing the final reading, encourage students to share their questions and comments before directing the discussion to the questions that follow.

### Consider the effects of racism on the choices Link makes.

- Why does Link feel responsible for Mrs. Healy? Why do you think his parents do not feel as responsible for her welfare?
- How does Link's relationship with Mrs. Healy affect his attitude toward African Americans?
- How does racism shape Link's friendship with Melba?
- To what extent does Link take a stand against racism?

### Discuss the importance of Ernest Green's graduation.

- The people who attend the graduation applaud other graduates but are silent when Ernest receives his diploma. How do you explain their silence?

## Historical Sidelights

### The Continuing Crisis in Little Rock

The Rev. Colbert Cartwright was one of the few white ministers in Little Rock to speak out against the mob. He and other religious leaders organized a day of prayer for peace in the city on October 12, 1957. Although over 6000 people participated, the next day the crowds gathered once again outside Central High. And once again, white citizens closed their doors to the violence or chose to look the other way. In reflecting on what he learned from the crisis in Little Rock, Cartwright observed:

In the end, the law could not do it [integrate the schools]. A group of very dedicated people, women . . . marshaled . . . grassroots support to take back the schools and work on the desegregation problem. The lesson is that people themselves had to take responsibility for what they wanted their community to be. . . . They had to rally the good forces in the community to take back the schools, do more than a lackluster desegregation effort by some edict. This was work that should have been done prior to desegregation.

Sara Alderman Murphy was one of the women who worked to reopen the city's schools. Her experience convinced her that "Little Rock was split into two communities that did not communicate or know enough about each other to solve problems together." She decided that "work needed to be done in changing attitudes—my own as well as oth-

- What does Ernest Green's graduation from Central High School mean to African Americans in Little Rock? Why is it a matter of such concern to segregationists?
- School officials tell the Greens that only members of their family can attend the graduation, but the family secretly arranges for two outsiders to attend: one is a reporter for a black newspaper and the other is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Why do you think the family invites these two strangers to the graduation? Why do you think both choose to attend? What does their presence suggest about the effect the nine students have had on African Americans throughout the nation?

**Consider the consequence of the choices Melba and the other eight African American students make.**

- What have Melba and the other African American students accomplished? To what extent have they made a difference in Little Rock? In cities across the nation? To people around the world?

ers." In 1963, she organized the Panel of American Women. It was an interfaith, interracial group that provided speakers for civic clubs, religious groups, and women's organizations in Little Rock and beyond.

One evening Mildred Terry, a member of the panel, spoke to a group about her son Alvin. He was one of the first black students at a local junior high school. She described how he was punched in the back, knocked down stairs, and repeatedly called names by white students at the school. After the program, a white boy about the same age as her son asked to speak privately with her. She later shared that conversation with Murphy. Murphy recalled:

When he and Terry were alone, he said: "You don't know me but you would if I told you my name. I was one of those boys who harassed Alvin. I hadn't thought about how it made him feel until I heard you talking today. Please tell him I'm sorry I did it." "I certainly did remember his name when he gave it," Terry said later, laughing. "He made Alvin's life miserable but I can't get over what he said today. I was really moved to know he finally understood what he had done."

*What does the story suggest about the way communities can crack the walls that divide people? About the way we as individuals can make a positive difference?*

- What groups honor Melba and the other African American students? Besides giving recognition to the students, what message are the groups conveying to other Americans?
- Why is Melba so committed to returning to the school in September?

**Consider why Melba regards her experiences at Central High as a positive force in her life.**

- Melba writes that “the newspapers said Ernie’s diploma cost the taxpayers half a million dollars. Of course, we knew it cost all of us much more.” What does she mean by that statement?
- Why do you think Melba comes to see her Central High experience as “a positive force that has shaped the course of my life”? How has it shaped her identity?
- What experiences have been a positive force in your life? How have they shaped your identity?

**Independent Writing Activity: *Reader Response***

Reproducible 6.1 provides students with a way of expressing their understanding of the book. The questions encourage critical thinking about the story and personal responses to its themes. The questions may also be used to assess how students compare and contrast this book with other books or experiences. After students have completed their answers to the questions, you may want to focus a class discussion on their responses.

1. *Warriors Don’t Cry* focuses on a single year in Melba Pattillo’s life. Identify some of the internal and external conflicts she faced that year.
2. Describe how Melba’s year at Central High affected the way she sees herself and others.
3. How does Melba change in the course of the book? To what experiences does she attribute those changes? To what experiences do you attribute those changes?
4. What does Melba’s story mean to you?
5. Why do you think she wrote this book?
6. What is the meaning of the title, *Warriors Don’t Cry*?

## To Practice

### Whole Class Discussion: *The Lesson to Be Learned*

In 1996, seven of the African American students who attended Central High during the 1957–1958 school year appeared on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. They came face to face with a few of the white students who tormented them as well as one student who befriended them. In reflecting on the year, a white student said, “I didn’t understand why you all wanted to come to Central High School, why you would want to leave your friends, things that you knew and were comfortable with, and why you would even want to be with me.”

Ask students how they would respond to the man’s comments. Did the African American students put up with harassment just to be with white students? Why did they risk their lives? How important was the stand they took? Ernest Green told the audience that “if there’s any lesson to be learned” it is to “stand up for what’s right.”

Have students review the writing they have done in response to *Warriors Don’t Cry*. What injustices upset them most? How might they and their friends confront these injustices? This discussion may be used to introduce the Final Writing Activity.

## To Express

### Final Writing Activity

**Writing Assignment:** Write an essay urging others to join you in taking a stand against racism or other forms of injustice in your school or community.

**Genre:** Persuasive Essay

#### Plan the Story

Remind students that persuasive writing tries to influence a reader to accept an idea, adopt a point of view, or take an action. Distribute Reproducible 6.2 and ask students to use the questions it raises to plan their essay.

#### First Draft

In the drafting stage, students translate the ideas and information they gathered during Prewriting into a rough draft. The goal at this stage is to let ideas flow without worrying about grammar and mechanics. The focus should be on developing a logical argument. Remind students that an



outline is a general guideline. If part of that outline doesn't work, they should omit it. If they come up with a better idea, they should feel free to change direction.

#### Writer's Conference

After students have completed their first drafts, ask them to look for ways to improve and refine them. Remind students that at this stage, writers often rework ideas, rearrange the order of sentences and even paragraphs, and add new information to make their writing clearer and more interesting.

#### Peer Response

At this stage, many students find it helpful to have someone else read their work. You may wish to arrange conferences with students to review their first drafts. Or you may want to invite students to ask questions and make comments about one another's work. Explain that the purpose of this review is to help writers see their work from a reader's perspective. This is not the time to point out errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling. These are better addressed later. (If you choose to meet individually with students to review first drafts, make note of skills that students have not yet mastered. Before they begin to revise their work, you may want to convene some or all of them for focused mini-lessons on particular skills.)

## Afterword

### Central High Since the Crisis in Little Rock

As a result of the efforts of a group of determined parents, the high schools in Little Rock re-opened in the fall of 1959. In 1998, the president of the Little Rock Chamber of Commerce, told a reporter, "Historians say that was the end of it, but you and I know we've been dealing with it ever since." In an article commemorating the 40th anniversary of the crisis in Little Rock, *U.S. News & World Report* revealed some of what Central High has been "dealing with" ever since.

In some ways, Central High stands as a model of desegregation's success. The once all-white student body is now 58 percent black and 39 percent white. The school produces many of the state's brightest students, black and white, and sends them on to the nation's best universities. Over the past decade, of Arkansas's 32 black National Merit semifinalists, 15 have come from Central High. . . .

At Central High School, the honors classes are mainly white. The regular classes are primarily African American. No one seems sure why this is so. Some think it is due to

Model the reviewing process by reading aloud something you or a volunteer has written. Ask students what they liked best about the writing. Encourage questions about parts that seem confusing or things they would like to know more about. Reproducible 6.2 may be useful to you in modeling such questions.

**Revise**

Ask students to incorporate both their own evaluations of their work and readers' suggestions in a revision of their story.

**Proofread**

After students have revised their work, help them proofread the new draft by looking closely at grammar, mechanics, and spelling. This is also the time to check for style. For example, are there clear connections between ideas? Do sentences and paragraphs flow smoothly?

**Present**

After students have completed their essays, encourage volunteers to read their work aloud to the class. Invite students to ask questions and make comments about one another's work. As a final activity you may want to bind the stories together into a collection and provide each student with a copy.

racism. Others attribute it to the poor academic preparation of incoming black students. The article goes on to note:

The racial makeup of classrooms reinforces self-segregation in other parts of school life. Many black students walk or take the bus to school and enter through the school's front doors. Most white students drive cars and come in a side door near the parking lot. Most black students eat lunch inside, near the hot lunch line, while white students eat outside, near the concession stand. And even though most Central High students generally say they have friends of different races, they acknowledge that for the most part they hang out with friends from their neighborhood, their junior high, or their classes.

*What does the account of Central High School today suggest about the progress that has been made since 1958? What does it suggest about the work that remains?*

# Merry-Go-Round\*

*Langston Hughes was one of the nation's best-known African American writers in the first half of the twentieth century. He wrote this poem in the 1950s.*

*Colored child at carnival:*  
Where is the Jim Crow section  
On this merry-to-round,  
Mister, cause I want to ride?  
Down South where I come from  
White and colored  
Can't sit side by side.  
Down South on the train  
There's a Jim Crow car.  
On the bus we're put in the back—  
But there ain't no back  
To a merry-go-round!  
Where's the horse  
For a kid that's black?

How do you think the carousel operator will answer the child's question?

What problems does he suggest merry-go-rounds and carousels present in a segregated society?

\* From *Don't You Turn Back*, Poems by Langston Hughes, selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins, Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Copyright 1967, 1969 by Arna Bontemps and George Houston Bass, Executors of the Estate of Langston Hughes.

# A Bystander at Central High

Marcia Webb was a student at Central High in 1957. As an adult, she reflected on what it mean to be a bystander at that time:

The things that I thought about when I was in high school were . . . the things that most kids did in the 50s . . . the football team . . . dances. . . I think it was a white person's world—probably a white man's world. Most of the blacks you had any contact with in 1957 were your household workers, sanitation department helpers, and that would be the only contact you would have. But I remember the picture in the newspaper of Elizabeth Eckford with the jeering white faces behind her. And at that moment I thought, Marcie, you were there and you never once thought about what was going on with Elizabeth Eckford. You were glad there weren't any violent demonstrations, you were glad no one was hurt physically. But then I realized what hurt can come from words, from silence even, from just being ignored. And when I think about it now I think about it with regret. I'm sorry to say now looking back that what was happening didn't have more significance and I didn't take more of an active role. But I was interested in the things that most kids are.

There is an old saying that “sticks and stones can break my bones but names can never hurt me.” Is it true? What is the hurt that comes from words? From silence? From “just being ignored”?

How might the situation at Central High School have been different if Webb and other white students had regarded Eckford as a “kid” much like them?

Like Marcia Webb, Robin Woods was also a student at Central High. She made a very different choice. Terrence Roberts, one of the “Little Rock Nine,” was in her algebra class. Realizing he didn't yet have a math book, she made “a gut level decision” and pulled her desk over to his so they could share her book. There was “a gasp of disbelief” in the classroom. For the rest of the year, segregationists harassed Woods and her family. How might the situation at Central High have been different if more students had acted the way Woods did?

## A Roundtable Discussion\*

A month after school opened, NBC set up a roundtable discussion moderated by Mrs. Jorunn Ricketts. The excerpt that follows focuses on comments made by four white students who participated in the discussion—Sammy Dean Parker, Kay Bacon, Robin Woods, and Joseph Fox—and two African American students—Ernest Green and Minnijean Brown.

**Ricketts:** Do you think it is possible to start working this out on a more sensible basis than violent demonstration?

**Sammy:** No. I don't because the South has always been against racial mixing and I think they will fight this thing to the end. . . . We fight for our freedom—that's one thing. And we don't have any freedom any more.

**Ernest:** Sammy, you say you don't have any freedom. I wonder what you mean by it—that you don't have any freedom? You are guaranteed your freedom in the Bill of Rights and your Constitution. You have the freedom of speech—I noticed that has been exercised a whole lot in Little Rock. The freedom of petition, the freedom of religion and the other freedoms are guaranteed to you. As far as freedom, I think that if anybody should kick about freedoms, it should be us. Because I think we have been given a pretty bad side on this thing as far as freedom.

**Sammy:** Do you call those troops freedom? I don't. And I also do not call it free when you are being escorted into the school every morning.

**Ernest:** Why did the troops come here? It is because our government—our state government—went against the federal law. . . . Our country is set up so that we have forty-eight states and no one state has the ability to overrule our nation's government. I thought that was what our country was built around. I mean, that is why we fight. We fought in World War II together—the fellows that I know died in World War II, they died in the Korean War. I mean, why should my friends get out there and die for a cause called “democracy” when I can't exercise my rights—tell me that. . . .

**Joe:** Well, Sammy, I don't know what freedom has been taken away from you because the truth is—I know as a senior myself—the troops haven't kept me from going to my classes or participating in any school activity. I mean, they're there just to keep order in case—I might use the term “hotheads”—get riled up. But I think as long as—if parents would just stay out of it and let the children of the school at Central High figure it out for themselves. I think it would be a whole lot better. I think the students are mature enough to figure it out for themselves. . . . As far as I'm concerned, I'll lay the whole blame of this trouble in Governor Faubus's lap.

**Sammy:** I think we knew before this ever started that some day we were going to have to integrate the schools. And I think our Governor was trying to protect all of us when he called out the National Guard—and he was trying to prepare us, I think.

**Ernest:** Well, I have to disagree. . . . I know a student that's over there with us, Elizabeth

### A Roundtable Discussion (continued)

[Eckford], and that young lady, she walked two blocks, I guess—as you all know—and the mob was behind her. Did the troops break up the mob?

**Robin:** And when Elizabeth had to walk down in front of the school I was there and I saw that. And may I say, I was very ashamed—I felt like crying—because she was so brave when she did that. And we just weren't behaving ourselves—just jeering her. I think if we had had any sort of decency, we wouldn't have acted that way. But I think if everybody would just obey the Golden Rule—do unto others as you have others do unto you—might be the solution. How would you like to have to . . . walk down the street with everybody yelling behind you like they yelled behind Elizabeth?

**Ricketts:** Sammy, why do these children not want to go to school with Negroes?

**Sammy:** Well, I think it is mostly race mixing.

**Ricketts:** Race mixing? What do you mean?

**Sammy:** Well, marrying each other.

**Minnijean:** Hold your hand up. I'm brown, you are white. What's the difference? We are all of the same thoughts. You're thinking about your boy—he's going to the Navy. I'm thinking about mine—he's in the Air Force. We think about the same thing.

**Sammy:** I'll have to agree with you. . . .

**Minnijean:** Kay, Joe and Robin—do you know anything about me, or is it just what your mother has told you about Negroes?

**Ricketts:** Have you ever really made an effort to find out what they're like?

**Kay:** Not until today.

**Sammy:** Not until today.

**Ricketts:** And what do you think about it after today?

**Kay:** Well, you know that my parents and a lot of the other students and their parents think the Negroes aren't equal to us. But—I don't know. It seems like they are, to me.

**Sammy:** These people are—we'll have to admit that.

**Ernest:** I think, like we're doing today, discussing our different views. . . . If the people of Little Rock . . . would get together I believe they would find out a different story—and try to discuss the thing instead of getting out in the street and kicking people around and calling names—and that sort of thing. If . . . people got together it would be smoothed over.

**Kay:** I think that if . . . our friends had been getting in this discussion today, I think that maybe some of them—not all of them—in time, they would change their mind. But probably some of them would change their mind today.

\* From "Transcript of Mrs. Jorunn Ricketts' Conversation," *The New York Times*, October 14, 1957. Copyright © by The New York Times Company.

# I'll Walk the Tightrope\*

Margaret Danner was an African American poet who grew up in the 1920s and 1930s.

I'll walk the tightrope that's been stretched for me,  
and though a wrinkled forehead, perplexed why,  
will accompany me, I'll delicately  
step along. For if I stop to sigh  
at the earth-propped stride  
of others, I will fall. I must balance high  
without a parasol to tide  
a faltering step, without a net below,  
without a balance stick to guide.

What do you think it is like to “balance high” without a parasol, net, or balance stick?  
How does the person on a tightrope keep from falling?

How are Melba and the other eight African American students at Central High like the  
narrator in the poem? What kept them from falling?

Have you ever “walked the tightrope”? What kept you from falling? How did you keep  
your balance?

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# Reader Responses

Assignment: Write your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. *Warriors Don't Cry* focuses on a single year in Melba Pattillo's life. Identify some of the internal and external conflicts she faced that year.
2. Describe how Melba's year at Central High has affected the way she sees herself and others.
3. How does Melba change in the course of the book? To what experiences does she attribute those changes? To what experiences do you attribute those changes?
4. What does Melba's story mean to you?
5. Why do you think she wrote this book?
6. What is the meaning of the title, *Warriors Don't Cry*?



# Persuasive Essay

Assignment: Write an essay that persuades others to join you in taking a stand against racism and other forms of injustice in your community.

A persuasive essay states a narrowly focused opinion on a matter that can be debated or discussed.

1. Begin your essay by stating your opinion clearly. What do you want your essay to accomplish? Make sure that your statement is sharply focused. If the your topic is too broad, it will be difficult to persuade readers.
2. Think about your audience. How much do your readers know about the topic? How likely are they to agree with you? Try to imagine their reactions and the questions they may have. Give them reasons to do what you ask.
3. Think about other points of view. If you present just one side of a question, readers will notice. It's better to acknowledge that there are other points of view and explain why yours is the best one.
4. Provide supporting evidence. What evidence do you have to support the stand you are urging others to take? Review your journal and the various essays you wrote as you read *Warriors Don't Cry* for ideas. You may also want to consult other books, magazines, and newspapers for evidence that supports your point of view.
5. Explain how the evidence supports your idea. How does the evidence you gathered, support the stand you are urging that your readers take? Why should a reader accept your evidence?
6. End your essay powerfully. Since your purpose is to persuade, you may want to restate your strongest argument or ask readers for a specific response.