

Abby Takes a Stand

by Patricia C. McKissack

THEME Reaching for Goals

This book describes how Abby, a young African American girl, witnesses and participates in the sit-in movement that ended segregation in Nashville restaurants in 1960. It addresses the Big Question: *What does it take to achieve our goals and dreams?*



This book will help students' understanding of the historic battle against racial segregation in the United States.



Genre **Historical fiction** is a story that takes place during a specific time in history. The characters and events could be real.

SUMMARY

In 1960, Abby, a ten-year-old African American girl, is kicked out of a segregated restaurant in a large Nashville department store. As a result, Abby, her mother, and Abby's best friend Patsy get involved in the sit-in protests in lunch counters in Nashville. In the process, Abby's brave cousin John experiences the consequences of standing up for what is right. He winds up roughed up and jailed. But eventually, the protests work and Abby and her mother are the first African Americans to eat in the department store's restaurant.

Other Books by Patricia C. McKissack

- *The Dark Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural*
- *Sojourner Truth: Ain't I a Woman*
- *Satchel Paige: The Best Arm in Baseball*

SNEAK PREVIEW

Match Students and Books

This book will appeal to students who

- are interested in reading about the brave days of the Civil Rights movement
- enjoy reading stories that are loosely based on real events
- are interested in American history

Comprehension Skills and Strategies

- prior knowledge
- sequence
- questioning
- cause and effect
- monitor and clarify
- critical thinking

Vocabulary Strategy

- dictionary and glossary

How to Use the Book

Students may work independently, as partners, or in small groups.
This book may be divided into two parts for reading.

Before Reading

BUILD BACKGROUND

Ask students what they know about segregation. Help them understand that during the years of segregation, laws and customs separated black people and white people. That meant there were different hotels, restaurants, drinking fountains, schools, and other things for blacks and whites. It usually also meant that the places and things that only white people could use were better than those that black people could use. Segregation was unfair.

Read aloud or have volunteers read aloud “In Gee’s Attic,” on pages 1–4 of the book. Explain that *Abby Takes a Stand* is part of a series of books called *Scraps of Time*. In the series, African American kids explore their grandmother’s attic to find wonderful treasures from the past. The series then tells stories related to those treasures. Ask students what they think this story will be about.

Students can use **Student Practice Page 5** to describe and draw pictures of what old family treasures they might find or would like to find in an attic.

PRACTICE
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INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

Use **Student Practice Page 6** to introduce vocabulary or to assess students’ understanding of the words before they read. If necessary, provide additional practice with the words. For example, ask students to say or write a new sentence for each word.

PRACTICE
PAGE

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Words to Know

canopy
protest
democracy
humiliates
nonviolent
segregation
boycott
inciting
riot
loitering

Reading the Book

PART 1 • PAGES 5–49 Best friends Abby and Patsy shop and laugh in Mr. Ford’s store. Patsy leaves for Washington, D.C. for two weeks. Later, Abby shops with her mother in a Nashville department store. When Abby tries to eat in the store’s restaurant, a manager kicks her out because she is black. The restaurant is for whites only. At a meeting, African American citizens decide to hold sit-ins in Nashville restaurants to end segregation. The first sit-in seems successful.

PRACTICE
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COMPREHENSION SKILL Sequence

On **Student Practice Page 7**, students order events that are out of sequence. Review with students what they have learned about sequence.

- Events in a story occur in a certain order, or sequence.
- Dates, times, and words such as *first*, *then*, *next*, and *last* are clues to the sequence of events.
- Sometimes stories are told out of sequence. The author might interrupt events in the present to tell about events in the past.

COMPREHENSION STRATEGY Questioning

Remind students that asking questions can help them understand the order of events in a story. Simple questions such as *What happened first?* or *Which event led to Abby and Patsy's punishment?* can aid students as they follow and clarify the sequence in the story.

Reader Response

See **Teacher's Guide Page 7** for a possible response to the question, "Why is it important to remember that Patsy went to Washington?"

PART 2 • PAGES 51–93 The sit-ins continue and black citizens also boycott downtown stores. Although worried, the protesters encourage each other. Abby's cousin John has a big role in the protests. When Patsy is back from Washington, she and Abby witness arrests of protestors including John. Eventually, the protests work. Restaurants end segregation. Abby and her mother are the first black people to eat at the department store restaurant. **Note:** After the story ends, students should read the last small three sections.

COMPREHENSION SKILL Cause and Effect

On **Student Practice Page 8**, students identify causes and effects of certain events from the story. Review with students what they have learned about cause and effect.

- An effect is what happens. A cause is why it happens.
- Clue words such as *because*, *so*, and *cause* can signal causes and events.
- Sometimes a cause has more than one effect, and an effect has more than one cause.

COMPREHENSION STRATEGY Monitor and Clarify

Remind students that checking their understanding as they read can help them see the relationships between causes and effects. Good readers look for clue words and relationships between events to determine cause and effect.

Reader Response

See **Teacher's Guide Page 8** for a possible response to this question, "What effect do you think Mayor West's answer to the question about segregation had on the city of Nashville?"

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After Reading

COMPREHENSION CHECK

PART 1 • PAGES 5–49

- 1. How is the young man dressed in the monkey suit important in the story's sequence of events?** He accidentally leads Abby into being humiliated in the restaurant and that makes her mother go to the protest meeting. (Sequence)
- 2. Why does the author begin the book with a section that takes place today rather than in 1960?** Possible response: She wants to help readers get interested in the story by giving them background information. (Author's Purpose)
- 3. Why do you think Mr. Ford asks Abby the name of the kind of notebook she wanted?** He wants to stock it in his store. (Draw Conclusions)
- 4. What did you think was going to happen when Abby visited the Monkey Bar Grill? Explain your answer.** She would be treated poorly. The author had given big hints that black people were not allowed in most Nashville downtown restaurants. (Inferring)
- 5. What does Abby's mother's speech at the protest meeting tell you about her personality?** Although Abby's mother is nervous about talking, she does it to help her daughter and black children in Nashville. She is a brave person who does hard things to make the world better. (Character)
- 6. How are Abby's mom and Aunt Mitty different?** Abby's mom believes in fighting for a cause and believes change can come because of it. Aunt Mitty will not fight for causes and thinks fighting might make things worse. (Compare and Contrast)

PART 2 • PAGES 51–93

- 7. Some of Abby's black neighbors think the sit-ins and boycotts are a bad idea. Mama disagrees but explains why people feel that way. What does she say causes them to think that?** They know what hate groups are capable of doing. (Cause and Effect)
- 8. Patsy discovers something surprising about the man wearing a monkey suit who was arrested at the sit-in. What is it?** He is white, and she didn't know that some white people are helping black people fight segregation. (Generalize)
- 9. Do you think Abby and Patsy really deserved to be punished for going downtown without permission?** Yes, it was very risky even for adults to be downtown during the protests, let alone children. They could have been hurt or arrested. (Draw Conclusions)

- 10. Late in the story, how do Abby and Patsy feel about the Big Blue Notebooks? Why do they still buy them?** The sit-ins, protests, and arrests make things like the notebooks seem unimportant, but they buy them so Mr. Ford's feelings will not be hurt. (Main Idea)
- 11. What event shows that the main problem of the story has been solved? Why?** Abby and Mama have lunch at the Monkey Bar Grill. The protest worked and segregation has ended. (Plot)
- 12. What was the author's purpose in writing this story?** It was to entertain readers but also to teach them about how unfair segregation was and how hard the fight was to end it. (Author's Purpose)

CRITICAL THINKING

- 1. In the first chapter, Abby and Patsy do things that best friends often do, such as share jokes and songs. Why do you think the author showed this?** The author wants readers to see how normal the girls are and how much like other girls they are, regardless of race. This helps show how unfair segregation was. (Evaluate)
- 2. Abby puts a sign in a window that says, "Save our nation. End segregation." What does that mean?** Possible response: Treating people differently based on race hurts America. Ending segregation will help America heal. (Analyze)
- 3. At the end of the book, why does Abby's mother take her to lunch at the Monkey Bar Grill? Why is it a brave thing to do?** The sit-ins, protests, arrests, and the bombing were all part of the effort to end segregation in restaurants. Mama wants to make sure her daughter can enjoy the victory and freedom. But there is still the chance they will be treated rudely or worse by unhappy white people. (Evaluate)

ASSESSMENT

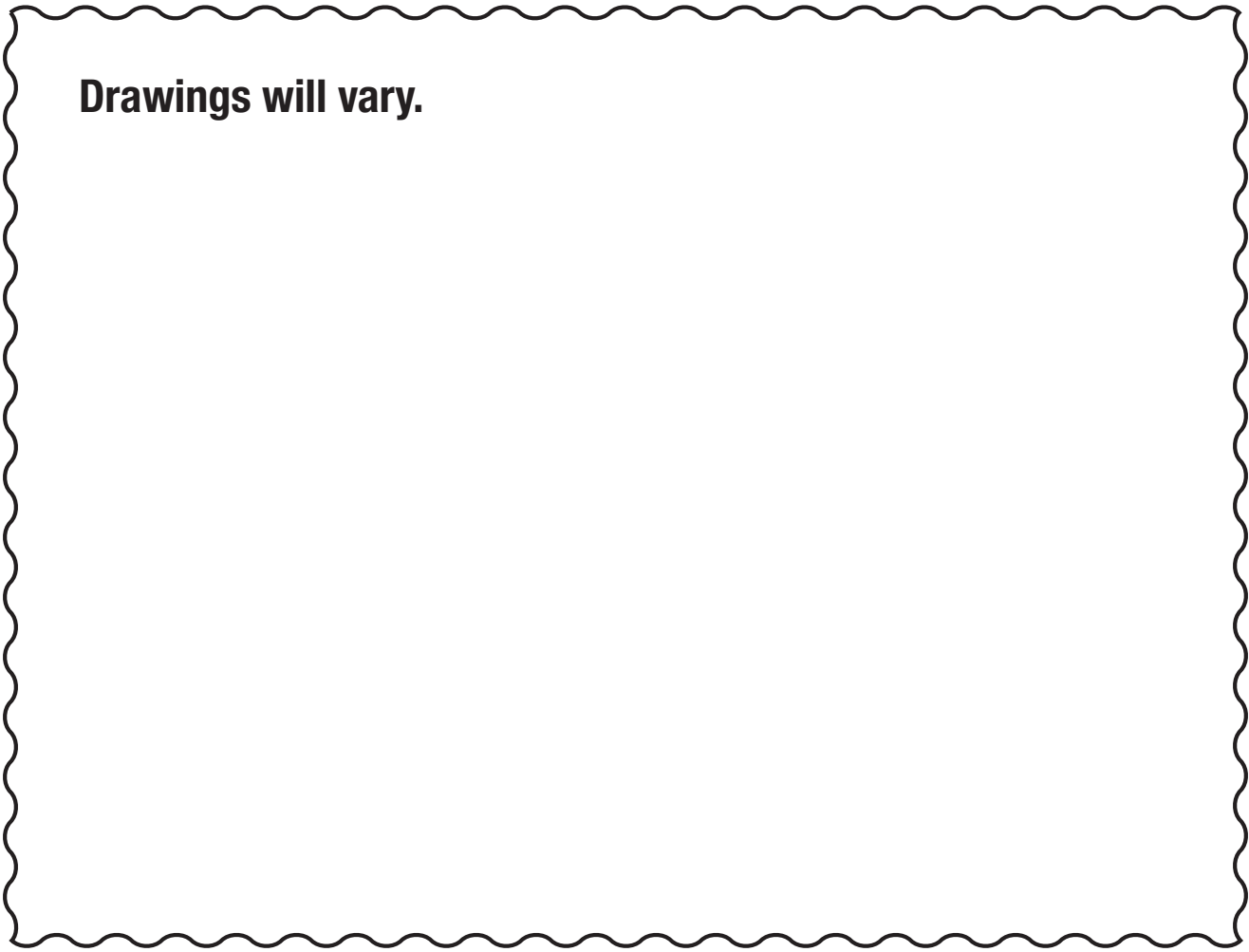
PRACTICE
PAGE

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Use the Selection Test on **Student Practice Page 9** to assess student's understanding of the book. See **Teacher's Guide Page 9** for answers.

In the Attic

Directions Have you ever explored an old attic? Use the box below to draw pictures of things you would like to find in an old attic. On the lines below your pictures, explain why these things would interest you.



Drawings will vary.

Answers will vary.

Words to Know

Directions Read the words and definitions. Write the correct word that completes each sentence below.

boycott, *v.* to join with others and agree not to buy from a business in order to get that business to change a policy

canopy, *n.* a covering over an entrance, bed, or throne

democracy, *n.* a government that is run by the people who live under it

humiliates, *v.* lowers pride, dignity, or self worth of a person

inciting, *v.* urging on, stirring up a reaction

loitering, *v.* lingering idly, hanging around

nonviolent, *adj.* not violent, against action that causes physical harm to others

protest, *n.* objection against a policy or statement

riot, *n.* a wild, violent public disturbance

segregation, *n.* separation of people according to race especially in schools, housing, and services

- After their football team lost, angry fans caused a riot.
- When it started to rain, we hid under the canopy of a big hotel.
- People will often boycott a business that treats customers unfairly.
- When there was segregation in schools, it was difficult for black and white kids to become friends.
- In 1960s, African Americans and others used nonviolent protests to peacefully change unfair city laws.
- The teachers were not happy to see students loitering in the halls at recess.
- The new video game is good at inciting kids to do math!
- In a democracy, citizens vote for their own leaders.
- I could never like a person who humiliates his family or friends.
- Ms. Johnson led a protest against the city park's no-pet policy.

You can use a dictionary or glossary to find the meaning of word you do not know. Skim Chapter 1 (pages 5–9) for a word you do not know. Look it up in a dictionary. Write its meaning.

- Word Possible response: alien
- Meaning Possible response: creature from another planet

What's the Right Order?

Directions The events below are from the first part of the story. Number the events 1 to 10 to show their correct sequence.

- 6 1. Abby goes to a protest meeting.
- 1 2. Patsy visits Washington, D.C.
- 4 3. Abby is kicked out of the Monkey Bar Grill.
- 9 4. Some restaurants close early.
- 3 5. Abby is invited to the department store restaurant.
- 5 6. John talks with Abby and her mother on the bus.
- 8 7. The first sit-ins take place.
- 10 8. Aunt Mitty warns that the protests will bring trouble.
- 2 9. Abby and her mother go downtown to shop.
- 7 10. Abby joins the Flyer Brigade.

Reader Response Text to Self

Why is it important to remember that Patsy went to Washington?

It explains the letter, which also lists some events in the sequence of the story.

What Happened and Why?

- An **effect** is what happens.
- A **cause** is why something happens. There can be more than one cause for an effect.

Directions In the boxes on the left below, write one or more causes for the effect in the boxes on the right.

Causes: Why did it happen?

Effects: What happened?

- Black citizens protest segregation.**
- The Looby house is bombed.**

Nashville’s mayor says segregation is wrong.

- Abby’s mother is unhappy with segregation.**
- Abby’s mother is upset by how Abby was treated at the Monkey Bar Grill.**

Abby’s mother goes to her first protest meeting.

- He is protesting.**
- The protests are working so the police crack down on the protestors.**

John is arrested.

- The protests are successful and segregation in restaurants ends.**
- Abby couldn’t eat there before so her mother makes sure she can there now.**

Abby and her mother eat at the Monkey Bar Grill.

Reader Response Text to World

What effect do you think Mayor West’s answer to the question about segregation had on the city of Nashville? **It probably helped cause the restaurants and stores to stop segregation.**

Selection Test

Directions Circle the letter for the best answer to each item.

- Patsy leaves Nashville to _____.
 A avoid the protests
 B visit her grandmother
 C organize sit-ins
- Among others things, segregation means that _____.
 A there are separate restaurants for black and white people
 B people can eat wherever they want to eat
 C black and white people get to know each other better
- On her first visit to the Monkey Bar Brill, Abby is _____.
 A surprised that the food is not as good as Mr. Ford's
 B kicked out
 C treated very well
- Abby first helps in the sit-ins by _____.
 A giving a speech at the church
 B passing out invitations to the Monkey Bar Grill
 C passing out flyers
- The member of Abby's family who does not help in the protests is _____.
 A Abby's mother
 B Abby's Aunt Mitty
 C Abby's cousin John
- Abby thinks Patsy might not like Teri because _____.
 A Teri is not from Nashville
 B Teri is not part of the sit-in
 C John likes Teri
- At the second church meeting, some people are worried that _____.
 A the sit-ins are not working
 B the fire fighters would turn on their hoses
 C there are too many people in the building
- When the protesters are attacked, they do not fight back because they _____.
 A are afraid of being hurt or arrested
 B want other people to feel sorry for them
 C hope to end segregation with nonviolence and love
- John is arrested because _____.
 A he refused to end a sit-in
 B he fought back
 C of the bombing of Mr. Looby's house
- The protestors know they have won when _____.
 A the protestors are released from jail
 B the Blue Book Notebooks arrive
 C Mayor West says segregation is wrong