CHOICES

IN LITTLE ROCK
Facing History and Ourselves is an international educational and professional development 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 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 about Facing History and Ourselves, please visit our website at www.facinghistory.org.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for making possible the creation of this curriculum and professional development for Chicago Public Schools*:

Anonymous
Christopher Family Foundation
The Crown and Goodman Family
Karen Harrison and Walter Freedman
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Linda and Judd Miner
Oppenheimer Family Foundation
Pritzker Pucker Family Foundation
The Segal Family Foundation
Zeil Family Foundation

*Recognizing commitments made as of April 2019.
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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO CHANGE THE WORLD?

**ANTICIPATION GUIDE**

Read the statement in the left column. Decide if you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD) with the statement. Circle your response and provide a one- to two-sentence explanation of your opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>YOUR OPINION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A small group of committed citizens can change the world.</td>
<td>SA A D SD Explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Any individual has the power to change society for the better and for the worse.</td>
<td>SA A D SD Explain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leaders are the only individuals who have the power to change society; a group of citizens is powerless to change society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>People can only change society when working within an established organization or institution, such as the government, the church, or a nonprofit group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Laws, more than any group, have the power to change society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>In a democracy, the government is “by the people, for the people, and of the people.” Therefore, the people have the power to control the government and change society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Throughout history, change has only happened when a group of ordinary people organized together.</td>
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At the age of seven, Jennifer Wang came to the United States from Beijing, China, with her family. At 17, she wrote an essay titled “Orientation Day” in response to a familiar experience: introducing oneself to a group of strangers. Wang writes in part:

Something about myself? How do I summarize, in thirty seconds, everything, which adds up and equals a neat little bundle called Me? How do I present myself in a user-friendly format, complete with “Help” buttons and batteries? Who am I, and why do I matter to any of you?

First of all, I am a girl who wandered the aisles of Toys “R” Us for two hours, hunting in vain for a doll with a yellowish skin tone. I am a girl who sat on the cold bathroom floor at seven in the morning, cutting out the eyes of Caucasian models in magazines, trying to fit them on my face. I am the girl who loved [newscaster] Connie Chung because she was Asian, and I’m also the girl who hated Connie Chung because she wasn’t Asian enough . . .

During that time I also first heard the term *chink*, and I wondered why people were calling me “a narrow opening, usually in a wall.” People expected me to love studying and to enjoy sitting in my room memorizing facts for days and days.

While I was growing up, I did not understand what it meant to be “Chinese” or “American.” Do these terms link only to citizenship? Do they suggest that people fit the profile of either “typical” Chinese or “typical” Americans? And who or what determines when a person starts feeling American, and stops feeling Chinese? . . .

I am still not a citizen of the United States of America, this great nation, which is hailed as the destination for generations of people, the promised land for millions. I flee at the mere hint of teenybopper music. I stare blankly at my friends when they mention the 1980s or share stories of their parents as hippies. And I hate baseball.

The question lingers: Am I Chinese? Am I American? Or am I some unholy mixture of both, doomed to stay torn between the two?

I don’t know if I’ll ever find the answers. Meanwhile, it’s my turn to introduce myself. . . . I stand up and say, “My name is Jennifer Wang,” and then I sit back down. There are no other words that define me as well as those do. No others show me being stretched between two very different cultures and places — the “Jennifer” clashing with the “Wang,” the “Wang” fighting with the “Jennifer.”!
1. Underline the words and phrases that Jennifer uses to describe herself.

2. Based on her description of herself, what words or phrases would you use to describe Jennifer?

3. How does being Chinese shape Jennifer’s identity?

4. How does being American shape her identity?

5. What experiences does Jennifer identify as important to who she is and how she sees herself? Which of those experiences do you think has had the greatest impact on her identity?

6. What experiences are important to who you are and how you see yourself? Which of those experiences has had the greatest impact on your identity?

---

In the 1950s, Jesús Colón had an unsettling experience during a late-night subway ride in New York City.

It was very late at night on the eve of Memorial Day. She came into the subway at the 34th Street Pennsylvania Station. I am still trying to remember how she managed to push herself in with a baby on her right arm, a [suitcase] in her left hand and two children, a boy and girl about three and five years old, trailing after her. She was a nice-looking white lady in her early twenties.

At Nevins Street, Brooklyn, we saw her preparing to get off at the next station—Atlantic Avenue—which happened to be the place where I too had to get off. Just as it was a problem for her to get on, it was going to a problem for her to get off the subway with two small children to be taken care of, a baby on her right arm, and a medium-sized [suitcase] in her left hand.

And there I was, also preparing to get off at Atlantic Avenue, with no bundles to take care of—not even the customary book under my arm, without which I feel that I am not completely dressed.

As the train was entering the Atlantic Avenue station, some white man stood up from his seat and helped her out, placing the children on the long, deserted platform. There were only two adult persons on the long platform some time after midnight.

I could perceive the steep, long concrete stairs going down to the Long Island Railroad or into the street. Should I offer my help as the American white man did at the subway door, placing the two children outside the subway car? Should I take care of the girl and the boy, take them by their hands until they reached the end of the steep, long concrete stairs of the Atlantic Avenue station?

Courtesy is a characteristic of the Puerto Rican. And here I was—a Puerto Rican hours past midnight, a valise, two white children and a white lady with a baby on her arm badly needing somebody to help her, at least until she descended the long concrete stairs.

But how could I, a Negro' and a Puerto Rican, approach this white lady, who very likely might have preconceived prejudices about Negroes and everybody with foreign accents, in a deserted subway station very late at night?

What would she say? What would be the first reaction of this white American woman perhaps coming from a small town with a [suitcase], two children and a baby on her right arm? Would she say: “Yes, of course, you may help me.” Or would she think that
I was just trying to get too familiar? Or would she think worse than that perhaps? What would I do if she let out a scream as I went forward to offer my help?

Was I misjudging her? So many slanders are written every day in the daily press against the Negroes and Puerto Ricans. I hesitated for a long, long minute.\(^2\)

1. Underline the words or phrases that Jesús Colón uses to define his identity.

2. If you were to create an identity box for Colón, what words would you place on the inside of the box?

3. What words or phrases would you place outside the box?

4. What do you think Jesús Colón should do? Be sure to list the reasons you think he should make that choice.

\(^1\) The word Negro was commonly used until the late 1960s to refer to an African American. Its use reflects the time period.

WHAT IS CHANGING THE WORLD?

1. Put an X by the events that you think have changed or would change the world.
   - Facebook is invented.
   - A national law changes the voting age from 21 to 18.
   - A new school policy in New York City bans cell phone use.
   - An enormous hurricane, like Hurricane Katrina, devastates a city on the coast of the United States.
   - Nelson Mandela is elected president of South Africa.
   - In a town that is known for being intolerant to immigrants, Laura Reynolds invites recent immigrants Gloria Garcia and Ang Lee over to her house for dinner.
   - Massachusetts requires students to pass the science MCAS test in order to graduate.
   - College presidents around the country decide to waive tuition payments, making college affordable for virtually all students.
   - France outlaws the wearing of headscarves in public schools.
   - A group of middle-school students work together to successfully reduce bullying at their school.

2. List three criteria you would use to evaluate whether an event changed the world. (For example, does an event have to affect more than one person to change the world? Does it have to be public? Should you be able to point to a concrete difference in the world before and after the event?)
REPRODUCIBLE

THE THIRTEENTH, FOURTEENTH, AND FIFTEENTH AMENDMENTS

Read each amendment and decide what its purpose is. (You may want to consult the glossary of legal terms at the end of this document.) Then write a headline announcing the ratification of the amendment. Remember that headlines summarize the main idea of a story in 12 words or less.

AMENDMENT XIII (RATIFIED DECEMBER 6, 1865)

1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

The headline reads . . .

AMENDMENT XIV (RATIFIED JULY 9, 1868)

1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. . . .

5. The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

The headline reads . . .
AMENDMENT XV (RATIFIED FEBRUARY 3, 1870)

1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

2. The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

The headline reads . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abridge</td>
<td>Reduce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amend</td>
<td>Change or add to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendment</td>
<td>A change in a constitution or other legal document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprive</td>
<td>Take away</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due process</td>
<td>The legal protections a citizen has when a state, nation, or court makes a decision that could affect his or her rights. The most basic rights protected under due process are the right to know what crimes one has been charged with and the right to have one's own version of the story heard in court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immunity</td>
<td>A release from or an exception to a law. For example, a court may decide that the testimony of a witness in one case will not be used against the witness at his or her own trial. The witness receives immunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jurisdiction</td>
<td>The right of a court to make decisions that must be obeyed in a particular geographic area—a city, state, or, in the case of the US Supreme Court, the nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalize</td>
<td>To give citizenship to someone born in another country</td>
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</table>
Homer Plessy was a citizen of the United States and a resident of the state of Louisiana. On June 7, 1892, he purchased a first-class ticket on the East Louisiana Railway from New Orleans to Covington, Louisiana. He entered a passenger car and took an empty seat in a car reserved for whites only. The conductor demanded that he leave his seat and move to a car reserved for the “colored race.” When Plessy refused to move, he was arrested. He was brought to trial and found guilty of violating a state law requiring segregation on trains.

Plessy appealed the decision of John Ferguson, the judge who claimed that as long as the railroad offered “separate but equal” seating, Plessy’s rights were protected. Plessy disagreed. He argued that the law was unconstitutional—that is, it went against the Fourteenth Amendment.

How the case would be decided depended on whether a law passed by the state of Louisiana in 1890 requiring separate railroad cars for black and white passengers was in keeping with the US Constitution. The first section of the law stated:

All railway companies carrying passengers in their coaches in this state, shall provide separate but equal accommodations for the white and colored races . . . No person or persons shall be permitted to occupy seats in coaches, other than the ones assigned to them, on account of the race they belong to.

1. Reread the Fourteenth Amendment. Does the amendment allow states to pass segregation laws?

2. Discuss the case with your partner. Then briefly describe how you would decide.
Justice Henry B. Brown delivered the majority opinion of the Supreme Court in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* on May 18, 1896. He wrote in part:

The object of the [Fourteenth] Amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things, it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or commingling [mixing] of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either. Laws permitting, and even requiring their separation, in places where they are liable to be brought into contact, do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency [responsibilities] of the state legislatures in the exercise of their police power.

. . . If one race be inferior to the other civilly or politically, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them on the same plane.

Justice John Marshall Harlan dissented. He wrote in part:

It is said in argument that the statute of Louisiana does not discriminate against either race, but prescribes a rule applicable alike to white and colored citizens. But . . . everyone knows that the statute in question had its origin in the purpose, not so much to exclude white persons from railroad cars occupied by blacks, as to exclude colored people from coaches occupied by or assigned to white persons. . . . Further, if this statute of Louisiana is consistent with the personal liberty of citizens, why may not the state require the separation in railroad coaches of native and naturalized citizens of the United States, or of Protestants and Roman Catholics? . . .

The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth, and in power. . . . But in view of the constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. . . . Our constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law.

Imagine that you were alive in 1896 and read about the Supreme Court’s decision in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in your local newspaper. Write a letter to a family member describing the impact you think the decision will have on your family and the nation.
Segregation laws touched every aspect of everyday life. For example, in 1935, Oklahoma prohibited African Americans and whites from boating together. In 1905, Georgia established separate parks for blacks and whites. In 1930, Birmingham, Alabama, made it illegal for the two races to play checkers or dominoes together. The Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site interpretive staff compiled the following list of other such restrictions on aspects of daily life in the region at the time:

- **Barbers.** No colored barber shall serve as a barber (to) white girls or women (Georgia).

- **Blind Wards.** The board of trustees shall . . . maintain a separate building . . . on separate ground for the admission, care, instruction, and support of all blind persons of the colored or black race (Louisiana).

- **Burial.** The officer in charge shall not bury, or allow to be buried, any colored persons upon ground set apart or used for the burial of white persons (Georgia).

- **Buses.** All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races (Alabama).

- **Child Custody.** It shall be unlawful for any parent, relative, or other white person in this State, having the control or custody of any white child, by right of guardianship, natural or acquired, or otherwise, to dispose of, give or surrender such white child permanently into the custody, control, maintenance, or support, of a Negro (South Carolina).

- **Education.** The schools for white children and the schools for Negro children shall be conducted separately (Florida).
• **Libraries.** The state librarian is directed to fit up and maintain a separate place for the use of the colored people who may come to the library for the purpose of reading books or periodicals (North Carolina).

• **Mental Hospitals.** The Board of Control shall see that proper and distinct apartments are arranged for said patients, so that in no case shall Negroes and white persons be together (Georgia).

• **Militia.** The white and colored militia shall be separately enrolled, and shall never be compelled to serve in the same organization. No organization of colored troops shall be permitted where white troops are available, and colored troops shall be under the command of white officers (North Carolina).

• **Nurses.** No person or corporation shall require any white female nurse to nurse in wards or rooms in hospitals, either public or private, in which Negro men are placed (Alabama).

• **Prisons.** The warden shall see that the white convicts shall have separate apartments for both eating and sleeping from the Negro convicts (Mississippi).

• **Reform Schools.** The children of white and colored races committed to the houses of reform shall be kept entirely separate from each other (Kentucky).

• **Teaching.** Any instructor who shall teach in any school, college, or institution where members of the white and colored race are received and enrolled as pupils for instruction shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be fined . . . (Oklahoma).

• **Wine and Beer.** All persons licensed to conduct the business of selling beer or wine . . . shall serve either white people exclusively or colored people exclusively and shall not sell to the two races within the same room at any time (Georgia).
In addition:

• Racially separate washrooms required in factories and mines (6 states)
• White and black prisoners could not be chained together (6 states)
• Segregated parks, playgrounds, bathing and fishing and boating facilities, amusement parks, racetracks, pool halls, circuses, theaters, and public halls (8 states)
• Separate waiting rooms for bus and train travelers (10 states)
• African Americans required to sit in the backs of buses and streetcars (11 states)
• Segregated railroad passengers on trips within the state’s borders (14 states)
• Segregated mental patients (14 states)
• Segregated public schools (14 states with 11.5 million students, and 4 other states allowed segregation if local communities wanted it)¹

¹ This list was derived from a larger list composed by the Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site interpretive staff, last updated January 5, 1998, https://www.nps.gov/malu/learn/education/jim_crow_laws.htm.
Born in 1910, Essie Favrot worked several decades for southern white families as a domestic worker. In an interview, she described some of the situations in which she worked:

I finished out the eighth grade in the country. But by then my very oldest sister had come to stay with my aunt, and she decided it was time I came, too.

The onliest thing then was for a black girl to do was to get domestic work. So, I worked. First it was just about a two-hour job per day, five days a week for this lady that just had come up to me and asked me to work. I’d go down there to her house, clean up the house, do a little washing, and that was it. Fifty cent a day was what I made. They were poor people. They were probably just about as poor as I was, but the lady worked for a department store!

Then, I think, my brother’s mother-in-law told me that this lady needed somebody to keep her kids. So I went there and worked. I was living on the place, and that’s when I met my husband. This was in ’39, and I remember the salary had gone up to a dollar a day. I was making seven dollars [a week] because I was living on the place. And I worked every day from seven to seven. You worked long hours, but you were making a dollar a day.

I slept up in the bedroom with the little boy. There was a servant house in the backyard, but it was occupied by the cook, which was a male. It was considered his house, but I used the bathroom there.

They were rich people. I guess they owned stock. And when my mother-in-law decided to sell half her land, I don’t know why but it came for me to borrow the money. My husband had been working for his people much longer than I had. Anyway I asked them for fifty dollars to pay for the property, and they readily gave it to me. But they said they wouldn’t help me to build a house. They had got stung with another maid borrowing from them. We paid the money back right quick, and they were surprised.

After that, I worked thirteen years for the Elliots. Now they weren’t rich people. They both worked, and they had six children. I took over the running of the house. I did everything for them—the groceries, the cleaning up, the kids. I did all for the kids—took them to the park, to school, bought their clothes, saw that they wore the right clothes to parties, all that. My neighbors used to laugh because those Elliots were such poor people. Everyone knew they were. I mean not poor white trash—no. Just working people like myself. I was fond of those kids. I still am. I worked for them until my son was born. We still keep in touch. One of the girls just died. She had cancer; that was very sad. And their mother, I worry about her. She’s had a hard time.
Working for them—since they had all those kids, it was more like family for me there. I feel still sort of protective and maternal towards them. Not like I do my own family, no, but like I would any children I’d cared for that much, watched grow up. I’d help them still anyway I could. I would . . . not go back to work, but I’d help them any other way I could.

After that, I worked days till my son got old enough to go to school. Then I worked for the Helms. I worked there for a while. And they had four kids. Two were up in age, school-age children. And they had two little kids. And I just figured, since I was taking care of her kids and cooking for them, I’d have supper done when they got there and the kids fed and clean. They both worked. And they were so congenial at first. So, when my son started school not far from where they lived, I figured they wouldn’t mind him coming down there after school and then going home with me.

But the first day after I did it, Mr. Helms say, “What happened, Essie? Did your son miss his bus?” I say, “No, he didn’t miss his bus. It’s nobody at home in the evening, so I just took your two children, and when we were on our way back from the park, we picked him up.”

“I don’t think it’s going to be such a good idea, him coming down here. That lady next door . . . Mind you now, it’s not us,” he said. “But that lady next door don’t want him playing down here.”

So his wife she thought she could come home early so I could go home early, too. And the next evening she said, “I think I might enjoy coming on home, getting here early.” I didn’t say a word, because I knew I wasn’t going to work for nobody who had two that were not toilet trained and I had to clean both of them up and I had to cook dinner for the whole family and clean the apartment and wash their clothes. I felt if I was doing all of that for her children and her, and mine couldn’t come there in the evening, that they could have their job. After she paid me, I said, “Now you be sure and get you somebody.” I was headed to my car when I said it. And I left there and never went back . . .

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H. J. WILLIAMS RECALLS WORK AND SCHOOL IN YAZOO COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

H. J. Williams, who was born in 1910 and lived mostly in Alabama, was interviewed in the 1990s about living in the segregated South. In this excerpt of the interview, Williams describes what he did for work and his experiences in school.

H. J. WILLIAMS: In 1933 we were working for fifty cents a day. 1933. That was.

MAUSIKI SCALES (INTERVIEWER): What were you doing?

H. J. WILLIAMS: Chopping cotton. Plowing a mule. And that’s what they paid. That was the wages they was paying. Fifty cents a day at that time in the ’30s. And up in the ’40s, and like I said after President Roosevelt come in power it was a little change made. They were finally moved up to a $1 a day.

MAUSIKI SCALES: Did you go to school while you were growing up on the farm?


MAUSIKI SCALES: How long was the school session?

H. J. WILLIAMS: I went to school. I went as high as 8th grade. I didn’t complete the 8th grade, but I went to 8th grade when I was going to school. That’s as high as I went. As I might have said, because of my daddy, we were living on the farm then and we had a bad year and my daddy wasn’t able to buy me school books and that’s when I dropped out of school. Didn’t go no further. I went high as 8th grade. That’s as far as I could go. When I was in the 8th grade, I was studying in the books with some of the other children at school what was able to have books and that’s where I was studying.
MAUSIKI SCALES: Did you go to school nine months out of the year?


MAUSIKI SCALES: What type of things did you learn in school?

H. J. WILLIAMS: What type did I learn in school? Well, far as jobs and so on like that I didn't learn nothing about jobs or nothing like that at school cause we was on the farm. In other words, they wadn't teaching at that time, they weren't teaching mechanical work, you know, in the public schools. They wadn't teaching that at that time out there. So they'd teach us about agriculture and so on like that, what we was doing, so on and like that. They'd teach us that. So that's as far as we could go at that time what they was teaching. But far as mechanical work and so on like that they wadn't teaching nothing like that at that time.

MAUSIKI SCALES: Were your parents educated people?

H. J. WILLIAMS: Nope. They wadn't. Neither one.

MAUSIKI SCALES: How about your grandparents? Were they?

H. J. WILLIAMS: Well, the grandparents could read and write. That's as far as I know. I can draw on that.

MAUSIKI SCALES: Did they ever talk about their experiences when they were coming along?

H. J. WILLIAMS: Oh yeah. They talked about their experiences because some of the grandparents was under slavery. Yeah. They was under slavery when they was coming along at that time. Some of 'em.¹

H. J. WILLIAMS RECALLS SEGREGATION IN BUSINESS AND TRANSPORTATION IN YAZOO COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

MAUSIKI SCALES (INTERVIEWER): When you were growing up here did the blacks own their own businesses?

H. J. WILLIAMS: No. No black business when I was growing up here. None whatever. Nothing but white was in business at that time when I was growing up here 85 years ago. Nothing but white business.

MAUSIKI SCALES: Were there places that you couldn’t go into because they . . .

H. J. WILLIAMS: Yes sir. Lots of places we couldn’t go into and those what we could go into like a cafe or a drug store or something like that the white would be on that side and the black on the other side, the right side. That’s the way it was here at that time. Absolutely. And there was some you couldn’t go in at all. That’s right. And in the bus stations you couldn’t drink out of the water fountains what a white man dranked out of. You couldn’t go to that fountain and get a drink of water. In other words if you get on the bus to go, I’ll say Memphis and Chicago, or any place, okay. You'd go about middle ways of that bus and take your seat. And, traveling on as many white, if whites get on there, okay, you'd have to continue moving back to the back. Moving back, and back, and back until you get to the last seat and have to get behind this if any more whites got on there. That's the way it was then.

MAUSIKI SCALES: They had room behind the last seat?

H. J. WILLIAMS: What? No, just crowd you back up in the back. That's right. Crowd you back up in the back and you'd have to stand up. You didn't have no seat as long as some white got on there that’s the way you were. And it was like that I’d say it was
in the armed forces in '43, that's when I went to the army and we had trouble right there in Yazoo City concerning us riding the bus. That's right. Concern of that. They put some colored boys off in Jackson, Mississippi. I come here on a furlough and they put some black boys off the bus because they wouldn't get back and they had us pushed in there like cows and they couldn't get back no further and they put 'em off the bus. That's right. That was the way it was. That was in 1943. Sure was.

MAUSIKI SCALES: Blacks own cars here?

H. J. WILLIAMS: At that time? A few. A few. A very few owned cars at that time in the '40s. A few.¹

MENDEZ VS. SEGREGATION: 70 YEARS LATER . . .

. . . The Mendez family won the landmark Orange County case, “Mendez, et al vs. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al,” which laid the groundwork for school desegregation throughout California—and eventually the nation—decades before the Civil Rights Movement captured the country’s attention. . . . When Sylvia Mendez was growing up in the 1940s, Orange County was largely segregated, according to Gilbert Gonzalez, author of the book “Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation.” Public parks, swimming pools, restaurants and movie theaters were all segregated, and houses were often sold with racially restrict[ive] covenants, stipulating that the property could only be resold to whites. . . . School segregation first appeared in Orange County in 1919, and by the 1940s, more than 80% of students of Mexican heritage were attending separate schools from whites, said Gonzalez. The so-called Mexican schools were designed to Americanize the students—speaking Spanish was prohibited—and also . . . train boys for industrial work . . . agricultural labor and girls for housekeeping. . . . Then in 1930, a group of Mexican parents in San Diego County organized a boycott and lawsuit against the Lemon Grove School District for forcing their children into segregated schools. The parents won, and the landmark lawsuit became the first successful school desegregation case in U.S. history. But the Lemon Grove Incident . . . didn’t carry legal precedent for the rest of California, so segregation continued elsewhere in the state. . . .

The Mendez family discovered this firsthand in 1944 when they moved to Westminster to lease a farm owned by a Japanese American family who had been put in an internment camp during World War II. The Mendez children attempted to enroll at the nearby 17th Street School but were turned away, while their fair-skinned cousins with the French last name Vidaurri were accepted. . . . Thinking the school simply made a mistake, Sylvia’s father, Gonzalo Mendez . . . went to talk with the higher-ups. “He talked to the principal and he said, ‘I’m sorry, Mr. Mendez, we don’t have Mexicans here,’” Sylvia Mendez recalled. “Then he went to the superintendent of schools for Orange County, and he said, ‘Mr. Mendez, four cities, Garden Grove, Santa Ana, Orange and Westminster, have built two schools, one specifically for Mexicans . . . I do not have the power to change it. The cities have decided to do that.’” The Mexican school she and her siblings were forced to attend were “terrible,” said Mendez. Besides the two wooden shacks, the books were “hand-me-downs” and the desks were “all falling apart.” An electric fence—which she said shocked one of her classmates—separated the school from a neighboring cow pasture. . . .

Gonzalo knew he had to do something. But he didn’t know what until he read about another successful desegregation case in Riverside that challenged the rules barring Mexicans from public parks. So he hired David Marcus, the Jewish American civil rights attorney who had won the Riverside case, to fight for his children. But Marcus wanted to take it one step further. “Let’s not do this just for your children. Let’s do it for all the children,” Sylvia recalled Marcus telling her.
father. Gonzalo agreed and drove Marcus around Orange County looking for other plaintiffs who could join him in a class action suit.

The case, which argued that the four segregated school districts violated the 14th Amendment's guarantee of equal protection, attracted attention outside Orange County. Thurgood Marshall, who at the time was chief counsel for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, wrote an amicus brief in support of Mendez. The Japanese American Citizens League, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the American Jewish Congress and the American Civil Liberties Union also lent their support.

In 1946, Mendez won, but as a harbinger of the civil rights movement decades later, the ingrained attitudes would be another battle. Some schools in Orange County started to desegregate. In Westminster, Sylvia Mendez explained, the schools were integrated by placing all of the older children in the Mexican school and the younger children in the white school. “The white people got so upset to see their children in that horrible school, so they went to the superintendent and they closed it down,” she said. Other schools didn’t integrate at all.

The Mendez family moved back to Santa Ana and found that the schools wouldn’t integrate until an appeal of the case was complete. Other schools, Gonzalez said, continued their use of IQ testing as a way to justify keeping Mexican American students separate. Gonzalo pushed back. “My dad went to the superintendent and said, ‘I don’t care what you say, I’m taking my kids to the white school,’” Mendez said. She successfully enrolled at the white school in Santa Ana.

A year later, the ruling was upheld in federal court, and within months, California Gov. Earl Warren signed legislation to desegregate schools — becoming the first state in the country to do so. [...] [C]losely following the case, the National [Association] for the Advancement of Colored People...used much of the same legal reasoning in 1954 in Brown vs. Board of Education, a landmark case that declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students to be unconstitutional. Marshall argued this case before the Supreme Court, which by then included Chief Justice Warren, who wrote the unanimous decision that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

Despite the far-reaching implications of their case, the Mendez family resumed a sense of normalcy after the decision came down. [...] [U]ntil decades later after her father died and her mother became seriously ill . . . Sylvia Mendez recalled her mother saying . . . “you have to go out and talk about it!” While Mendez was initially reluctant to take up her mother’s request, she . . . Started a nationwide effort to educate the public about her parents’ activism.

Today, Mendez continues to do educational programs for youth across the country. But going to so many schools has also taught Mendez that the struggle for educational equity is not just in the past. . . . Still, Mendez hopes that teaching the public about her family’s legal victory 70 years ago will spark change — particularly for Latinos. “. . . Latino students who are dropping out of high school need to know that Latinos have always fought for education,” she said. “And that’s something to be proud of.”

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Segregation of white and Negro children in the public schools of a State solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies to Negro children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment — even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors of white and Negro schools may be equal.

(a) The history of the Fourteenth Amendment is inconclusive as to its intended effect on public education.

(b) The question presented in these cases must be determined not on the basis of conditions existing when the Fourteenth Amendment was adopted, but in the light of the full development of public education and its present place in American life throughout the Nation.

(c) Where a State has undertaken to provide an opportunity for an education in its public schools, such an opportunity is a right, which must be made available to all on equal terms.

(d) Segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race deprives children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal.

(e) The “separate but equal” doctrine adopted in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537, has no place in the field of public education.

**GLOSSARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inconclusive</td>
<td>Questionable; open to doubt</td>
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<td>Pursuant of</td>
<td>In agreement with</td>
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**THE LITTLE ROCK NINE**

Ernest Green became the first African American student to graduate from Central High School in 1958. He later earned a bachelor’s degree from Michigan State University. Green served as Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Affairs in the administration of President Jimmy Carter. He is currently a managing partner and vice president of Lehman Brothers in Washington, DC.

Top row, left to right: Ernest Green, Melba Pattillo, Jefferson Thomas, Carlotta Walls, Daisy Bates (president of the Arkansas NAACP and advisor to the Little Rock Nine), Terrence Roberts. Seated, left to right: Thelma Mothershed, Minnijean Brown, Elizabeth Eckford, Gloria Ray.

Library of Congress
Melba Pattillo Beals is a writer who has worked as a reporter at NBC and People magazine. Her memoir, Warriors Don’t Cry, won several literary awards in 1995. She earned degrees at San Francisco State and Columbia University and today lives in San Francisco.

Jefferson Thomas served as president of the student council and was an outstanding track athlete at Dunbar Junior High in Little Rock. He gave up those activities to attend Central High. He, along with Carlotta Walls, graduated from Central in 1960. Today he is an accountant with the US Department of Defense living in Anaheim, California.

Carlotta Walls LaNier was the youngest of the Little Rock Nine. She graduated from Central High along with Jefferson Thomas in 1960. She earned a BA from the University of Northern Colorado. In 1968, she married Ira LaNier in Denver, Colorado. She and her family still live in Colorado, where she works as a real estate agent.

Terrence Roberts entered Central High as a junior. He earned a BA from California State University, Los Angeles, a master’s degree from UCLA, and a PhD in psychology from Southern Illinois University. He heads the master’s in psychology program at Antioch University in Los Angeles.

Thelma Mothershed-Wair earned a master’s degree in guidance counseling and worked as an educator in the East St. Louis school system for 28 years before retiring in 1994. She now does volunteer work in her community, including teaching survival skills at a homeless shelter.

Minnijean Brown Trickey was expelled from Central High in February 1958, after several incidents, including one in which she dumped a bowl of chili on a student in the school cafeteria. She stayed with the family of psychologist Kenneth Clark in New York City until she graduated from high school. She later earned a BA from Southern Illinois University. She and her husband moved to Canada after she graduated and raised six children on a farm. The family now lives in Maryland.

Elizabeth Eckford still lives in Little Rock. She served in the US Army and worked as a journalist. In 1974, she returned to the home in which she grew up and is now a part-time social worker and mother of two sons. Eckford, who has a degree in history, serves on the board of the Central High Museum and Visitors Center near the school.

Gloria Ray Karlmark graduated from Illinois Technical College and earned a postgraduate degree in Sweden. She and her husband live in Europe, where she has worked as an executive officer of a Dutch company and the publisher of a European computer magazine.
I am part of a group that became known as the Little Rock Nine. Prior to the segregation of Central, there had been one high school for whites, Central High School, and one high school for blacks, Dunbar. I expected that there may be something more available to me at Central that was not available at Dunbar; that there might be more courses I could pursue; that there were more options available. I was not prepared for what actually happened.

I was more concerned about what I would wear, whether we could finish my dress in time. . . . What I was wearing, was that okay? Would it look good? The night before when the governor went on television [September 2] and announced that he had called out the Arkansas National Guard, I thought he had done this to insure the protection of all the students. We did not have a telephone. So, inevitably we were not contacted to let us know that Daisy Bates of NAACP had arranged for some ministers to accompany the students in a group. And so it was I that arrived alone.

On the morning of September 4th, my mother was doing what she usually did. My mother was making sure everybody’s hair looked right and everybody had lunch money and notebooks and
things. But she did finally get quiet and we had family prayer. I remember my father walking back and forth. My father worked at night and normally he would have been asleep at that time, but he was awake and he was walking back and forth chomping on a cigar that wasn’t lit.

I expected I would go to school as I did before on a city bus. So, I walked a few blocks to the bus stop, got on the bus, and rode to within two blocks of the school. I got off the bus and I noticed along the street that there were many more cars than usual. And I remember hearing the murmur of a crowd. But, when I got to the corner where the school was, I was reassured seeing these solders circling school grounds. And I saw students going to school. I saw the guards break ranks as students approached the sidewalks so that they could pass through to get to school.

And [as] I approached the guards at the corner, as I had seen other students do, they closed ranks. So, I thought maybe I am not supposed to enter at this point. So, I walked further down the line of guards to where there was another sidewalk and I attempted to pass through there.
But when I stepped up, they crossed rifles. And again I said to myself, maybe I’m supposed to go down to where the main entrance is. So I walked toward the center of the street and when I got to about the middle and I approached the guard he directed me across the street into the crowd. It was only then that I realized that they were barring me so that I wouldn’t go to school.

As I stepped out into the street, the people who had been across the street start surging forward behind me. So, I headed in the opposite direction to where there was another bus stop. Safety to me meant getting to the bus stop. I think I sat there for a long time before the bus came. In the meantime, people were screaming behind me. What I would have described as a crowd before, to my ears sounded like a mob.¹

1. Study the photographs carefully. Describe what you see. Where are people standing? How are they relating to one another? If you were there, what sounds might you hear? If you were a reporter, whom would you want to interview? What questions might you ask?

2. Elizabeth tells her story of her first day at Central High School in Little Rock from her point of view. Choose one person in the preceding photograph and write a short story about how that individual happened to be at Central High School that morning. What choices did that individual make?

¹ Elizabeth Eckford, interviewed by Facing History and Ourselves, 1997.
As you watch film clips and read the information provided in this part of the unit, highlight the events that you think are central to the story. Which event marks a turning point in the story? A turning point is an event that marks an important change of course or an event on which important developments depend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>May 24, 1955</td>
<td>The school board votes unanimously to adopt Superintendent Virgil Blossom’s plan of gradual integration. Integration will start in September 1957 at the high school level and add lower grades over a period of six years.</td>
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<td>February 8, 1956</td>
<td>The NAACP files suit on behalf of 33 African American children.</td>
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<td>August 28, 1956</td>
<td>Federal Judge John E. Miller dismisses the NAACP suit, declaring that the Little Rock School Board acted in “utmost good faith.”</td>
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<td>Spring 1957</td>
<td>The school board determines that 517 black students live in the Central High district. Following interviews with the superintendent and staff, 17 are selected for the first year of integration at Central. Eight later decide to remain at Horace Mann High School.</td>
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<td>August 27, 1957</td>
<td>A member of the Mothers’ League of Central High is granted an injunction to temporarily stop school integration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 30, 1957</td>
<td>Federal District Judge Ronald Davies overturns the injunction and orders integration to proceed as planned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2, 1957</td>
<td>Governor Orval Faubus sends the Arkansas National Guard to Central High School to “preserve the peace and avoid violence.”</td>
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September 3, 1957  Judge Davies orders desegregation to begin September 4.

September 4, 1957  The nine black students try to enter Central High only to be turned away by the National Guard.

September 10, 1957  The US Department of Justice files an injunction against Governor Faubus to force him to obey Judge Davies's desegregation order.

September 14, 1957  President Dwight D. Eisenhower meets with Governor Faubus in Newport, Rhode Island, to discuss desegregation in Little Rock.

September 20, 1957  Judge Davies orders Governor Faubus to remove the National Guard. Faubus announces he will obey the order in a televised speech but asks African Americans to stay away from the high school.

September 23, 1957  When a mob outside the school learns the African Americans students have entered Central High, riots follow. The African American students are taken out of the school through a side door.

September 24, 1957  Little Rock Mayor Woodrow Mann asks President Eisenhower for help in maintaining order. The president announces that he is sending 1,000 members of the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock and federalizes the Arkansas National Guard.

September 25, 1957  Federal troops escort the Little Rock Nine to classes at Central High.

1 A court order that stops a person from doing something or requires a person to do something.
REPRODUCIBLE

SHAPING PUBLIC OPINION

In 1957, Jesús Colón wrote a newspaper column about the Little Rock Nine. In it, he describes what a friend in New York did a few days after Governor Faubus called out the National Guard.

Joe took a rough piece of paper from the factory and wrote a request to the President of the United States to use his federal and military powers to keep open the doors of the high school to the Negro children. Joe then asked the sixty workers in his shop to sign their names to the request. About forty of them signed. Then Joe put the whole thing in an envelope and sent it to President Eisenhower. Joe is a white worker. Can you imagine the effect in the White House if other Joes in thousands of other factories and offices all over the nation would have done the same? Enough said.1

1. How would you answer Colón’s question?

2. What is Colón suggesting about the way he and other Americans could influence the decision the president made?

3. What is your opinion of Joe’s idea? Should the president of the United States be influenced by the opinions of ordinary citizens?

4. What other ways might ordinary citizens make their views known? How do you make your voice heard?

1 Jesús Colón, A Puerto Rican in New York (Mainstream, 1961).
Read the speech that President Eisenhower gave to the nation on September 24, 1957. Underline the sentences that reveal the things he took into account in making his decision. Then answer the questions that follow.

My Fellow Citizens . . . I must speak to you about the serious situation that has arisen in Little Rock. . . . This morning the mob again gathered in front of the Central High School of Little Rock, obviously for the purpose of again preventing the carrying out of the court’s order relating to the admission of Negro children to that school.

Whenever normal agencies prove inadequate to the task and it becomes necessary for the executive branch of the federal government to use its powers and authority to uphold federal courts, the president’s responsibility is inescapable.

In accordance with that responsibility, I have today issued an Executive Order directing the use of troops under federal authority to aid in the execution of federal law at Little Rock, Arkansas. . . .

As you know, the Supreme Court of the United States has decided that separate public educational facilities for the races are inherently unequal and therefore compulsory school segregation laws are unconstitutional. . . . During the past several years, many communities in our southern states have instituted public school plans for gradual progress in the enrollment and attendance of school children of all races in order to bring themselves into compliance with the law of the land. They thus demonstrated to the world that we are a nation in which laws, not men, are supreme. I regret to say that this truth—the cornerstone of our liberties—was not observed in this instance. . . .

The very basis of our individual rights and freedoms rests upon the certainty that the president and the executive branch of government will support and insure the carrying out of the decisions of the federal courts, even, when necessary, with all the means at the president’s command. . . .

Mob rule cannot be allowed to override the decisions of our courts.

Now, let me make it very clear that federal troops are not being used to relieve local and state authorities of their primary duty to preserve the peace and order of the community. . . .

The proper use of the powers of the executive branch to enforce the orders of a federal court is limited to extraordinary and compelling circumstances. Manifestly, such
an extreme situation has been created in Little Rock. This challenge must be met and with such measures as will preserve to the people as a whole their lawfully protected rights in a climate permitting their free and fair exercise.

The overwhelming majority of our people in every section of the country are united in their respect for observance of the law—even in those cases where they may disagree with that law. . . . A foundation of our American way of life is our national respect for law.

In the South, as elsewhere, citizens are keenly aware of the tremendous disservice that has been done to the people of Arkansas in the eyes of the nation, and that has been done to the nation in the eyes of the world.

At a time when we face grave situations abroad because of the hatred that communism bears toward a system of government based on human rights, it would be difficult to exaggerate the harm that is being done to the prestige and influence, and indeed to the safety, of our nation and the world. . . .

And so, with deep confidence, I call upon the citizens of the state of Arkansas to assist in bringing an immediate end to all interference with the law and its processes. If resistance to the federal court orders ceases at once, . . . Little Rock will return to its normal habits of peace and order and a blot upon the fair name and high honor of our nation in the world will be removed. Thus will be restored the image of America and of all its parts as one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.\(^1\)

1. How does Eisenhower’s view of his responsibilities as president affect the choice he makes?

2. What does he see as the responsibilities of every American citizen?

\(^1\) Reprinted from the Arkansas Gazette, September 23, 1957.
HOW DID OTHERS SEE US?

Newspapers from around the world commented on the 1957 school integration crisis in Little Rock.

**Manchester Guardian (UK)** — The real test is going forward in the minds of parents, teachers, local officials — all those who go to make up public opinion in Little Rock — and the real lesson is to be drawn from what has now happened at Clinton, Tenn. There Negro children are sitting in the same classroom as white, and there has been no trouble. This is true also of a number of other Southern towns that do not break into the headlines. Tension has not vanished; there will be more incidents and more noise. But the noise is the slow grind of change, and it is a healthy noise.

**Times of Indonesia** — Americans must ask themselves . . . whether Governor Faubus should not be hauled before the Un-American Activities Committee for alienating half the world from the United States.

**Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)** — The time for a compromise is clearly at an end. President Eisenhower’s determination to “follow through” over Little Rock will be welcomed by his friends in the free world no less than by enlightened Americans.

**Mexico City El Nacional** — Racism and its methods of segregation must be [wiped out] forever. The honor of the United States and the conception itself of true civilization and Christian conscience demand it.

**Toronto Globe & Mail (Canada)** — The theory, [tirelessly] spread by the Communists for decades, that the United States is the inveterate enemy of all colored people everywhere, is likely to win much wider support than ever before. This episode illustrates a deadly contradiction in United States life and policy.

**Tokyo News (Japan)** — Nearly 100 years after the death of Abraham Lincoln, endless disputes between the two races continue everywhere. It is sometimes difficult to understand why this problem should arise in the United States, the champion of democracy.

**Manila Herald (Philippines)** — It is a test right in America’s home grounds to determine how really sincere the American people are in their avowals of equal justice and fair play—a doctrine repeatedly dinned into the ears of their allies by American leaders.
Facing History and Ourselves

Reprinted from the Arkansas Gazette, September 23, 1957.
In her book, Daisy Bates, president of the Arkansas branch of the NAACP in the 1950s, reported a conversation with Dr. Benjamin Fine, the education editor of the New York Times. He was among the first reporters to cover the Little Rock story. Fine came to her house a few days after the National Guard kept Elizabeth Eckford from entering the school. Bates quotes Fine as saying:

“I was standing in front of the school that day. Suddenly there was a shout — ‘They’re here! The niggers are coming!’ I saw a sweet little girl who looked about fifteen, walking alone. She tried several times to pass through the guards. The last time she tried, they put their bayonets in front of her. When they did this, she became panicky. For a moment she just stood there trembling. Then she seemed to calm down and started walking toward the bus stop with the mob baying at her heels like a pack of hounds. The women were shouting, ‘Get her! Lynch her!’ The men were yelling, ‘Go home, you bastard of a black bitch!’ She finally made it to the bus stop and sat down on the bench. I sat down beside her and said, ‘I’m a reporter from The New York Times. May I have your name?’ She just sat there, her head down. Tears were streaming down her cheeks from under her sunglasses. Daisy, I don’t know what made me put my arm around her, lifting her chin, saying, ‘Don’t let them see you cry.’ Maybe she reminded me of my fifteen-year-old daughter, Jill.

“There must have been five hundred around us by this time. I vaguely remember someone hollering, ‘Get a rope and drag her over to this tree.’ Suddenly I saw a white-haired, kind-faced woman fighting her way through the mob. She looked at Elizabeth and then screamed at the mob, ‘Leave this child alone! Why are you tormenting her? Six months from now, you will hang your heads in shame.’ The mob shouted, ‘Another nigger-lover. Get out of here!’ The woman, who I found out later was Mrs. Grace Lorch, the wife of Dr. Lee Lorch, professor at Philander Smith College, turned to me and said, ‘We have to do something. Let’s try to get a cab.’

“We took Elizabeth across the street to the drugstore. I remained on the sidewalk with Elizabeth while Mrs. Lorch tried to enter the drugstore to call a cab. But the hoodlums slammed the door in her face and wouldn’t let her in. She pleaded with them to call a cab for the child. They closed in on her saying, ‘Get out of here, you bitch!’ Just then the city bus came. Mrs. Lorch and Elizabeth got on. Elizabeth must have been in a state of shock. She never uttered a word. When the bus pulled away, the mob closed in around me. ‘We saw you put your arm around that little bitch. Now it’s your turn.’ A drab, middle-aged woman said viciously, ‘Grab him and kick him in the balls!’ A girl I had seen hustling in one of the local bars screamed, ‘A dirty New York Jew! Get him!’ A man asked me, ‘Are you a Jew?’ I said, ‘Yes.’ He then said to the mob, ‘Let him be! We’ll take care of him later.’
“The irony of it all, Daisy, is that during all this time the national guardsmen made no effort to protect Elizabeth or help me. Instead, they threatened to have me arrested for inciting to riot.”

1. Why does Benjamin Fine think he tried to help Elizabeth Eckford? Did he do the right thing?

2. What is the danger in a journalist becoming a part of the story he or she is reporting?

3. David Halberstam, a young reporter in the 1950s, wrote that when Ben Fine comforted Elizabeth Eckford, he lost “his cool”: “He had started to argue with the mob and the Times had been forced to bring him back to New York.” Halberstam maintains that however a reporter “feels about the events taking place in front of him, it has to be kept bottled up.” What is he suggesting about the role of a reporter? To what extent do you think Fine would agree? Did the Times do the right thing when it replaced Fine with another reporter?

2 David Halberstam, The Fifties (Fawcett Books, 1993), 681–82.
“I DECIDED NOT TO RUN”

The coverage of the Little Rock crisis in the documentary series *Eyes on the Prize* shows the mob attacking four African American journalists—reporters Alex Wilson of the *Memphis Tri-State Defender*, James Hicks of the *Amsterdam News*, Moses J. Newson of the *Baltimore Afro-American*, and photographer Earl Davy of Little Rock. Wilson was the reporter who was hit with a brick. Shortly after he was attacked, Wilson wrote about what happened to him on the morning that the crowd at Central High School turned violent and the choice he made that day:

The disgraceful incident . . . occurred about 8:20 a.m. Monday, near the 16th and Park Street entrance of Central High.

I parked my car about two blocks from the intersection. Newson and I were in front with Hicks and Davy following, when we began the long, apprehensive walk.

We had firsthand knowledge of where the nine stout-hearted Negro students were to enter; and we set off at a fast clip to be on hand when they arrived at the campus entrance.

About midway of the final block, we picked up a tail of two whites. They made no comment. We kept moving forward.

A crowd of about one hundred faced the school (away from us), waiting for the nine students to appear.

Then, someone in the crowd of whites spotted us advancing.

Suddenly the angry eyes of the entire pack were upon us. We moved forward to within ten feet of the mob. Two men spread their arms in eagle fashion. One shouted: “You’ll not pass!”

I tried to move to the left of the mob, but my efforts were thwarted. I made a half-turn left from the sidewalk and went over to a Little Rock policeman, who was standing mid-center of the street.

“What is your business?” he asked. I presented my press card. He took his time checking it. Then he said: “You better leave. Go on across the sidewalk” (away from the mob at my heels).

I followed his suggestion. After taking several steps, I looked back. The officer was near the opposite sidewalk, leaving the angry pack to track me.

The mob struck. I saw Davy being roughed up. Hicks and Newson were retreating from kicks and blows. I stopped momentarily, as the boots and jeers behind me increased.
Strangely the vision of Elizabeth Eckford, one of the nine students, flashed before me as she with dignity strode through a jeering, hooting gauntlet of segregationists several days ago. Maybe, too, my training as a U.S. Marine in World War II and my experience as a war correspondent in Korea, and work on the Emmett Till case [a young African American boy who was lynched in Money, Mississippi, for whistling at a white woman], influenced my decision during that moment of crisis.

I decided not to run. If I were to be beaten, I'd take it walking if I could—not running.¹

1. Why did Wilson refuse to run? What message was he trying to send? At whom was that message aimed? What individuals and experiences inspired his decision?

2. David Halberstam writes that however a reporter “feels about the events taking place in front of him, it has to be kept bottled up.” What is Halberstam suggesting about the role of a reporter? To what extent do you think Alex Wilson would agree?

3. Why do you think Wilson and the other African American reporters found themselves part of the story rather than simply reporters of the story? What is the danger in becoming part of the story?

¹ Will Counts, A Life Is More Than a Moment: The Desegregation of Little Rock’s Central High (Indiana University Press, 1999), 49, 51.
As you read and complete the activities in this part of the unit, highlight the events that you think are central to the story. Which event is a turning point in the story? A turning point is an event that marks an important change of course or an event on which important developments depend.

**September 25, 1957** Federal troops escort the Little Rock Nine to classes at Central High.

**October 17, 1957** Judge Davies dismisses a petition by the Mothers’ League to remove the federal troops who are in Little Rock in violation of state and federal constitutions.

**December 1957** Taunted by white male students, Minnijean Brown dumps a bowl of chili on the boys harassing her in the cafeteria. She is suspended for six days.

**February 6, 1958** Following additional confrontations with white students, Minnijean Brown is suspended by the Board of Education for the remainder of the school year. She transfers to New Lincoln High School in New York City.

**February 20, 1958** The Little Rock School Board files a request for permission to delay integration until effective legal means exist for integrating the schools without impairing the quality of the educational programs.

**May 27, 1958** Ernest Green becomes the first African American student to graduate from Central High School. He joins 600 senior classmates in commencement ceremonies as federal troops and city police are on hand.
WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS DO?

Throughout the 1957–1958 school year, the principal of Central High School issued bulletins to students and teachers. The bulletin issued on September 25, 1957, read as follows:

This is the second bulletin to be read without discussion in your homeroom. Homeroom period will be extended till 9:05 this morning. Last night, the Federal Court ordered the Board of Education to begin today the integration of white and Negro pupils at the high school level, according to the plan of limited integration approved by that court and sustained on appeal. This Federal Court approved plan recognized the responsibility of the Board of Education to preserve the high quality of education in our schools. In order to carry out the directions of the Court, a group of qualified Negro pupils have been enrolled in Central High School this year. These students may be in attendance today, or at any future time. As a student in Central High School, you have certain duties to yourself and your school, and your community. You should know your responsibilities:

You have a responsibility to yourself:

a. Your first and immediate job is to get an education of the highest quality possible. Any disorder, confusion, disagreement, or quarreling at or around school will interfere with classroom work. Such disorder, disorderly gatherings, or excitement anywhere will make it hard for you to study. For the sake of your progress in school, refuse to be drawn into any disputes or disputing groups.

b. Any person interfering by word or action with the orderly carrying out of a direction from the Federal Court may be judged in contempt of that Court and will be subject to arrest and prosecution by the Federal Government. This is a serious offense and is punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both. Any name-calling, demonstrations, or similar disorder could be interpreted as contempt of court. This is no light matter.

You have a responsibility to your school:

Central High School has a reputation as one of the leading public high schools of the nation. It is important to each of us to keep it in that position. We can do that if each pupil and teacher will go quietly about our business here at school — learning and teaching. There must be no “incidents” at school.
You have a responsibility to your city, state, and nation:

The eyes of the nation and of the world are on our community during these days. The good name of our community will suffer if we become disorderly. How you or I conduct ourselves can help or hurt the reputation of our city, our state, and our nation. We can be known as law-abiding and peace-loving, or as quarrelsome and unintelligent. You and I can go about our business here and keep the headlines the kind that will make people want to live in Little Rock, Arkansas, or the U.S.A. — or we can make people scornful of our community as a place where people cannot manage to live peaceably.

From the cooperative expressions we have heard from numbers of our students, we are expecting the whole-hearted cooperation of our student body in these matters of importance to their individual records, to the good name of our school, and to responsible citizenship.

Jess W. Matthews, Principal

Georgia Dortch and Jane Emery, the co-editors of the Central High School newspaper, also expressed their views on how students ought to behave. On October 3, 1957, shortly after soldiers escorted the Little Rock Nine to school, the two girls wrote an editorial titled “The Price We Pay.”

On the 25th of September, with few words and fixed bayonets, crack paratroopers of the U.S. Army quickly dispersed the crowds that had gathered around Central and carried out the court order for integration. No violent incidents, as had previously occurred, were reported.

No matter what our personal opinions may be, we cannot be proud of the violence that occurred around our school that made it necessary for the use of these Federal troops. Looking back on this year will probably be with regret that integration could not have been accomplished peacefully, without incident, without publicity.

But the future remains.

And with the future remain many questions. Will there be more violence? How long will troop-protected education be necessary? Will our own educations be retarded?

The only answer to all these questions is for each individual to maintain a sensible, peaceful neutrality; to accept the situation without demonstration, no matter what personal views are entertained; and to make these, your years in Little Rock Central High School, the happiest and most fruitful of your academic education.
1. How does the principal define good citizenship? How do the editors of the school paper define the term? How do you define it?

2. With a partner, write your own set of suggestions for students at Central High School.

3. What would you have written if you were the principal or the editors of the school paper?

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1 Will Counts, A Life Is More Than a Moment: The Desegregation of Little Rock’s Central High (Indiana University Press, 1999), 49, 51.
REPRODUCIBLE

“THIS WAS A GOLD RING”

A Denver reporter interviewed Carlotta Walls LaNier about her experiences at Central High School. The story described the then 14-year-old’s decision to attend the school.

Central felt like the natural choice. . . .

“I was supposed to go to school there,” LaNier said. “I passed it every day on the way to junior high school. I played baseball with the white kids all summer long. It seemed like a natural progression to go to school with them. No one expected all this.”

“I knew it was important, but I didn’t know what it would become,” LaNier said. “I knew it was a step in the right direction. But I credit my parents for having those dreams — for having dreams and grasping opportunity.”

She didn’t tell her parents she was one of 147 black children to sign up to attend Central in the spring.

When the registration card arrived in July — along with a note to meet with the superintendent — it generated little discussion at home.

“In my family it was expected you would reach for an opportunity,” LaNier said. “This was a gold ring.”

The difference was stark between white Central High — hailed as the largest, most expensive, most beautiful high school in the nation when it was built in 1927 — and black Dunbar High — where LaNier would have gone to school and where her mother had graduated.

Central had 11,000 library books, compared with 5,000 at Dunbar. Central cost $1.5 million to build, Dunbar cost $400,000. Central had 100 classrooms, Dunbar 34. Central had science labs and athletic facilities. Dunbar had neither. The students at Dunbar received Central’s hand-me-down textbooks.

“I knew when the white kids got new textbooks. It always made me happy because I knew we were going to get their old ones,” LaNier said.

School Superintendent Virgil Blossom told the families of the 39 black children who eventually registered at Central that the students would be expelled if they retaliated against their abusers and, to minimize conflict, they wouldn’t be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities. LaNier gave up student council and the basketball team. Others among the nine gave up track, choir and band.

“When you’re going to school with all these opportunities and you can’t take advantage of them, that’s a little hurtful,” LaNier said. “But we knew that going in.”
After the meeting, the number of black students dwindled to 10. One girl didn’t return after being confronted by the threatening mob the first day. The Little Rock Nine were born.

In 1957, Little Rock was a moderate Southern town in which whites and blacks generally got along. . . . But LaNier swam in a segregated pool. She was relegated to the balcony in the movie theater, was allowed at the zoo only on certain days and often had to wait until she got home to use the bathroom.

LaNier was 11 when the Brown decision was handed down. “I knew how important it was,” she said. “It was in our Weekly Reader in the sixth grade. It was reinforced in my elementary school and my church and my community. I knew what it meant — exactly.”

She was excited by the prospect of her first day of school on Sept. 4, 1957, as she was every year.

“The first day of school was always a good day,” LaNier said. “I had never missed a day of school since I started in the first grade.”

That was about to change. As she arrived for her first day of high school, she was stunned by what she saw: a riotous crowd and National Guard soldiers brought in by Gov. Orval Faubus to deny them entrance to Central High, a school her grandfather, a mason, helped build. . . .

Eight of the nine met at 13th and Park streets a block from school, where they were escorted by a group of supporters — NAACP leaders, ministers and rabbis.

The ninth, 15-year-old Elizabeth Eckford, didn’t get the message and faced the jeering mob alone amid threats of lynching. . . .

The nine returned to school three weeks later — on Sept. 23 — after a federal judge denied a school board request to suspend the integration plan. Television viewers nationwide watched as rioting broke out and the students were smuggled out a side door before noon. President Dwight Eisenhower, calling the rioting “disgraceful,” ordered 1,200 members of the 101st Airborne Division to protect the children, and he placed the Arkansas National Guard under federal orders.

On Sept. 25 — the children’s third attempt at a full day of school — they were escorted into Central by the soldiers. Each child was assigned a bodyguard.

A week later, the 101st Airborne turned over duties to the federalized Arkansas National Guard, and discipline problems broke out. The nine were harassed and intimidated. Gloria Ray was hit by a rock and pushed down a flight of stairs. Minnijean Brown was suspended for dumping lunchroom chili on antagonists and eventually expelled. Two white students were suspended for wearing cards that read, “One down . . . Eight to go.”

Carlotta Walls, whose heels were stepped on so often they bled, quietly made the honor roll.1

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REPRODUCIBLE

CAN ONE STUDENT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

At the beginning of the school year, Jane Emery, the co-editor of the *Tiger*, Central High School’s newspaper, wrote an editorial that said in part:

You are being watched! Today the world is watching you, the students of Central High . . .

Will you be stubborn, obstinate, or refuse to listen to both sides of the question?

Will your knowledge of science help you determine your action or will you let customs, superstition, or tradition determine the decision for you? . . .

The challenge is yours, as future adults of America, to prove your maturity, intelligence, and ability to make decisions by how you react, behave, and conduct yourself in this controversial question. What is your answer to this challenge?

As you read about the various ways students at Central High responded to that challenge, use colored pencils to underline the choice they made and at least one consequence of that choice. Choose one color for the choice and a second color for the consequences or results of that choice. Which choices made a difference?

1. In 2004, Elizabeth Eckford sat down with CNN and recalled the events of the 1957–1958 school year at Central High School. When the reporter asked her about the atmosphere at school, she replied:

We were physically assaulted every day. The principal’s rule was that, no matter what was reported, he wouldn’t act on any reports if a teacher didn’t corroborate what we said happened. So, in essence, students had free reign to attack us every day. It was a coordinated group of about 55 students who attacked us out of 1,900 students at the school.

A lot of people think, “We didn’t know what was going on.” People around me that I saw didn’t react to what they saw or what they had to have heard. They turned their backs. It was impossible to have a friend. This was not anything like a normal environment. Anybody that would talk to us got a lot of pressure.
There are two students I want to talk about that persisted in talking to me in speech class. Actually I was a very, very shy person, but I felt comfortable, felt that I belonged in that one class. At the end of the day, two people treated me like a human being (starts to cry). And when they just . . . they persisted in talking to me every day like any other student. They didn’t ask me something to see what “it” sounded like. They just talked to me.

I didn’t know what happened to them. I knew something had to be happening to them. I didn’t find out until 1996 what had happened to them. There was a boy and there was a girl. The boy was a senior, and there’s a graduation picture of him standing next to Ernest Green and a bunch of students in the background looking at them and talking about them, just ’cause he was standing near Ernest Green.

But I found out in ’96, because I had talked about these students over the years. In the ’60s I started naming them. So, they had heard about me, and what it meant to me.

One girl named Ann Williams I found out didn’t live in Little Rock. She said her family lived on a farm outside the city, and that her father had to hire armed guards for their home.

And the other student is Ken Reinhardt. Ken was harassed. He’d been knocked down, one time, he said, right in front of the gym teacher and the gym teacher did nothing.¹

2. In an article titled “Fear Is Portable,” Terrence J. Roberts writes of his algebra class:

Algebra class was a haven for me. The teacher, Mrs. Helen Conrad, let it be known from the first day that she would tolerate no nonsense from anyone who opposed my presence. She was emphatic about it and the class responded accordingly. It was in this class also that I met Robin Woods, a white student who shared her textbook with me. Since my books and other school supplies were routinely destroyed by fellow students, I would come to class often with no supplies. Robin simply pulled her desk next to mine and we shared her book — an act that did not win her friends or favor. Her act of kindness was interpreted as a violation of the social code that outlawed any contact between black students and white students, especially black males and white females. Students who befriended any of the nine of us were labeled “nigger lovers” and shunned by those who wanted to preserve the old social order. Robin did not allow that kind of thinking to interfere with her choices.²
3. In her memoir, *Warriors Don’t Cry*, Melba Pattillo Beals recalls a choice a classmate made on a cold day in March:

As I stood alone outside the Sixteenth Street entrance of Central High, I was shivering against the cold, waiting for my ride home that Friday afternoon. I was immersed in fantasies about my quiet, safe weekend. My body was there, but my mind was somewhere else.

Suddenly there was a voice in the distance, calling my name, jolting me from my thoughts. “It’s nigger Melba.” It was Andy’s voice shouting at me. [Andy was a white student who harassed Melba.] My heart started beating fast. He was more than a block away, coming up from the playing field with a group of his friends. They were walking fast, almost galloping. Even if I started running, I couldn’t out-distance all of them. I looked around frantically, searching for help.

“Hey, Melba, you gotta get out of here.” The second voice was much closer. I wasn’t alone. There was a sleek, muscular boy, about six feet tall, wearing a varsity jacket and a cap, with a bushy shock of blond curls peeking from beneath it. He was leaning against the passenger side of a 1949 Chevy parked at the curb, only a few feet to my left. Was he one of Andy’s friends, who’d come to corner me and hold me there? His face looked familiar to me. He resembled one of those big tough boys who got their kicks taunting me. But why wasn’t he coming toward me, shouting ugly words like the others?

“Nigger, nigger on the wall, who’s the deadest of them all,” Andy shouted as he hesitated, waiting for his friends. Now they were only about a quarter of a block away. “Stand still, don’t run, ‘cause if you do, it’ll be worse for you,” Andy shouted.

What now? My mind scrambled to figure out what I should do.

“Melba,” the blond boy whispered my name, “listen to me. I’m gonna call you ‘nigger’ — loud. I’m gonna curse at you, but I’m gonna put my keys on the trunk of this car. Get out of here now. My name is Link, I’ll call you later.”

“But I can’t do that. . . .”

“You don’t have any choice,” he whispered. “Go!” I turned to see that Andy and his friends were only a short distance away. I wasn’t even sure that I could make it to the car. . . .

“Hey, Andy, we’re gonna have us some nigger tonight.” I heard Link shout as he walked away from the car, toward them. I grabbed the keys and ran around quickly to open the door on the driver’s side. I hopped in and locked all the doors.
By the time I turned the key in the engine, Andy was clawing at the lock, while the other boys popped off the windshield wipers, and tried to get into the passenger’s side. Link stood glaring at me with an anxious look on his face, spewing hate words just like them. I pressed down the clutch, shifted into first gear, and the car jumped forward. Andy was still running alongside, holding on to the door handle, but as I sped up, he had to let go.³

After that incident, Link would often contact Melba to warn her of threats from his friends.

4. Jane Emery was a white student at Central High. She was the co-editor of the *Tiger*, the school paper. She wrote the editorial on page 1 of this reproducible. In a 1999 interview, she recalled a choice she made at the end of the school year:

Towards the end of the year, graduation, Mrs. Huckaby [the vice principal of girls at Central High School] called five of us into her room . . . and she said . . . [during graduation] one of the five of us would be walking with Ernest Green.

And so we could decide what we wanted to do, and Ernest understood if we were uncomfortable. . . .

There were five of us brought in . . . And I was the middle person, so of the five people, I would be the one, and so since they didn’t know who was going to be absent, they would call five of us. And I didn’t realize that I was going to be it. And I said, “I have no problem, I’ll walk with him,” and I really thought that was silly. And I didn’t think anything about it.

[Then] we started getting obscene phone calls [at] my home. My mother really got scared. I mean things like . . . “Are you a nigger lover, are you going to walk with him? You want your daughter to marry a nigger?” And it went on ’til late at night, and my mother took the phone off the hook, but she was absolutely scared to death, you know like the house was going to be blown up. . . . I was angry at the [whites] who did that, who really angered me. So, that just made me more determined that I was going to walk with him. And I walked with him, that was the first I ever talked to him.”⁴

1 “Eckford: Central High in 1957 ‘was not . . . a normal environment,’” CNN.com, May 17, 2004.
4 Beth Roy, *Bitters In the Honey* (University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 224.
CATEGORIZING DECISIONS

Adults, both black and white, made decisions about the crisis in Little Rock. As you read about the various ways teachers, parents, and others in the community responded to events, use colored pencils to underline the choices they made and at least one consequence of that choice. Choose one color for the choice and a second color for the consequences or results of that choice. Then compare and contrast these choices with those you examined in “Can One Student Make a Difference?” What similarities do you notice? What differences do you consider most striking?

1. Daisy Bates, the president of the Arkansas NAACP, not only advised the Little Rock Nine but also served as their advocate. After Jefferson Thomas was physically beaten twice within a single week, she made a decision. She writes:

   After talking with Mr. Thomas, I checked my daily records. The boy who attacked Jeff had been repeatedly reported to school authorities for hazing the Negro students.

   At nine o’clock that morning, when Superintendent Blossom arrived at his office, Clarence Laws and I were waiting to see him. We asked him what he intended to do about the continued brutal attacks on the children by the organized gang—attacks that had been reported many times. He said he was not aware of a large number of repeaters. We showed him the record of the pupils who had taken part in various attacks. As he looked at the long list of names and the repeated brutalities against the nine children, his expression lost some of its hardness and his face seemed to soften. Momentarily there was no sign of the defiant attitude I had observed in him whenever anyone dared criticize him or his desegregation plan. Then as he straightened his shoulders, I said, “If you are really interested in clearing up this trouble, you should expel some of these repeated troublemakers.”

   He looked at me and blurted, “You can’t tell me how to run my school.” “No, I can’t,” I retorted, “but it’s up to you—not the Army—to maintain discipline inside the school. By not doing so, you are subjecting the children to physical torture that you will have to live with the rest of your life.” As we left his office, I realized that we would have to seek help from some other source.
2. Daisy Bates writes:

One day Gloria [Ray] started on her way down from the third floor of Central High School. She had taken only a few steps down the flight of steel steps when she heard a woman’s scream from behind her. Gloria quickly connected the scream with some impending danger to herself. And she was right.

A boy had silently been following her down the stairway. He was about to lunge at her to push her down the flight of stairs. The scream had alerted Gloria to the attack from behind. . . .

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 class breaks. In this way they attempted to discourage the segregationist students from torturing the Negro children.

One of the teachers had been standing in the doorway of her classroom looking down the stairway. It was she who had witnessed the attack on Gloria and had screamed the alert.

3. Ann Thompson’s parents made a decision soon after the school board announced plans to integrate Central High School. She recalls:

My family were just ordinary, salt-of-the earth people. My dad was a hardworking man who lived day-by-day, week-by-week. Although we were very poor, I didn’t really know it. I felt as though I was the luckiest person in the world. Our life was very typical. Every day, I went off to school, my dad went off to work, and my mom worked hard at home. My parents’ main concerns were making a living and raising their family.

Segregation was simply the way of life; we never knew anything else. As it was in most southern cities, the blacks had their part of town, and the whites had their part. I can’t remember ever going into a restaurant and seeing blacks there. I never really thought about it. My parents were wonderful people, but they were also a product of their society. We were all taught that you just don’t mix. We were very ignorant about segregation and integration. It wasn’t even an issue until we found out that they were going to integrate Little Rock Central High.²

I was a fifteen-year-old tenth grader when they made the announcement. At first, many of the parents refused to believe that it was actually going to happen. Some parents formed groups and committees to try and stop it, but my parents didn’t
really take part in any of that. It’s not that they weren’t interested; they just didn’t know what to do or where to go. Ultimately, they just decided that their child was not going to an integrated school, and that was that. I don’t think it was really out of hate for anyone. I think it was out of ignorance and fear of the unknown. “What would this lead to?” “What would be next?” That was the mind-set; people just didn’t know what to expect. And we couldn’t understand why they would ever want to leave their black school and come to Central in the first place.\(^3\)

4. Daisy Bates writes:

When Governor Faubus was forced by the Federal Court to withdraw the Arkansas national guardsmen and to stop interfering with integration at Central High, [Eugene] Smith was Assistant Chief of Police. When school authorities wondered how they could protect the Negro students, Smith came to their aid. “Just give me the men and I will protect the children,” he said.

When I was told to have the students assemble at my house by 8:15 a.m. on September 23, I asked who would protect the students. The reply was: “Smith, of course.”

At 6 a.m. the next morning, facing a mob of one thousand, Smith stood with one hundred of the department’s best men, blockading the streets to Central—a school he and his children had attended. Later, when the mob learned that the Negro students had gone inside the school, it surged against the police lines, ignoring Gene Smith’s command to halt. One of the mob’s leaders ran up to Smith and Smith knocked him to the pavement. Many were arrested and sent to jail.

. . . But when reporters questioned Smith on how he stood on the issue of integration, he replied, “That’s out of my province. Our function is to do everything we can to protect life and property and preserve the public peace. And that’s what we do every day.”\(^4\)

5. Daisy Bates writes:

Mr. [Dunbar] Ogden was a Southerner whose roots lay deep in the old plantation tradition: his heritage was linked to the slave-owning South. His great-grandfather, David Hunt, was said to have owned more slaves than any other man in Mississippi—and probably the South. . . . His father held a high ministerial post in the Presbyterian Church. . . .
The first time Mr. Ogden attracted my attention was when he was elected President of the Greater Little Rock Interracial Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance in June, 1957. It was this that led me to telephone and ask him to walk with the students to Central High School.

When I talked to him that night, he was momentarily hesitant. “If it’s God’s will, I’ll be there.” Later he admitted that much of his hesitancy was due to simple fear. But much in his background and tradition also caused him to wonder and hesitate. “I was still thinking in terms of ‘separate but equal,’” he explained. “I was incapable of a real relationship with Negro friends because I was still condescending in my attitude.”

The next morning, when the children assembled to go to school, Mr. Ogden was there to walk with them. With him was his son David. The father was pleased and proud that his son had accompanied him. “When I left the house this morning,” he told me, “I wasn’t sure how many would be here. I phoned all the ministers that I thought might come, but there was doubt in their voices. ‘Isn’t this a bit dramatic?’ ‘Is this the responsibility of the ministry?’ In fact, more than one replied, ‘I’m not sure that this is the will of God.’ But as I was getting into the car, David came out of the house and said, ‘Dad, I’ll go with you. You may need a bodyguard.’”

Only three ministers had come, and Mr. Ogden said somewhat apologetically, “I’m very discouraged that I wasn’t able to get more, but frankly, I had to pray for courage myself. All I could think of was a pop bottle hitting me on the back of the head.”

He never suspected that the white citizens of Little Rock would turn on him. He was, after all, a minister and a Southerner. But that day, when he saw the stored-up hate in the mob and their contorted faces, when he heard them screaming not only for the blood of the nine Negro children but for his and all connected with him, he realized how vicious was the system under which he had lived all his life. “I became aware of where segregation led. I had to make a decision,” he told me later. . . .

To the segregationists, Mr. Ogden had become a traitor. . . . Members of his church stopped attending services, stopped giving financial support, and finally forced him to resign. . . .

The night before Mr. and Mrs. Ogden left Little Rock . . . they came to see me. . . .

“I’m sorry I got you into this,” I said.

He was silent for a moment. Then he said, “Don’t feel sorry. If I had to do it all over again, I would. I believe that I’m a better Christian for having been privileged to participate in such a worthy cause.”

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5 Beth Roy, *Bitters In the Honey* (University of Arkansas Press, 1999), 224.
As you read and discuss this part of the unit, highlight the events that you think are central to the story. Which event marks a turning point in the story? A turning point is an event that marks an important change of course or an event on which important developments depend.

**February 20, 1958**  
The Little Rock School Board asks the federal court for permission to delay integration.

**June 21, 1958**  
Federal District Judge Harry Lemley grants a delay until January 1961. The NAACP appeals the decision.

**August 18, 1958**  
The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis overturns the district court's decision by a vote of six to one.

**August 21, 1958**  
The school board appeals the decision to the Supreme Court.

**August 25, 1958**  
The US Supreme Court announces a special session to discuss the Little Rock school desegregation issue.

**August 26, 1958**  
At Faubus’s request, the Arkansas legislature passes bills that would allow him to close public schools to avoid integration and to rent the closed schools to private school corporations. Faubus delays signing the bills into law until the Supreme Court rules on the school board’s appeal.

**September 12, 1958**  
The Supreme Court rules that integration must continue. The justices announce they will give the reasons for their decision no later than October 6. Faubus signs into law the bills the legislature passed in August. The governor also calls for a special election on September 27 to decide whether the schools should integrate or close.
September 16, 1958  A group of white women who favor limited integration organizes the Women’s Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools. They are the first to challenge the governor by taking a stand against segregation.

September 19, 1958  Sixty-five white students at Hall High School issue a statement calling for the immediate reopening of their school even if it means admitting African Americans.

September 23, 1958  Governor Faubus asks the school board to turn its authority over Little Rock’s public schools to a newly created private school corporation.

September 24, 1958  The NAACP challenges the constitutionality of the private school corporation.

September 27, 1958  Voters overwhelmingly oppose integration. At final count, 19,470 voted to close the schools rather than integrate. Only 7,561 voted to integrate.

September 29, 1958  The Supreme Court issues its opinion.
Facts of the Case

The governor and the Legislature of Arkansas openly resisted the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. They refused to obey court orders designed to implement school desegregation. Local officials delayed plans to do away with segregated public facilities.

Question Presented

Were Arkansas officials bound by federal court orders mandating desegregation?

Conclusion

In a signed, unanimous opinion, the Court held that the Arkansas officials were bound by federal court orders that rested on the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The Court noted that its interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment in *Brown* was the supreme law of the land and that it had a “binding effect” on the states. The Court reaffirmed its commitment to desegregation and repeated that legislatures are not at liberty to annul, or overturn, judgments of the Court.

In explaining its decision, the justices of the Supreme Court noted that they believed that the school board and the superintendent of schools acted in “good faith” during the 1957–1958 school year.

We likewise have accepted the findings of the District Court as to the conditions at Central High School during the 1957–1958 school year, and also the findings that the educational progress of all the students, white and colored, of that school has suffered and will continue to suffer if the conditions which prevailed last year are permitted to continue.

The significance of these findings, however, is to be considered in light of the fact [that these] conditions . . . are directly traceable to the actions of legislators and executive officials of the State of Arkansas. . . . In its petition . . . the School Board itself
describes the situation in this language: “The legislative, executive, and judicial departments of the state government opposed the desegregation of Little Rock schools by enacting laws, calling out troops, making statements [insulting] federal law and federal courts, and failing to utilize state law enforcement agencies and judicial processes to maintain public peace.” . . .

The controlling legal principles are plain. The command of the Fourteenth Amendment is that “no State shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” A State acts by its legislative, its executive, or its judicial authorities. It can act in no . . . other way. . . . In short, the constitutional rights of children not to be discriminated against in school admission on grounds of race or color declared by this Court in the Brown case can neither be [overturned] openly and directly by state legislators or state executive or judicial officers, nor [overturned] indirectly by them through evasive schemes for segregation.

The justices could have stopped at this point, but they chose instead to remind the governor and the legislature of their responsibilities under the US Constitution.

The Constitution created a government dedicated to equal justice under law. The Fourteenth Amendment embodied and emphasized that ideal. State support of segregated schools through any arrangement . . . cannot be squared with the Amendment's command that no State shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. . . . The principles announced in the [Brown] decision and the obedience of the States to them, according to the command of the Constitution, are indispensable for the protection of the freedoms guaranteed by our fundamental charter for all of us. Our constitutional ideal of equal justice under law is thus made a living truth.¹

1. What are the facts of this case?

2. What question was the Supreme Court asked to decide?

3. What decision did the Supreme Court reach?

4. Why is the decision important?

Use your answers to the questions above to write a short news story about *Cooper v. Aaron*. Be sure to write a headline for your story. It should summarize the main idea in 12 words or less.
REPRODUCIBLE

PACKET A: LITTLE ROCK
POLITICAL ADS

[ Advertisement in the Arkansas Democrat ]

A SPECIAL MESSAGE ADDRESSED TO THE
FOLLOWING COLORED CITIZENS OF ARKANSAS

Dr. Lafayette Harris, President of Philander Smith College
Dr. J. M. Robinson, an outstanding doctor — leader and builder
Bishop Sherman
Reverend Guy Reverend Roland Smith
Reverend Harry Bass
All of whom are outstanding Christian Ministers

Dr. Harris, you are well aware of the fine cooperation, which has always existed in Little Rock between the races. With your great leadership, we (both white and colored) have built one of the outstanding colleges in the country.

This message is addressed to you and is being published in the press because you as leaders in your respective fields enjoy the respect and confidence of the people of your race as well as the white citizens of our state. Individually and collectively, you can make a great contribution and perform an important service in behalf of all citizens of our state in this grave situation, which has developed.

Until a year ago, the relations existing between the colored and white citizens of Arkansas were harmonious and pleasant. Each race respected and had confidence in each other.

Down through the years, the colored and white citizens of Arkansas have accomplished much together for the good and improvement of all.

The key to the present grave situation which has developed and exists at this time, is in the hands of your race, the parents of the seven colored children and Mrs. L.C. Bates. The Federal Government, State Government and City Government have failed to furnish the leadership in this great crisis. As citizens of Arkansas and as leaders of your race, you are urged to counsel
with those who direct the activities of the NAACP in Arkansas — parents of the children, recommend and urge that they be tolerant and not press their position too strongly at this critical time. Instead we urge you to induce the seven colored children to wait and give both you and us a chance to work this out in a peaceable manner. With time, we pledge with your help, we will solve this great problem.

SAVE OUR SCHOOL COMMITTEE
I. Smith, Secretary

BISHOP ROBERT R. BROWN
A trip to Washington won’t help. Please appeal to Mrs. Bates and seven parents to give us time to accept this change in a Christian manner. Mrs. Bates holds the key.

SAVE OUR SCHOOL COMMITTEE
I. Smith, Secretary

BISHOP PAUL E. MARTIN
Please for all Christian people (white and colored) appeal to Mrs. Bates and seven parents to give us time and with men like you leading the way we can and will accept this change in a Christian way. Force and violence is not the way.

SAVE OUR SCHOOL COMMITTEE
I. Smith, Secretary
PREACHER DALE COWLING

You and your ministerial alliance please pray for Mrs. Bates and the seven parents to please give our Christian, law abiding citizens a chance to accept this philosophy in a Christian-like manner and not try to force us.

SAVE OUR SCHOOL COMMITTEE
I. Smith, Secretary

PARENTS AND TEACHERS

(Both white and colored) Please get petitions, rallies, and prayer meetings started to appeal to Mrs. Bates and the seven parents to give us time and we will help solve our problem in a Christian way, not by force, hate and violence. They hold the key.

SAVE OUR SCHOOL COMMITTEE
I. Smith, Secretary
The Save Our Schools Committee issued the following statement in an advertisement that appeared in the *Arkansas Democrat*.

Governor Faubus can’t help us because he has a mandate from the people to stop forced integration and stop violence. (Faubus believes that the people make the law of the land.)

The federal government can’t help us because they have a mandate from the NAACP to force this on us even with tanks, guns and bayonets.

If we can appeal to the parents of the seven children and Mrs. Bates and keep all outsiders out who started this thing, we can solve this problem in a Christian way with a little time. But force will not work; we freedom-loving, God-fearing American people will not bow down by force from anyone. Hitler, nor Hirohito [the leaders of Germany and Japan during World War II] could not make us knuckle under and neither can the NAACP.

We shall and continue to help our neighbors and brothers in a Christian way, but force never. The Communist and NAACP policy is divide and conquer; this is their first step.
THE WOMEN'S EMERGENCY COMMITTEE
TO OPEN OUR SCHOOLS

Is dedicated to the principle of free public school education and to law and order.

OUR AIMS ARE:
to get the four free public high schools re-opened;
to get the students back in their classes;
TO RETAIN OUR STAFF OF GOOD TEACHERS;
to regain full accreditation by the North Central Association.

Women’s Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools
P. O. Box 122, Pulaski Heights Station
Little Rock, Arkansas

Ad paid for by Mrs. Joe B. Brewer, Chairman

Get On With It...
LITTLE ROCK HAS BIG PLANS FOR A BIG FUTURE...

We MUST Open Our Schools!
Join The Women’s Emergency Committee To Open Our Schools
NOT for Integration — NOT for Segregation
BUT For Education
Mail Contributions To: Women’s Emergency Committee,
P. O. Box 122 P.H. Station, Little Rock

—Ad paid for by Mrs. Joe Brewer

PEOPLE WHO CARE ABOUT
THEIR TEACHERS
Their Children's Education
THEIR CITY'S FUTURE
WANT OPEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Join With the Women’s Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools
NOT for Integration—NOT for Segregation—NOT affiliated with any other group
—FOR Public Education

Sign and mail with contribution to:
Women’s Emergency Committee
P.O. Box 122, P.H. Station, Little Rock,

Not paid for by Mrs. Joe Brewer

—FOR Football

Join With the Women’s Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools
NOT for Integration—NOT for Segregation—NOT affiliated with any other group

—FOR Public Education

Sign and mail with contribution to:
Women’s Emergency Committee
P.O. Box 122, P.H. Station, Little Rock,

Not paid for by Mrs. Joe Brewer

—FOR Football
DO YOU WANT NEGROES IN OUR SCHOOLS?

IF YOU DO NOT THEN GO TO THE POLLS THIS COMING MONDAY AND VOTE AGAINST REMOVAL

LAMB
MATSON
TUCKER
McKINLEY
ROWLAND
LASTER

THIS IS THE SIMPLE TRUTH. IF THE INTEGRATIONISTS WIN THIS SCHOOL BOARD FIGHT, THE SCHOOLS WILL BE INTEGRATED THIS FALL. THERE WILL BE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING YOU OR WE CAN DO TO STOP IT.

PLEASE VOTE RIGHT!!!

Join hands with us in this fight—send your contributions to

THE MOTHERS’ LEAGUE
P. O. BOX 3321
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

As sent to by Margaret B. Jordan, President, New Thompson, Arkansas

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It Is Time NOW To Say...

STOP

Stop This Outrageous Purge

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES
ADOPTED MAY 6, 1959, BY THE COMMITTEE TO

STOP THIS OUTRAGEOUS PURGE

In these principles we stand united:

1. We oppose the action taken by the majority of the Little Rock School Board in discharging teachers without giving them notice of a fair and impartial hearing.

2. We believe the action of these three men constitutes a denial of basic rights to citizens of our school and will do irreparable damage to our public school system.

3. We are appalled at the manner in which the Board of Education has attempted to destroy the rights of our teachers.

4. We believe that the action taken by these three men was not as a purge which was carefully designed to create a fear that would silence the conscientious.

5. We believe that the action taken by these three men was as a purge which was carefully designed to create a fear that would silence the conscientious.

Pick Up Your Recall Petitions Today

STOP

1959 Pavilion Rd.
9 A.M. to 9 P.M.
3rd Floor
Public Education

Stop
September 1958  As public high schools in Little Rock close for the year, 3,698 high school students have to find alternatives.

November 12, 1958  Five of the six members of the Little Rock School Board resign.

December 6, 1958  A new school board is elected, with its membership evenly divided between those favoring compliance and those favoring resistance to the court’s orders.

March 1959  Little Rock Chamber of Commerce votes 819 to 245 in favor of reopening the schools on a controlled minimum plan of integration acceptable to the federal courts.

May 5, 1959  Segregationist members of the school board try to fire 44 teachers and administrators suspected of favoring integration. The other three board members refuse to participate in the firing.

May 8, 1959  STOP (Stop This Outrageous Purge) is formed to recall the segregationist members of the board. Segregationists respond by forming CROSS (Committee to Retain Our Segregated Schools).

May 25, 1959  STOP wins the recall election by a narrow margin, and moderates replace the three segregationists on the school board.

June 18, 1959  A federal court declares the state’s school-closing law unconstitutional. The new school board announces it will reopen the high schools in the fall.
**August 12, 1959**  
The school board opens public high schools a month early. Three African American girls enroll at Hall High School in west Little Rock. Jefferson Thomas and Carlotta Walls, two of the original Little Rock Nine, return to Central High for their senior year. About 250 protesters march to Central High. This time, Little Rock police act quickly, arresting 21 and turning fire hoses on the remaining crowd.

**Fall 1972**  
All grades in the Little Rock public schools are integrated.
REPRODUCIBLE

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 6,000 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.¹

Sara Alderman Murphy was one of the women who worked to reopen the city's schools after they were closed for the 1958–1959 school year. 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 others.”² 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 Sara Alderman 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.”

The End of the Story?

Although the high schools in Little Rock reopened in the fall of 1959, the process of desegregating Central High and other schools across the country unfolded slowly. Additional civil rights laws, such as the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and new court orders demanding that schools comply with *Brown v. Board of Education* helped the process. But when faced with sending their children to desegregated schools, many white families in Little Rock and across the South chose to send their children to the increasing number of private schools instead. Yet persistent efforts at school desegregation did bring about change at Central High. Historian Hasan Kwame Jeffries writes:

> In recent years, Little Rock Central’s student population has been 58 percent black, 30 percent white, 8 percent Asian and 4 percent Hispanic; the school has also been among Arkansas’ best performing in terms of graduation rates and achievement on standardized tests. “This is my school,” said black student Malik Marshall a few years back when he was enrolled there. “I love it here.”

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 racism. Others attribute it to the poor academic preparation of incoming black students. Jeffries continues:

> [T]hings have been far from perfect at Central. “We’re desegregated,” said Marshall, referring to the fact that racial divisions were plain to see inside the school. “We’re not integrated because integration comes from the heart of the people that go here. . . . It’s something that you have to want to do,” he added.

Desegregation, though, is the necessary starting point for integration, and few schools have made this long, arduous journey as successfully. The question, then, is why is Central High such an anomaly?

According to the Civil Rights Project at UCLA, despite the absence of segregation laws, school segregation has risen significantly since the early 1990s everywhere in the United States, in both the North and the South. A third of African American and Latino students attend schools that have few or no white students. Jeffries writes that this trend demonstrates that “fully desegregating the nation’s public schools will be neither quick nor easy.” But the story of Central High School demonstrates that it is possible.
1. 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?

2. How does Malik Marshall distinguish between the terms *desegregation* and *integration*? What does the information in this reading suggest is required to accomplish each?

3. What might be the consequences for students and communities of the trend toward school segregation since the 1990s? How has reading *Warriors Don’t Cry* and learning about the struggle to desegregate Central High helped you understand these consequences?

4. What do Melba Pattillo Beals’s story and the history of Central High suggest about the way communities can crack the walls that divide people? About the way we as individuals can make a positive difference?

---

2. Alderman Murphy, *Breaking the Silence*, 244.
5. Jeffries, "Little Rock 60 Years Later."
6. Jeffries, "Little Rock 60 Years Later."
### INITIAL CLAIM

What is your opening claim about the power of ordinary people to change the world?

### EVIDENCE

What evidence do you have from the sources you investigated to support your initial claim? Make sure to cite your sources.

### DOUBLE CHECK

What ideas from the sources contradict your claim? Have you forgotten anything? Make sure to cite your sources.
### WORD BANK
Useful language to use when making and refuting counterarguments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nevertheless</th>
<th>Some might believe</th>
<th>But</th>
<th>Even so</th>
<th>Despite</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the one hand</td>
<td>On the other hand</td>
<td>While</td>
<td>It is true</td>
<td>Yet</td>
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<td>In contrast</td>
<td>To some extent</td>
<td>Although</td>
<td>Admittedly</td>
<td>However</td>
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<td>It might seem that</td>
<td>What this argument fails to account for</td>
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</table>

### 1. Argument
This thesis is true because . . .

### 2. Counterargument
Yet some people argue . . .

### 3. Refutation
But . . .

### 4. Response
On the other hand . . .
## OUTLINING YOUR ESSAY: GRAPHIC ORGANIZER FOR BODY PARAGRAPH

OUTLINE FOR BODY PARAGRAPH #_____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THESIS</th>
<th>(The purpose of my paper is to prove . . .)</th>
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<tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARGUMENT</th>
<th>(This thesis is true because . . .)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence to support argument (with citation)</td>
<td>Analysis: This evidence supports my argument because . . .</td>
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(Optional)

**COUNTERARGUMENT** (Some people argue . . .)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence to support argument (with citation)</th>
<th>Analysis: This evidence supports my argument because . . .</th>
</tr>
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SHARING OUR LEARNING: WRITING CONNECTIONS
WRITING CONNECTION 1
(DAY 4)

How does our identity influence the choices we make?

DIRECTIONS: Write a paragraph supported with evidence that explains how identity informs the choices we make.
WRITING CONNECTION 2
(DAY 12)

How did individuals in the past demonstrate upstanding in the face of segregation?

DIRECTIONS: Create an annotated timeline detailing the actions taken against segregation by individuals from 1896 to 1954.
WRITING CONNECTION 3
(DAY 15)

How did President Eisenhower’s position evolve as a result of public pressure?

DIRECTIONS: Create an annotated list of three pieces of evidence that show that Eisenhower’s position on Brown changed as a result of public pressure. Include at least one piece of evidence showing another important factor that influenced Eisenhower.
How did students at Central High School advance or impede desegregation?

DIRECTIONS: Create a T-chart showing how students at Central High School either obstructed desegregation or advanced it.
WRITING CONNECTION 5
(DAY 21)

Should the desegregation of Central High School be viewed as an example of the power of the people or the power of the courts?

DIRECTIONS: Hold a class discussion in which you make an evidence-based claim about whether the desegregation of Central High School should be viewed as an example of the power of the courts or the power of the people.
FINAL WRITING CONNECTION
& TAKING INFORMED ACTION

ESSENTIAL QUESTION: How much power do ordinary people have to change the world?

WRITING PROMPT
In an essay, students will construct an argument that addresses the essential question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical and contemporary sources while acknowledging competing views.

INFORMED ACTION
In a hands-on project, students will apply lessons gained from their study of desegregation and the civil rights movement toward taking action in their communities. The informed action has three parts:

UNDERSTAND: Students will define what inclusivity means in the context of their school community.

ASSESS: Students will design ways to measure the strengths and weaknesses of their school community’s inclusivity. Examples of these measures include creating a school or class survey, holding student focus groups, taking an inventory of the diversity of texts in the library, or examining school-wide celebrations.

ACT: Students will write a short report that celebrates an existing inclusive practice or recommends a change that will make the classroom or school more inclusive. If there is a proposal for change, students will share this with their school leadership, student voice committee, local school council, or other appropriate group.