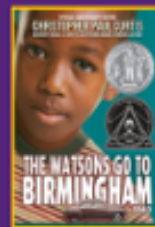
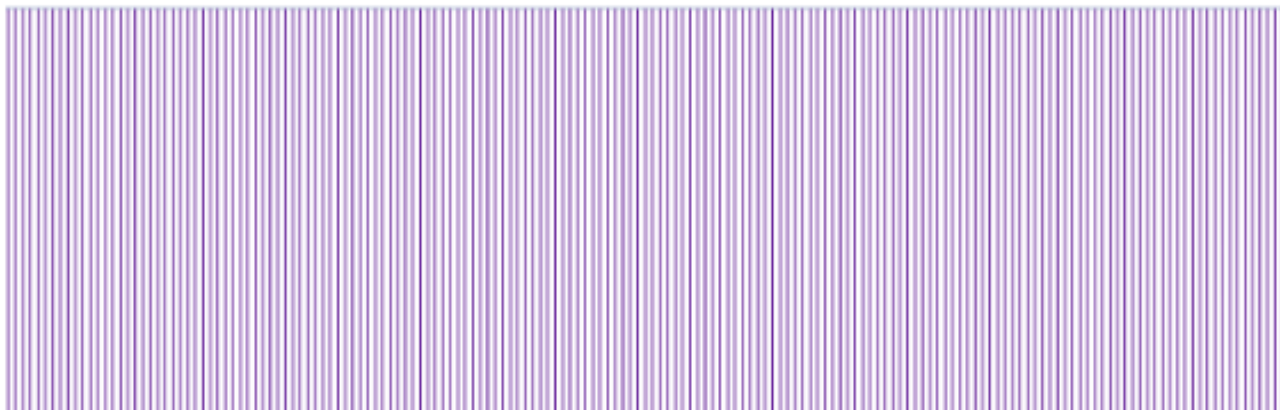


# The Watsons go to Birmingham-1963



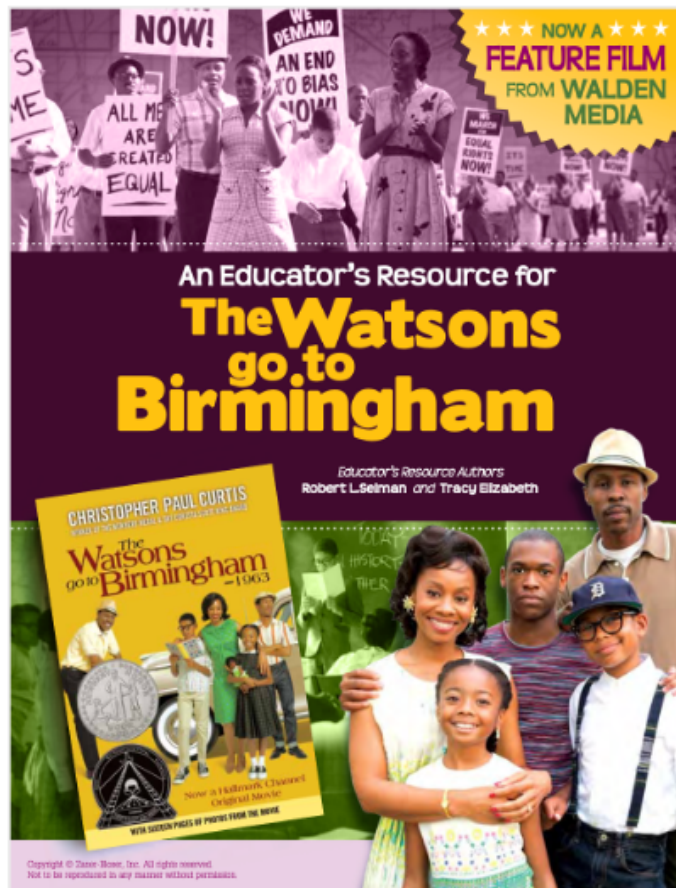
Educators' Resource: Focus on Primary Sources



## ABOUT this Guide

The development of this guide was made possible through funding provided by the US Library of Congress, TPS Eastern Regional Grant Program. It is intended to serve as a supplement to the original **Educators' Resource for The Watsons go to Birmingham** (2013) that focused on developing literacy and perspective taking skills through close reading of the book and viewing of the film adaptation.

Now in 2023, on the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Children's March and the tragic bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, we return to the Watsons' story to expand the learning potential for students in middle school and high school through the strategic use of primary sources in combination with cross-media analytic methods developed and utilized at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.



The sample lessons provided in this supplementary guide focus on the social context and historic significance of two events that proved pivotal to the progression of the Civil Rights Movement in the US and have enduring relevance today. Our approach to these lessons can also serve as a template for adapting other stories for use in the classroom that focus on important themes, topics, issues, or events relevant to your teaching goals and learning objectives for your students.

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## ABOUT the Authors:

**Robert L. Selman PHD** is a research professor at Harvard University. Formerly, the Roy E. Larsen Professor of Education and Human Development at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE:1992 to 2019)) he served as the Chair of the Human Development and Psychology area (2000 to 2004), founded and directed (1992-1999) the Prevention Science and Practice Program within the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and was also a Professor of Psychology in the Department of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School (1990 to 2019). His courses drew from on-going research into the developmental, cultural, and clinical antecedents of children's capacity to form and maintain social relationships, and to take positive rather than negative health, educational, and wellness risks.

**Susan Johnson McCabe M.ED.** is an Adjunct Lecturer in Education and Co-Director of the Harvard X-Media Lab at Harvard University, Graduate School of Education. Susan draws from her current X-Media work and past experiences in senior management at a global education technology start-up, a Fortune 500 Top 5 IT/management consulting firm, and more recently at Harvard University as Director of Digital Strategy to design her in-person/online courses and workshops. In 2017, Susan launched StoryEdge to help educators and organizations tap into the power of storytelling across media to engage learners and deliver measurable impact. She brings creativity and an entrepreneurial mindset to her practice as she seeks to expand the cross-media methodology in new directions, amplify the impact of stories, promote media literacy, and advocate for education innovation.

## ABOUT the Harvard X-Media Lab:

The Harvard X-Media Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Education is a research/practice hub at the crossroads of social education, media literacy, technology, & prevention science committed to putting research into practice.

The Cross-Media methodology was first introduced at the Harvard Graduate School of Education by Dr. Robert Selman and Dr. Randy Testa in 2013. It then served as the framework for teaching multiple graduate-level and professional development courses over the next several years. The methodology has continued to evolve – most recently in 2023 to include strategic use of primary sources with humanistic stories told across media.



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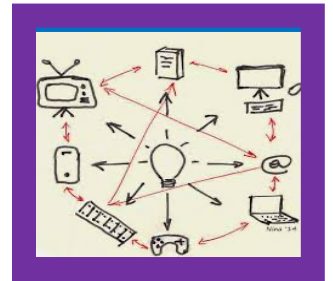
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## FOUNDATIONS of our Approach

### What *is* Cross-Media?

Cross-media refers to the telling of a story in more than one media format e.g., book, film, graphic novel, podcast etc. The Cross-Media Methodology, that has been developed and taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, begins with the premise that experiencing stories in more than one-media format has the potential to ignite student engagement, build perspective-taking and media literacy skills while promoting deeper learning across subjects and disciplines.



Stories are selected from popular culture and a creative canon within the arts and humanities. Then, we apply the cross-media methodology to the story told in different media formats.

### Why Stories?

Stories are ubiquitous in education already. In language and literacy programs, they serve as the context for initial reading as well as later for reading comprehension. In teaching science and math, brief narratives provide frames for understanding abstract concepts and practical applications. In history, civics, and social science, brief narratives become the focus of inquiry and analysis.

However, something magical happens when students experience a story using cross-media methods. Comparing different media versions of a story opens them up to new ideas, new points of view, and new connections. They start to look beyond the mechanics of narrative. They begin to see themselves in a character or relate a story dilemma to something they've witnessed, puzzled over, or experienced in their family/community. They gain newfound understanding and empathy for people/events/issues far-removed from their everyday life. Such insights bring meaning and relevance to their academic work- and fill the room with a kinetic sort of energy felt by teachers and students alike.

No matter the academic subject or discipline, the story told across media drives student engagement. Class discussions, guided inquiry, and personal reflections take on new dimensions- and spur deeper comprehension. The cross-media methodology has proven to be the catalyst for such magical teaching/learning moments.

“Tell me the facts and I’ll learn. Tell me the truth and I’ll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.” —*Native American proverb*

Stories can fuel discovery and drive student engagement. Characters in stories (fictional and non-fictional) can provide differing viewpoints and fodder for developing analytical and perspective taking skills through the examination of characters’ dilemmas, choices, actions, omissions, or losses. Whether real or imagined, character analyses can give students new insights about their own lived experience or a window into unfamiliar situations where they can safely consider how they might act or respond if someday they were similarly challenged in their own lives. Primary sources have the potential to provide additional perspectives and context for characters’ actions/beliefs thus making stories relevant, memorable, and relatable for learning about civic/social agents and current events.

As one educator/founder of Edward Elementary, [Edward Miller](#), put it: “Stories are our primary tools of learning and teaching, the repositories of our lore and legends. They bring order into our confusing world. Think about how many times a day you use stories to pass along data, insights, memories, or common-sense advice.” We’ve selected two compelling stories as points of entry for the learning experience that invite exploration of social, civic, historic, and current event issues through the characters’ eyes. These stories were chosen also because they are adaptable for use with different grade levels.

### The Fundamental Question?

The fundamental question underlying the Cross-Media Methodology is... “How do we make meaning from stories?”

We analyze and compare stories told across media using three epistemic lenses or ways of knowing:

- **Aesthetics**- What is the media/form of the story as told? How does the media/form contribute to the effects of the story? What choices did the creator(s) make and to what effect?
- **Ethics**- How does the story promote dialog and ethical reflection on character perspectives and ethical dilemmas?
- **Academics**- How does the story promote critical thinking and deep comprehension? How does the story increase knowledge, awareness and understanding?



## Why Primary Sources?

The strategic use of primary sources is the latest innovation strategy incorporated into Harvard's Cross-Media Methodolog. Primary sources are original objects such as diaries, photos, videos, illustrations and more. The key to being designated as a "primary" is that the source (in any media format) must be created at the same time as an event or created by a person directly involved in an event. Primary sources bring new perspectives and provide context for characters' actions/beliefs thus making stories relatable, memorable, and more relevant. Primary sources such as eye-witness accounts, court records, newspapers, and more, are a natural supplement to teaching history and social sciences. They provide critical context for stories that involve historic or culturally significant figures, events, movements and/or controversies.

Secondary sources offer intrinsic value to education as well in the form of documents, text, images and more. They are created by someone who reports on, interprets, or synthesizes information about an event or about people involved in an event. Secondary sources may be created at the time of an event or at a later time by someone not directly involved in event.

One of the inclinations for students to avoid when conducting historical inquiry, is "presentism" -a term that Weinberg (2011) defines that as the act of "viewing the past. through the lens of the present" and thereby risk misinterpretation of people and events.

Cultivating the "historical mind-set—understanding that rules, roles, norms, and behavioral expectations can change radically across time" (Bellino & Selman, 2011)- is pivotal to helping students gain a more nuanced and complex understanding of past events that can be applied to deepen understanding of present-day issues/events. Incorporating primary and secondary sources into a learning activity challenges students to consider what is authentic, biased, evidentiary, or irrelevant. The act of evaluating source materials in multiple media formats, inevitably surfaces gaps in historic records, conflicting accounts, or laws/conventions that are inconceivable or abhorrent in present day. The temptation is to judge the past by today's standards. However, the more challenging and expansive approach would be to help students analyze and reflect on their visceral reactions and take a deeper look at context/precedents.

In a world where students are bombarded every day with information, misinformation, and disinformation online, it can be difficult to discern what's fact, fiction, or shades of truth. Extensive research (by Common Sense Media, Pew Internet Research, and others) has shown that students spend 9-11 hours per day online. They are consuming online content, watching videos (YouTube, streaming media), connecting with peers through social media (Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram etc.) and playing video games. We believe that the combination of humanistic stories with cross-media methods *and* primary source inquiry/analysis provides an exciting new path to engage students and help them build critical thinking, perspective-taking, media literacy, and digital literacy skills that are applicable across academic subjects and disciplines.

## Point of View Matters

Stories can do more than captivate the attention of students. Through the power of story, students get to walk in the shoes of others, experience another culture or live in another place or time. They may be challenged to contemplate how they would feel, how they would react, or what decisions they might make in similar circumstances. Choosing a diverse mix of stories told in all media forms and relevant primary sources creates opportunities for students to be exposed to and learn from multiple points of view and situations they may not have thought about or encountered before.

Conversely there is much in the way of academic discussion and attention given to choosing stories that more directly reflect the lives and cultures of students in the classroom. The term “culturally responsive teaching” was introduced in 2000 by researcher Geneva Gay who posited that “when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference for students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly.”

Comparing the telling a story such as Watson’s -in book and film, then pairing it with primary sources in multiple media formats, provides ample opportunity to encounter, examine, and better understand alternative points of view.

“...to acknowledge the point of view of another person, to be able to explicitly articulate that point of view, to understand why someone else’s perspective may be different from their own, and then to be able to position the point of view of another with respect to its genesis in that person’s life experience, history, or current circumstances, and how when others disagree with them, how their differences influence one another.  
All this is challenging social-cognitive work.

*- Robert L. Selman, 2019*

As you make use of this guide, we encourage you to consider additional stories told across media and pair them with primary sources to innovate your teaching practice, engage student more fully, and to expand learning in new directions.



## Story Criteria

“The first demand any work of art makes upon us is surrender. Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way. There is no good asking first whether the work before you deserves such a surrender, for until you have surrendered you cannot possibly find out.”

-- C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, 1961

As educators, we can surrender to the stories to uncover the true educational value that may be derived from using them in the classroom. And then, we can help students discover the full potential of the story's meaning and purpose in our curriculum.

There's an art to choosing stories that will cultivate self/social awareness and deepen learning that is part strategy and part serendipity. The strategy begins with articulating teaching goals then exploring literature and media to find stories that touch upon relevant social, cultural and/or historic themes and topics to incorporate into your curriculum. The serendipity comes when a story in two or more forms of media surfaces that intersects with your teaching goals *and* captures the curiosity and interest of your students.

Point of View plays a role in story selection as well. There are three points of view in storytelling that educators may factor into story selection.

- **Who is the Creator/Storyteller** (e.g., author, director, podcast host) What do we know about their craft, opinions expressed on social media, and intentions for telling *this* story? What perspectives do they bring to the narrative/subject matter? Are there explicit or implicit signs of subjectivity, cultural/gender bias, or other types of prejudice or lack of objectivity? How will their point of view in storytelling impact teaching/learning objectives?
- **What role do the Characters (real and imagined) serve in expressing/revealing perspectives?** Do they surface ethical dilemmas, represent diverse cultures, or contend with relevant issues? Do they convey with words or actions any form of bias, prejudice, subjectivity, or viewpoints that may enhance or broaden learning? Ultimately, does examination of these characters inhibit or promote meaningful classroom analysis, discussion, and deeper comprehension of relevant curriculum topics or themes?
- **What do the story Consumers in this context the students, bring to the experience of this story-**whether they are reading, listening, or viewing it? What perspectives, stereotypes, bias or misperceptions might the students have been exposed to or bring to the topics or themes surfaced with this story? Do the students have relevant lived experience or the capacity to understand if they never encountered issues or dilemmas woven into the narrative? Do they have sufficient knowledge or context to learn from this story? If not, how might that be addressed through the curriculum and cross media/primary source analysis?

Over the years at the Harvard X-Media Lab, we've chosen stories from the classic canon such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960) in book, film and play; *Little Women* (Alcott, 1868-1869) in book and six film adaptations (1917-2019), *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Collodi 1863) in book, animated film, live-action film and opera. We've also chosen more contemporary stories such as *The Joy Luck Club* (Tan 1989) in book, film and play; *The Giver* (Lowry 1993) in book and film and *The Farewell* (Wang 2019) in a podcast and film.

Through our research and teaching in the Harvard X-Media Lab, we have identified three characteristics of stories that serve as a bridge between the strategy and serendipity of story selection:

- **Variety** in the telling and comparison of story told across media with emphasis on, the aesthetic aspects of the story that may resonate with readers/viewers. Variations among story narrations create space for exploration, analysis, and discussion to take pursue domain-specific knowledge or topical themes that can help take deeper learning to a deeper level.
- **Polarity** taps into the inclination of readers/viewers to disagree about aspects of the story and the perspectives, choices or decisions made by its' protagonists. In a facilitated session or environment that provides a safe context for students, contrasting opinions and perspectives can be effective fodder for discussion and debate.
- **Criticality** makes the case for choosing stories of social, cultural, and moral relevance that engage students in meaningful reflection and facilitate deeper comprehension of matters pertaining to personal identity, human relationships, current events, or civil society.

The Watsons story holds universal appeal for readers/audiences. Comparison of the book/film using the Cross-Media Methodology has successfully engaged students from middle school to graduate school. Here's how the story criteria apply to the Watsons' story featured in this guide:

| Variety   | Polarity   | Criticality   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>A fictional story told in book and film that pairs well with graphic novel, documentary, poetry and a variety of primary sources.</p> <p>Its' characters represent a variety of lived experiences and perspectives</p> | <p>A story that surfaces and humanizes the implicit and explicit bias and racism rampant in the US in the 1960's that restricted access, resources, and opportunities for some citizens and afforded privileges, advantages, and immunity to others.</p> | <p>A story that eschews stereotypes of an African American family unit in the US. It also reminds readers/viewers of the historic struggles for freedom and equal rights that took place in the 1960's- struggles that are still relevant today in the US and around the world.</p> |

## BACKGROUND

As educators, we have the opportunity to choose stories that resonate with students *and* choose stories that stretch their frame of reference, increase their knowledge, and deepen their understanding. The Watsons' story provides ample opportunity for building self/social awareness and media literacy skills while supporting teaching goals across subjects/disciplines and learner levels. Before delving into the sample lessons, we've assembled an overview of the story, as told across media and the primary sources that provide additional insights and context.

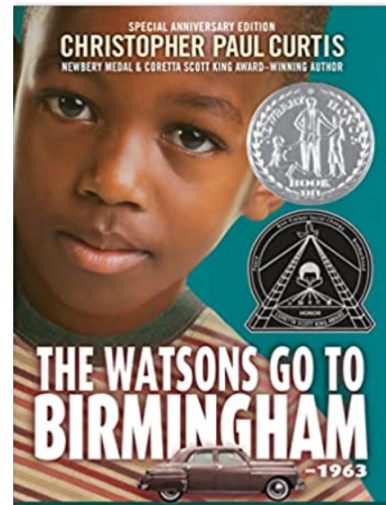


### About the Book

This fictional story *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* (1995) was written by Christopher Paul Curtis. The book has earned dozens of awards/honors including the Coretta Scott King Honor Book and Newbury Honor Book.

The story about an African American family takes place during the nascent days of the Civil Rights movement in the US. Student readers have an opportunity to witness a tragic- and historic event through the eyes of a young boy, Kenny, and his family who have traveled from Michigan to the deep South during summer vacation to visit their maternal grandmother in Alabama – a state rife with racial tension, inequities, and violence at that time.

- # Pages: 206
- # Chapters: 15



Here's what some reviewers have to say about the book:

- "A modern classic." —NPR (National Public Radio)
- "Marvelous . . . both comic and deeply moving." —The New York Times
- "One of the best novels EVER." —Jacqueline Woodson, Newbery Honor and National Book Award–winning author of *Brown Girl Dreaming*
- "This is a book that changes lives" — Kate DiCamillo, author of *Because of Winn Dixie* and *The Tale of Despereaux*

### About the Film

In 2013, Walden Media released the film adaptation of the Watsons' story, directed by Kenny Leon, starring Tony® Award, Black Reel Award winner and Grammy Award nominee Anika Noni Rose along with three-time Tony Award nominee and Grammy Award nominee David Alan Grier, Wood Harris, LaTanya Richardson Jackson, Pauletta Washington, Bryce Clyde Jenkins, and Harrison Knight. The screenplay was written by Tonya Lewis Lee, Stephen Glantz, and Caliope Brattlestreet based on the book by Christopher Paul Curtis.

- Length: 87 minutes
- Access: on DVD and streaming services
- Rating: PG



Here's what some reviewers have to say about the film:

- "Warm family drama brings the civil rights movement to life." Rated PG, 12+ (2017) — Joyce Slaton, reviewer for Common Sense Media
- "One of the biggest compliments I can pay "The Watsons Go to Birmingham" is that the acting is so spot on that there isn't a star in this movie... What this all boils down to is that "The Watsons Go to Birmingham" is both an effective and entertaining movie which looks back at the segregation and troubles in Birmingham during 1963" — Andy Webb for The Movie Scene

### Focal characters in the book and film:

- **Kenny's older brother Byron** (depicted as age 13 in the book, age 16 in the film) arrives in Alabama rebellious and lacking purpose. He experiences the injustice of racial discrimination acutely for the first time. The learning opportunity will be to examine prevailing attitudes/belief systems, and the trail of historic events/legislation that contributed to racial injustices through primary sources in multiple media forms. Given Byron's burgeoning social consciousness- primary sources can focus on "sense of purpose".

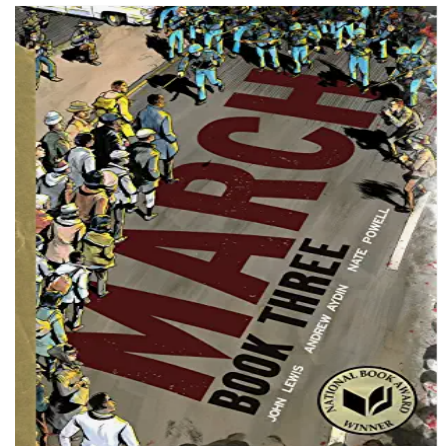
- **Younger brother Kenny and others** are out of step with their cultural context. The learning opportunity will be to examine the early days of the Civil Rights movement, role of children in grabbing the attention of the US citizens and the world through primary sources in multiple media forms. Given Kenny's terrifying encounter with the Woo Pooh and witnessing the aftermath of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church bombing primary sources could support meaningful discussion when focused on courage- it's context and expression in words/action for example the courage to jump out of a classroom window to join the March.
- **Parents of Byron, Kenny, and Joetta** express caution and concerns about risks such as loss of job, harm in jail etc. While striving as dedicated parents to instill feelings of self-worth and moral responsibility in their children, they are also navigating uncertain times. They alternate between exposing their children to the realities of racial discrimination/segregation and protecting them from other inequities and racially motivated violence. Primary sources can focus on societal norms, racial tensions in the community and the regional/national responses at that time.

### Additional Media in the Mix

For additional context about the events referenced in the Watsons story and the Civil Rights movement, a graphic novel, a documentary and a poem have been included in the mix of optional resources relevant to the Watsons' story.

### About the Graphic Novel

**MARCH, Book 3 (2016)** is the final book in an award-winning and best-selling MARCH trilogy written by Congressman John Lewis, one of the key figures in the Civil Rights Movement, in collaboration with co-writer Andrew Aydin and artist Nate Powell. It brings to life through illustrations and sparse text, the lessons of history for a new generation. Lewis offers eye-witness perspectives on pivotal events in Alabama and the deep South. He dedicated the series to: "To the past and future children of the movement."



This graphic novel has earned numerous honors including: 2016 National Book Award Winner for Young People's Literature, 2017 Printz Award Winner, 2017 Coretta Scott King Author Award Winner, 2017 Sibert Medal Winner 2017, YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction Winner, 2017 Walter Award Winner

Here's what some reviewers have to say about the graphic novel:

- “An incredible accomplishment. MARCH explains- more deeply than anything else I’ve ever read- the methods and moral foundations of the civil rights movement, how civil rights activists did what they did and won what they won, and how they had the strength to do it in the most difficult of circumstances imaginable.” —Rachel Maddow
- "This vivid rendering of Lewis’ story stimulates both robust learning about the past and critical thinking about current and future events, making March a powerful and urgently relevant title for today’s classrooms." — Teaching Tolerance
- “MARCH is one of the most important graphic novels created- and extraordinary presentation of an extraordinary life, and proof that young people can change the world. I’m stunned by the power of these comics, and grateful that Congressman Lewis’s story will enlighten and inspire future generations of readers and leaders.” —Raina Telgemeier

### About the Documentary

**Mighty Times: The Children’s March (2004)** Is a directed by Robert Houston, produced by Robert Hudson, and co-produced by the Southern Poverty Law Center and HBO. The film interweaves archival footage and eye-witness interviews with event re-enactments to tell the story of a seminal moment in the civil rights movement.



In 2005, this documentary won the Oscar for Documentary Short Subject at the 77th Academy Awards.

- Length: 41 min. 23 sec.

Here's what some viewers have to say about the documentary:

“I had to watch this for school, and I cried. I honestly was so proud of the US Black community but also crying because of the pain, suffering, and un-just agony they went through. Children did this! I couldn’t believe it , yet I could. ..? I was overwhelmed, and I had to turn off my camera on my virtual meeting because of it. Young = the FUTURE. I give this movie a 100 out of 10. In all, this movie is great and teaches about a lot of things that children need to learn. I suggest this movie for all who are studying Civil Rights or want to learn about the Children’s March”. — Alanna-Jol Sheard, student viewer (2023)

“After watching this in history class, all I have to say is that this documentary is AMAZING. And that I strongly recommend this movie to anyone who wants to learn more about the civil rights movement and how it all started.” — Daniel Ebdon, student viewer (2023)

“Normally movies i watch in school bore me, but this particular movie did not bore me at all, and my attention was kept at all times. In addition to being interesting, it had a lot of great facts that I eventually based a report on later in the year. The Children's March has information from primary source documents, and interview of people who lived in Birmingham, Alabama during the time that all this was happening. All of this added together comes together to make a movie all about how the African American children did things that the parents couldn't do.”  
— Student viewer (2006)

“This is great to share with kids, but adults should see it too! Powerful look at a piece of MLK's story that we didn't learn about. Some of the old footage is a bit hard to hear, but it's a great combination of history from the 60's and recent interviews with those who participated in the March. — Adult viewer “ (2017)

### **About the Poem**

The *Ballad of Birmingham* (1968) <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46562/ballad-of-birmingham> was written by Dudley Randall, a prolific poet and publisher. He founded the Broadside Press in Detroit Michigan in 1965. It is one of America's oldest African American owned presses, having published more that 200 poets and writers in broadsides, individual collections, anthologies, phonograph records, and videotapes.

Randall wrote this poem in the aftermath of the tragic bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama on September 15, 1963. Soon after, Jerry Moore set the poem to music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVHhzku2yuE>

## LESSONS

We've designed three lessons to supplement the chapter-by-chapter lessons in the original *“Educator Resource for The Watsons go to Birmingham”*. These new lessons can also be easily incorporated into existing curricula/units for the social sciences and history disciplines. The added dimension of focusing on primary sources, in a variety of media formats, serves to:

- Introduce students to new perspectives on culture, history and human behavior.
- Help students make meaningful connections between the past and the present events
- Open up new avenues for inquiry, discussion, and debate
- Create opportunities in the classroom to cultivate media literacy skills

The sample lessons provided below have only two prerequisites:

1. Students must have read the Watsons book in advance of the lesson
2. Students must be familiar with the film adaptation – whether, as an educator, you choose to watch film together in a classroom, highlight selected scenes as part of the activity, or give the film as an at-home viewing assignment prior to the activity.

Three learning strategies are represented in this guide

- Lesson #1: Station Rotation
- Lesson #2: Think-Pair-Share
- Lesson #3: Discussion

These lessons are designed for use in the classroom but can easily be adapted to blended learning or online synchronous learning. At the conclusion of each activity, an optional assignment is provided: *“Journal Reflections”* with a set of prompts.



## LESSON #1 : STATION ROTATION

**Description:** The students are divided into three groups and rotate through three stations in order to comment on their experience of the story. Each station is labeled with one of the three epistemics. Students are given short prompts to help spur reflection and new insights. After the three groups have completed the rotations, they will share their observations with the entire class.

- **Duration:** 45 minutes
- **Learning Goals:** Introduce the three epistemics to engage students in reflecting on their experiences of the story and to begin close comparison of the book and film.
- **Teacher Notes:** The selected scene in book and film for students to compare, focuses on how the characters experience the bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.
  - **Watsons film clip:** Watch from 1:10:19 to 1:14:03
  - **Watsons book excerpt:** pp. 182-190 (from Chapter 14: *Every Bird and Bug in You may Birmingham Stops and Wonders*)

You may also choose to allocate time for students to read reviews of the book/film for additional perspectives on the characters, story and use of historic events.

- Goodreads- Book Review  
[https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/108077.The\\_Watsons\\_Go\\_to\\_Birmingham\\_1963](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/108077.The_Watsons_Go_to_Birmingham_1963)
- Common Sense Media – Movie Review  
<https://www.common Sense Media.org/movie-reviews/the-watsons-go-to-birmingham>

An optional set of prompts for *Journal Reflections* is provided at the end of the lesson.

This activity can stand alone or be incorporated into lessons from the original guide that touch upon the historic events i.e.: Chapters 9, 14, and 15.

- **Preparation & Materials:** Allow 15-20 minutes for printing (e.g., student instructions and book excerpt handouts) and setting up the stations in 3 corners of the classroom. Each station will require a supply of dry-erase markers in multiple colors. Instructions for each station can be printed as a handout or posted at each station where students can write their comments on a dry-erase board or large post-it sheets. Here are the labels and prompts for each station:

**Station 1-Aesthetics:** Things to consider and comment on:

- What did you notice as you listened to the film scene without sound and then with sound? What did it make you think about? How did it make you feel?
- Identify 3-4 similarities or differences between how book describes the bombing scene -and what you saw/heard in the film?

**Station 2- Ethics:** Respond to one of the following:

- What do you think the author was trying to say about right and wrong in this chapter?
- What do you think the filmmaker was trying to say about right and wrong in this scene?

**Station 3- Academics:** Respond to one of the following:

- Have you learned something new or surprising about life in the US during the 1960's or the Civil Rights movement? If so, what?
- Can you identify any events, beliefs, or behaviors depicted in the Watson's story that relate to issues/events in current day? If so, what issues or events. And how?

**Student instructions:** This activity has two parts. You will begin as a class to review materials then work in small groups to answers some questions.

**PART 1-** You will have 15 minutes.

- Watch the selected scene two times... the first time with the sound off, then a second time with the sound on. What did you notice?
- Read excerpt from book for selected scene.

**PART 2 -**You will have 25 minutes.

- Divide up into 3 groups (A, B, and C)
- Choose one person in your small group to be notetaker, and one person to be your small group spokesperson.
- You will have 8 minutes at each station to comment on the similarities & differences between the film and graphic novel in the selected scene Each station has prompts to help you get started. When the 8 minutes are up, rotate to the next station.
  - Group A will start at Station 1- Aesthetics
  - Group B will start at Station 2- Ethics
  - Group C will start at Station 3- Academics

- After the small groups complete rotations, take 2 minutes as a small group to make 1-2 observations from doing this activity.
- Your teacher will invite the group spokespersons to share 1-2 observations about what your group has discussed.
- With the time remaining, your teacher will invite you to walk around the room and read what other students have written at each station.

**OPTIONAL Journal Reflections:** Take 10-15 minutes to reflect and respond to the following:

- Does reading/viewing the Watsons story give you a better understanding of life in 1960's or the Civil Rights movement in the US?
- Does it matter that the Watsons are a fictional family experiencing historic events? If so, how?

## LESSON #2: THINK-PAIR-SHARE

**Description:** This collaborative learning strategy, think-pair-share, will allow students to work together to evaluate sources and build media literacy skills. It requires students to (1) think individually about the primary and secondary sources related to the Watsons story; and (2) share ideas with classmates and be open to alternative perspectives.

- **Duration:** 45 minutes
- **Learning Goals:**
  - Learn about what a primary source is
  - Be able to identify a primary source in their everyday lives
  - Be able to distinguish between a primary and secondary sources.
  - Make meaningful connections between past and present events
- **Teacher Notes:** A sampling of primary sources relevant to the Watsons story has been prepared and included in the Appendix of this guide. We recommend that you choose 3-4 primary sources that you think will interest your students and support your teaching goals. Also, an optional set of prompts for *Journal Reflections* is provided at the end of the lesson.

This activity can stand alone or be incorporated into lessons from the original guide that touch upon the historic events i.e.: Chapters 9, 14, and 15.

- **Preparation & Materials:** Allocate 10-15 minutes to review/select primary sources for this activity. Allow an additional 15-20 minutes to prepare the following materials:
  1. Presentation slide with two definitions to review before the activity begins:
    - **Primary Sources** are original objects such as diaries, photos, videos, illustrations and more. The key to being designated as a "primary" is they must be created at the same time as an event or created by a person directly involved in an event.
    - **Secondary Sources** are created by someone who reports on, interprets, or synthesizes information about an event or about people involved in an event. They may be created at the time of an event or at a later time by someone not directly involved in event.
  2. Create Handouts with printed versions (or links) to the 3-4 primary sources selected from the sampling PDF (See Appendix).
  3. Create Google sheet or print handouts for student pairs to write their answers.

**Student Instructions** For this activity, you will work in pairs to answer a series of questions about primary sources listed in your handouts. You will have 30 minutes to complete this activity. To help you stay on track, we recommend that you spend 5 minutes per question. Keep in mind that even though you are working as a team, you may have different answers or observations -that OK. Be sure to capture them both!

You can take turns writing your team's answers to the questions on a handout, the white board or google sheet provided by your teacher. Decide who will capture answers first and begin!

Here are your questions:

- **Review the definition for primary sources**, then think about the types of information you encounter in your everyday life. Can you give 1-2 examples of primary sources that you have seen/heard/read recently? (Suggestion: allow 5 minutes to answer this question)
- **Review the definition for secondary sources** then think about the types of information you encounter in your everyday life. Can you give 1-2 examples of secondary sources that you have seen/heard/read recently? (Suggestion: allow 5 minutes to answer this question)
- **Now look over the sample primary sources that your teacher has chosen related to the Watsons story.** write a brief description of each. Things to notice include date created, topics covered, people or events mentioned, insights about civil rights movement etc.(Suggestion: allow 5 minutes to answer this question)
- **Compare the primary sources related to the Watsons' story** that you just described. (Suggestion: 15 minutes)
  - Which primary sources are more interesting to you and why?
  - Have you learned something new or surprising from them? If so, what?
  - Does it make a difference what media form the primary source is? If so, why? If not, why not?
  - Think back to the primary sources you identified in response to *Question 1* and consider...what makes them believable and trustworthy to you? Now look at the primary sources related to the Watsons' story. Do any of these sources appear to be more believable or authentic than others? If so, why?

**OPTIONAL Journal Reflections:** Take 10-15 minutes to reflect on the primary and secondary sources discussed in class today then answer the following questions:

- What did you notice about the current day primary sources that you and your classmates shared as examples earlier? Were there notable similarities (or differences) in terms of media format, who created them, where you found them, and for what audience?
- If the Watsons story and the actual church bombing took place in 2024, where would you look for , and how would you choose primary sources to learn more?

## LESSON #3: DISCUSSION

**Description:** This activity begins by introducing the definition of Point of View (POV) then viewing/listening to two primary sources as a class. Students will be encouraged to share their reactions with the entire class. Students will benefit from sharing the media experience and their peers' perspectives. Then the teacher will divide them (randomly or by assignment) into small groups (3-4 students). Students will be challenged to work collaboratively and be mindful of giving each student in the group equal time to share their ideas, ask questions, and contribute to the group's responses to the questions.

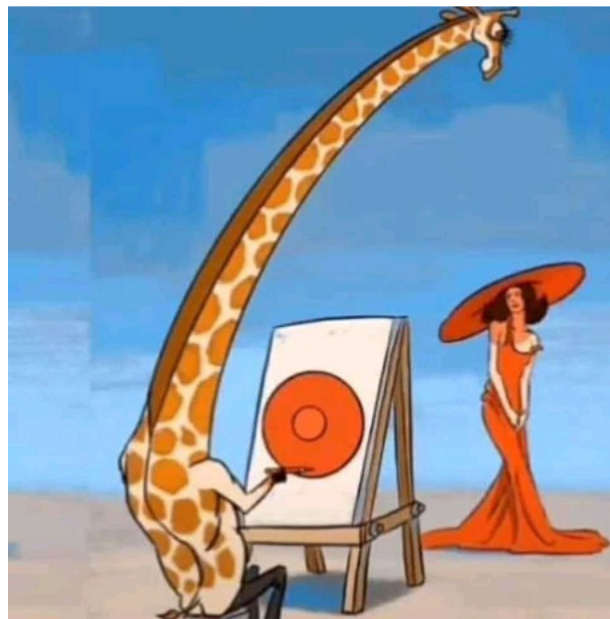
- **Duration:** 40-45 minutes
- **Learning Goals:**
  - Understand the definition of Point of View
  - Be able to identify different points of view in Watson's story
  - Be able to identify different points of view in primary and secondary sources
  - Build media literacy and critical thinking skills
- **Teacher Notes:** Two media assets have been selected for this activity focus on the bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.
  - **BBC Interview with Survivor** (9 minutes) This recording is available for download/listening online at no charge.  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01g7f3j>
  - **Mighty Times: The Children's March** (<2 minutes) Film clip timestamp- 34:28- 38:18. This video is available at no charge from the Zinn Education project. <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/childrens-march>  
Film clip Timestamp 34:28- 38:18

You may wish to choose a different combination such as substituting MARCH Book 3 which provides a vivid depiction of the church bombing, as a secondary source and activist's point of view, on pp 7-21. Also, an optional set of prompts for *Journal Reflections* is provided at the end of the lesson.

This activity can stand alone or be incorporated into lessons from the original guide that touch upon the historic events i.e.: Chapters 9, 14, and 15. POV chapters for each character

- **Preparation & Materials:** Allocate 5 minutes to set up media for easy access (download the eye-witness interview with Sarah Collins Rudolph from BBC website) and test the link to film clip for Mighty Times: The Children's March documentary. Allow an additional 10 minutes to prepare the following materials:

- Create two presentation slides to use at start of class:
  - **Point of View (POV)** is generally defined as “a position or perspective from which something is considered or evaluated “ (Oxford dictionary); In storytelling, the author or filmmaker determines how the story unfolds or is narrated and from whose perspective the story is told.
  - As the cartoon by Gary Larson (The Far Side) illustrates, perspective matters:



- Create two slides that animate to advance questions to support the Part 1 Class Discussion
  - **Questions related to the documentary film clip:**
    - *Before watching* the film clip, does the name of the documentary give you any hints or expectations about the topic or what the filmmaker may be thinking?
    - *After watching* the film clip, what message(s) do you think the filmmaker wants you to come away with?
  - **Questions related to the BBC Radio interview**
- Create Google sheet or print handouts for student groups to with questions and space to write their answers

**Student instructions:** This activity has two parts. You will begin with viewing a documentary film clip and listening to a recorded interview to discuss as a class. Then you will divide into small groups (3-4 students) to answer some questions.

### **PART 1 – Class Discussion (20 minutes)**

- 1. Review/reflect on the definition of Point of View**
- 2. Watch a film clip from the documentary *Mighty Times: The Children’s March***

#### **Discussion questions:**

- *Before watching* the film clip, does the name of the documentary give you any hints or expectations about the topic or what the filmmaker may be thinking?
  - *After watching* the film clip, what message(s) do you think the filmmaker wants you to come away with?
- 3. Listen to recording of the BBC interview in 2013** with a survivor, 50 years after the church bombing.

#### **Discussion questions:**

- How did you feel as you were listening to the interview with Sarah?
- Can you identify more than one point of view expressed or implied during the interview?
- Why do you think Sarah didn’t feel like herself after the bombing?
- Can you imagine a time when you didn’t feel like yourself- and why?
- Does this interview remind you of any current events or issues that you have encountered recently? If so, who? what? when?

### **PART 2: Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)**

You will divide you into small groups (Your teacher will guide you on how many students per group). Be sure to read through the instructions right away and ask your teacher any clarifying questions then work collaboratively as a team to do the following: to:

1. Choose a notetaker and a group spokesperson
2. Choose one of the character perspectives from the Watsons’ story to focus on and make note (on your handout, whiteboard or Google sheet) as to why you chose this person.
  - **Kenny** seems out of step with his cultural context. His terrifying encounter with the Woo Pooh has impacted his experience witnessing the aftermath of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church bombing. What does courage mean to him- and does he have it?



- **Byron, Kenny's older brother** (depicted as age 13 in the book, age 16 in the film) arrives in Alabama rebellious and lacking purpose. He experiences the injustice of racial discrimination acutely for the first time. How do the events in Alabama help him develop a sense of purpose?
  - **Parents of Byron, Kenny, and Joetta** are navigating uncertain times as they try to expose their children to a world beyond their Michigan neighborhood *and* protect them from racial discrimination, segregation and racially motivated violence. What might they have to say about societal norms, racial tensions in the community? Do you think they have any regrets about making the trip to Alabama at that time?
3. Now imagine that your chosen character(s) saw the documentary and had a chance to listen to the interview just as you did today.
- How do you think your chosen character(s) would react- looking back on the events in Birmingham in 1963 from today's vantage point, 60 years later? How might their perspectives on the Civil Rights movement have changed since 1963? Give specific examples from the book that illuminate their perspectives in 1963- and then explain what would be change -or be the same.
  - If your chosen character(s) were to look around at what is happening in the world today, what might they notice or comment on (keeping in mind what you learned about their interests and concerns in the book).
4. As a small group, identify 2-3 things that you learned today that you'd like to share with the entire class. Write them down and designate one student as your spokesperson. When the teacher calls on your group, be ready to share and explain.

**OPTIONAL Journal Reflections:** Take 10-15 minutes to reflect on today's discussions, then answer the following questions:

- What did you notice about your own perspectives on the story and historic events?
  - Did watching the film clip or listening to the survivor interview change your point of view in any way?
  - Did examining character perspective in the story and historic event, change your point of view in any way? If so, how?
  - Did thinking about the perspectives and reactions of characters to the historic events in the story change your point of view in any way? If so, how?

## RESOURCES

### THE STORY:

- Curtis, C.P.(1995) *Watsons Go To Birmingham –1963* Delacorte Press
- *Watsons Go To Birmingham* (2013 ) on DVD and streaming services (1 hr. 26 min)
- *Watsons Go To Birmingham* (2013 ) Movie Trailer, produced by Walden Media :  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u-oXVDMw6t4&t=7s>

### PRIMARY SOURCES:

- ABC News: Birmingham Church Bombing Survivor Reflects on 60th Anniversary of Attack <https://abcnews.go.com/US/birmingham-church-bombing-survivor-reflects-60th-anniversary-attack/story?id=103217582>
- Documenting the American South: Interview with John Lewis November 20, 1973 Transcript <https://docsouth.unc.edu/sohp/A-0073/A-0073.html>
- Kids in Birmingham-1963 first-hand recollections of events and experiences as children in Birmingham, Alabama.  
[https://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1688410468.7258360385894775390625](https://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?doing_wp_cron=1688410468.7258360385894775390625)
- The Children’s Podcast: Episode 69 (2020) Interview with Christopher Paul Curtis (Timestamp 00:30-37:45) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p35dl1Td13w> (37 min 15 sec)
- National Abolitionist Hall of Fame Interview with Melvin Todd on the Children's Crusade, 1963 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKcn71jvL5o>
- Publishers Weekly: Conversation with Christopher Paul Curtis and Wendy Lamb: <https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/childrens/childrens-authors/article/84793-in-conversation-christopher-paul-curtis-and-wendy-lamb.html>

### SECONDARY SOURCES:

- Alabama Public Radio-The Moth Radio Hour: <https://www.apr.org/arts-life/2017-04-14/alabama-public-radio-civil-rights-radio>
- Detroit History Heroes, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-gxjQ32XR4> (17 min 59 sec)
- National Park Service, The 16th Street Baptist Church <https://www.nps.gov/places/sixteenth-street-baptist-church.htm>
- NPR <https://www.npr.org/2023/05/31/1179125099/birmingham-childrens-crusade-civil-rights-60th-anniversary>
- Watts, P., (2015) Learning for Justice , Issue 49  
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2015/the-social-justice-league>

- Washington Post Reports: Podcast (2021) Legacy of the 1963 Children’s March <https://www.washingtonpost.com/podcasts/post-reports/the-legacy-of-the-1963-childrens-crusade/> (24 min 8 sec).

## TEACHING TOOLS:

- Library of Congress: Teachers Program; Teaching with Library of Congress Primary Sources <https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-8981/> (4 min 16 sec)
- Library of Congress: Classroom Materials: Primary Source Sets [https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/?fa=partof\\_type:primary+source+set](https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/?fa=partof_type:primary+source+set)
- Library of Congress: Collections: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/civil-rights-movement/>
- Library of Congress: Teachers Program: Getting Started with Primary Sources <https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/>
- Facing History and Ourselves (2021) Playing with Perspective- teaching Resources: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/playing-perspective>

## METHODOLOGY:

- Diasamidze, Ivdit. (2014) Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042814061552>
- 158. 160-165. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.062.
- Facing History and Ourselves (2021) Playing with Perspective- teaching Resources: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/playing-perspective>
- Selman, R.L. et al (2014) Educator’s Guide to Promoting Perspective Taking Skills in the Classroom
- Selman, R.L.(2012) Voices: Literature and Writing Curriculum (2012)
- Selman, R.L.(2003) The Promotion of Social Awareness: Powerful Lessons from the Partnership of Developmental Theory and Classroom Practice

## ADDITIONAL MEDIA:

### Ballad of Birmingham

- Moore J. (1963) “Ballad of Birmingham” set to music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVHhzku2yuE>
- Poetry Foundation <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/dudley-randall>
- Randall, Dudley (1968) “The Ballad of Birmingham” published in collection, Cities Burning, Broadside Press 1pp

## MARCH Trilogy

- Cavna, Michael (August 2, 2021). [\*"John Lewis finished this graphic memoir as he died. He wanted to leave a civil rights 'road map' for generations to come". The Washington Post.\*](#) Archived from [\*the original\*](#) on August 2, 2021. Retrieved August 18, 2021.
- Lewis, J., Aydn, A., MARCH Book 1 (2013) Top Shelf Publications
- Lewis, J., Aydn, A., MARCH Book 2 (2015) Top Shelf Publications
- Lewis, J., Aydn, A., MARCH Book 3 (2016) Top Shelf Publications

## Mighty Times: The Children's March Documentary (2004)

- Zinned Project: *About the documentary*  
<https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/childrens-march>
- Vimeo- offers free access to stream documentary here: <https://vimeo.com/442870349> (40 min)
- Lebrecht ,J., Podcast Series(2023) The Art of the Documentary  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-art-of-documentary/id1685985826>

## SAMPLING OF PRIMARY SOURCES

The purpose of this section is to provide a variety of primary and secondary sources or artifacts that upon examination, have the potential to convey diverse perspectives and provide historic, civic and/or social context for better understanding the early days of the Civil Rights movement and the bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church bombing on September 15, 1963.

*This is just a sampling* of the countless photographs, eye-witness accounts, newspaper reports, historical documents, court records etc., that can be found in the US Library of Congress and collections around the country. We encourage you to consider how artifacts such as these may inform and expand your teaching practice and more fully engage your students in social, cultural, literary, and historic inquiry and deeper learning.

**Source:** <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01g7f3j>

**Type:** Audio, eye-witness account

**Description:** In 2013, 50 years later, after the tragedy, Sarah Collins Rudolph, who was badly injured in the attack and the sister of Addie Mae who perished in bombing, tells her story.

The screenshot shows the BBC Witness History website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, a menu icon, and a search icon. Below this is a purple header with the 'Witness History' logo. A navigation menu includes 'Home', 'Episodes', 'Collections', 'Films', 'Sounds', 'The History Hour', and 'Sporting Witness'. The main content area features a large image of a funeral procession with a casket. Below the image is a 'Listen now' button with a speaker icon. The episode title is '16th Street Baptist Church Bombing'. A brief description follows: 'On September 15th 1963, four young black girls were killed in a racist bomb attack against a church in Birmingham, Alabama, USA. Hear from the sister of one of those girls.' To the right of the description, it says 'Available now' and '9 minutes'. Below the description is a 'Show more' link and a 'Download' button. On the right side of the page, there is a 'Last on' section showing the date 'Fri 13 Sep 2013' and time '03:50 Local time', with the text 'BBC WORLD SERVICE ONLINE'. Below this is a 'More episodes' section with 'PREVIOUS Saving the Tiger' and 'NEXT Evita's Odyssey', each with a speaker icon. At the bottom of this section is a link to 'See all episodes from Witness History'.

**Source:** <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018645344/>

**Type:** Photo (1963)

**Description:** Photograph shows African American and white members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) outside the funeral for the girls who died in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church. Depicted are (left to right) Emma Bell, Dorie Ladner, Dona Richards (now Marimba Ani), Sam Shirah, and Doris Derby.



**Source:** <https://www.loc.gov/item/2010636937/>

**Type:** Photo(2010)

**Description:** The Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was organized in 1873 as the First Colored Baptist Church of Birmingham. In 1880, the church came to this site on 16th Street and 6th Avenue North. During the Civil Rights Movement the church served as an organizational headquarters. On Sunday, September 15, 1963, members of the Ku Klux Klan planted 19 sticks of dynamite outside the church basement. The explosion killed 4 young girls and injured 22 others.



Source: <https://www.dallascollege.edu/events/black-history/pages/video-presentation-1.aspx>

Type: Video (2021) eye-witness account

Description: Part of the Dallas College Civil Rights Tour Speaking Series- Interview with Dale Long who was 11 years old at the time and survived the bombing. Almost 58 years later, he is here to share with us what it was like to grow up in ‘Bombingham’ and bear witness to one of our nation's most shocking tragedies.

## Video: A Witness to the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing in Birmingham, Alabama (1963)



Dallas College Civil Rights Speaker Series >

Video: A Witness to the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing in Birmingham, Alabama (1963)

Video: Family, Food and Freedom: African Diasporic Family Ties Via Emancipatory Foodways

Video: The Stories Behind the Headlines: The Fight for Social Justice in Education During the Civil Rights Movement

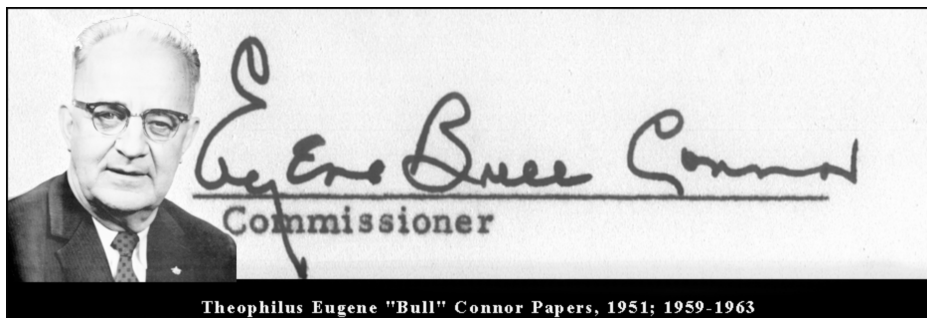
Video: Intersectionality, Black Women and the Family

Video: "Women's History Panel: Women Leaders of Dallas

Source: <https://cdm16044.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16044coll1>

Type: Mixed Media

Description: This is part of the Birmingham Public Library’s digitized collections that includes letters, memoranda, clippings, photographs and reports kept by Theophilus Eugene "Bull" Connor during his last five years as Commissioner of Public Safety in Birmingham , Alabama. "Bull" Connor is most famous for his staunch defense of racial segregation and for ordering the use of police dogs and fire hoses peaceful marchers to disperse the crowd.



**Source:** [www.loc.gov/exhibits/civilrights/exhibit.html#22](http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civilrights/exhibit.html#22)

**Type:** Photo (2004) and eye-witness account

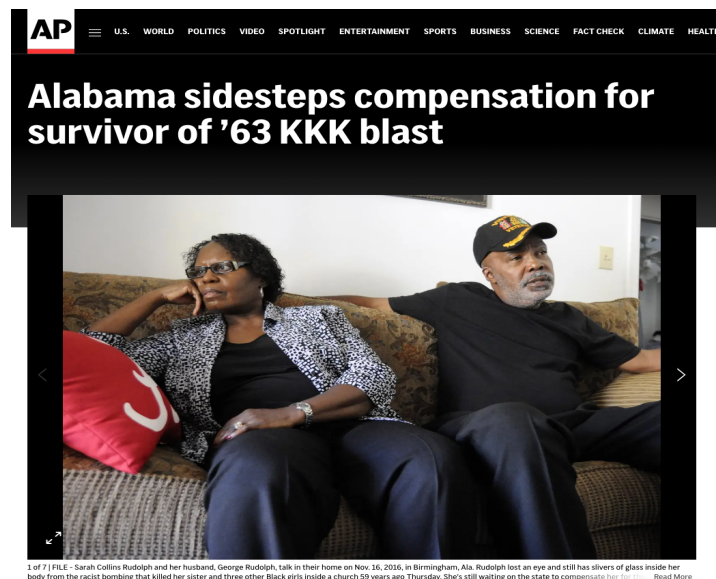
**Description:** brief quote and photo of Sarah J. Rudolph who lost her right eye and her little sister, Addie Mae Collins, in the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. Image includes brief account.



**Source:** <https://apnews.com/article/biden-alabama-bombings-birmingham-ku-klux-klan-b66dc96f9e4c22978ca6c53cdfd18996>

**Type:** Newspaper article (2016)

**Description:** Recent interview with Sarah J Randolph, current issues related to compensation, and a look back at the who was held accountable for the bombing.

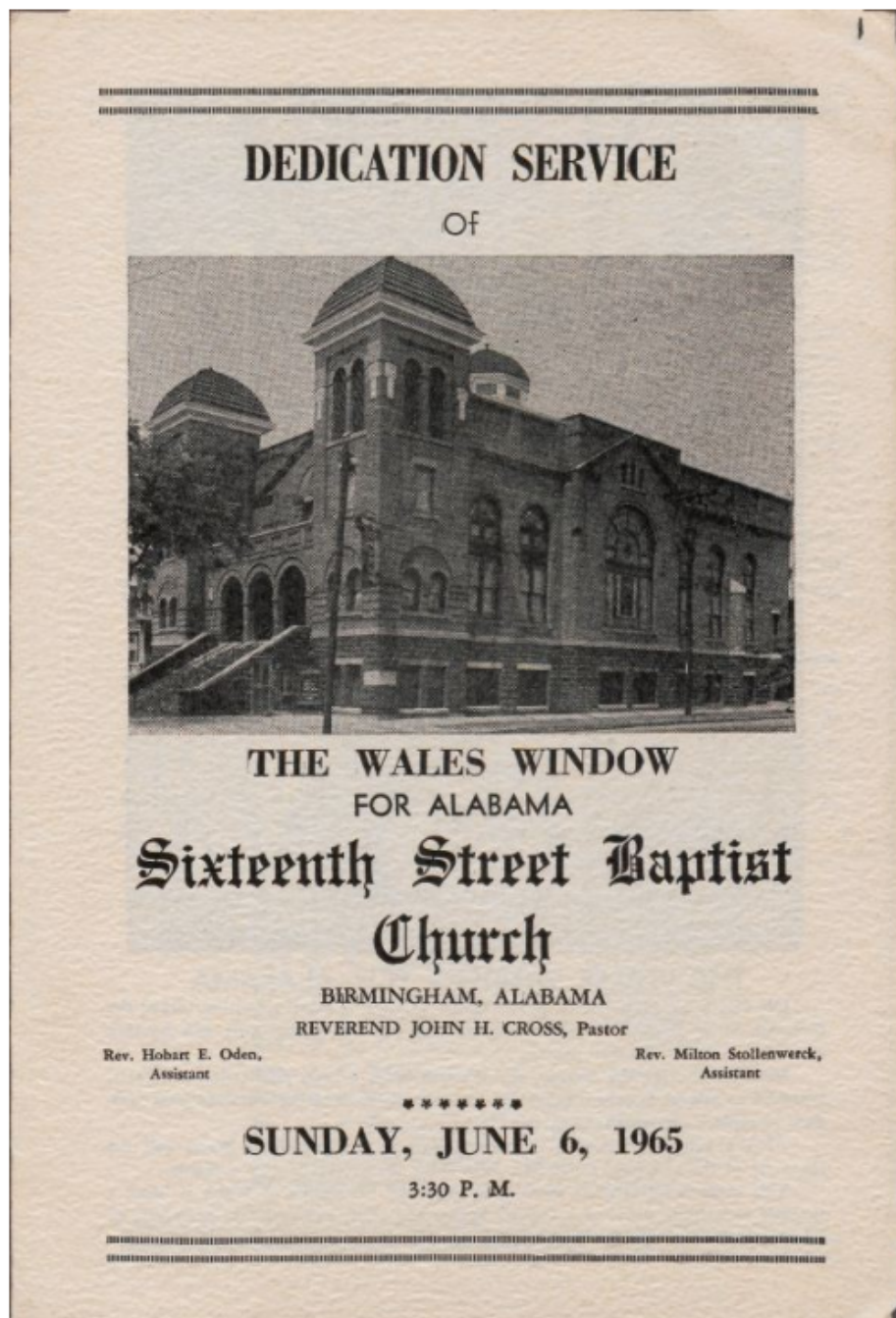




**Source:** <https://blog.library.wales/the-wales-window-birmingham-alabama/#:~:text=A%20telegram%20was%20sent%20to,gesture%20of%20comfort%20and%20support.>

**Type:** Photo and Text

**Description:** Brief account of how the people of Wales commissioned a new stained-glass window and donated it to the church after the bombing.



**Source:** FBI.gov website <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/baptist-street-church-bombing>

**Type:** Government Report (2013)

**Description:** FBI report on investigation into the 16th Street Baptist Church Bombing and its immediate aftermath; includes multiple photos

## HISTORY

A Brief History | Directors, Then And Now | Famous Cases & Criminals | Field Office Histories | Wall Of Honor | Artifacts | More

### Baptist Street Church Bombing



The crater and other damage caused by the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, which killed four African-American girls. AP Photo.

It was a quiet Sunday morning in Birmingham, Alabama—around 10:24 on September 15, 1963—when a dynamite bomb exploded in the back stairwell of the downtown Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

The violent blast ripped through the wall, killing four African-American girls on the other side and injuring more than 20 inside the church.

It was a clear act of racial hatred: the church was a key civil rights meeting place and had been a frequent target of bomb threats.

Our Birmingham office launched an immediate investigation and wired the FBI Director about the crime. FBI bomb experts raced to the scene—via military jet—and an additional dozen personnel from other offices were sent to assist Birmingham.

At 10:00 p.m. that night, Assistant Director Al Rosen assured Assistant Attorney General Katzenbach that “the Bureau considered this a most heinous offense...[and]...we had entered the investigation with no holds barred.”

And we backed that promise up. Dozens of FBI agents worked the case throughout September and October and into the new year—as many as 36 at one point. One internal memo noted that:

“...we have practically torn Birmingham apart and have interviewed thousands of persons. We have seriously disrupted Klan activities by our pressure and interviews so that these organizations have lost members and support. ...We have made extensive use of the polygraph, surveillances, microphone surveillances and technical surveillances...”

By 1965, we had serious suspects—namely, Robert E. Chambliss, Bobby Frank Cherry, Herman Frank Cash, and Thomas E. Blanton, Jr., all KKK members—but witnesses were reluctant to talk and physical evidence was lacking. Also, at that time, information from our surveillances was not admissible in court. As a result, no federal charges were filed in the ‘60s.

It has been claimed that Director Hoover held back evidence from prosecutors in the ‘60s or even tried to block prosecution. But it’s simply not true. His concern was to prevent leaks, not to stifle justice. In one memo concerning a Justice Department prosecutor seeking information, he wrote, “Haven’t these reports already been furnished to the Dept.?” In 1966, Hoover overruled his staff and made transcripts of wiretaps available to Justice. And he couldn’t have blocked the prosecution and didn’t—he simply didn’t think the evidence was there to convict.

**Source:** Newspapers.com: Montgomery Advertiser  
<https://www.newspapers.com/article/25054421/alabama-newspapers-front-page-the-day/>  
**Type:** Newspaper (1963)  
**Description:** Here's how one local journalist reported on the tragic event in 1963; article appeared on the front page of Alabama newspaper on September 16th- the day after the Birmingham church bombing occurred (Suggestion: compare with headlines/articles from newspapers in other parts of the country).

The Weather  
Montgomery: Mostly cloudy with light drizzle and steady rain...  
136th Year—No. 222  
Montgomery, Ala., Monday Morning, September 16, 1963  
18 Pages Price 5 Cents

# The Montgomery Advertiser

## Racial Tension Mounts In Birmingham After Four Killed In Church Bombing

Shootings On Streets Fatal To 2



**NEWS FLASHES**  
Detroit: ...  
Birmingham: ...  
Washington: ...



FIREMEN, AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS BRING COVERED BODY OF VICTIM OUT OF CHURCH  
Policeman Armed With Shotgun Stands Guard Behind Rope Stretched To Cordons Off Building



POLICE TRY TO DISPERSE CROWD OF FRIGHTENED, ANGRY NEGROES  
Front Of 16th Street Baptist Church, Scene Of Tragedy, Shown In Rear



ALABAMA HIGHWAY PATROLMEN GATHER OUTSIDE OF BIRMINGHAM CITY HALL  
Part Of Massive Force Moved Into Major City Following Sunday Bombing Of Negro Church

### First Food Given To Fischer Quints

ARMED, UNID. AP: — "They're along fine," the doctor said, smiling as he handed out the first of a five-day feeding schedule to a group of five children and their mother. The children were in a room that had been converted into a kitchen. The mother, Mrs. Fischer, was a Negro woman who had been living in the city since the bombing. The children were in a room that had been converted into a kitchen. The mother, Mrs. Fischer, was a Negro woman who had been living in the city since the bombing.

### Attalla Fire Loss Heavy

ATTALLA (AP) — A fire at the ...

### Reports Of Death And Violence Come

BIRMINGHAM (AP) — City police ...

### Shock, Disbelief And Tears

Mayor Boutwell's Reaction

### States Rights Party Boss Threatened, Family Moves

BIRMINGHAM — The Alabama ...



ADVERTISER TODAY  
Business Review Page  
...  
City Editor ...

FIRST PORTRAITS FROM QUINETS SETS  
Top, Baby A. A Girl; Bottom, 'D,' Only Boy

Source: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/bombing-sixteenth-street-baptist-church-1963> (Interview video included)

Type: Report (1963)

Description: Report commissioned soon after bombing identifies a pattern of extreme violence in the area and what transpired in court cases that followed; includes images of destruction at the church (e.g., decimated cars, shattered stained glass windows)

INTEP-CITIZENS COMMITTEE, INC.  
BOX 1443  
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

REPORT ON BIRMINGHAM                      SEPT. 20, 1963

DEAR FELLOW-HELPER,

Many months have passed since I wrote you about the progress of the Committee. The reason is that the work load has become so heavy, particularly since The Demonstrations last Spring, that it is impossible to keep up with all of the rights violations.

The savage, brutal, murderous, and ungodly bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on Sunday morning Sept. 14, has revealed to the whole world the evil of racism. Those few terrifying moments of the blast said what we have been trying to say to the nation for years, that there exists in Alabama the most unconscionable disregard for man and God on the part of some. If white supremacy consists in the wanton and brutal destruction of worshippers of God in the very house of worship, then I must confess that the church bombers are the most supreme murderers and cowards the world has ever seen. Only the diseased mind can aspire to reach such depths.

On the morning of the bombing I stood across the street from the church behind carbine bearing policemen and watched as the covered bodies were placed into waiting ambulances. Policemen drove a small crowd off the street. I got on a nearby porch. Women seeing the covered bodies being brought from the church cried and screamed without restraint. I could not bring my mind to believe what my eyes saw. It still seems like a tale from some distant land where people know nothing about freedom and democracy.

On Sept. 19, 1963 I sent a telegram to President Kennedy cataloging some of the horrible incidents which have afflicted and continue to afflict our city and our citizens. I share that list with you.

1. March, 1963 - a Negro home destroyed by a bomb.
2. May 11, 1963 - the A. G. Gaston Motel bombed.
3. May 11, 1963 - the home of Rev. A. D. King bombed.
4. August 14, 1963 - a tear gas bomb dropped in Loveman's Department Store following desegregation of eating facilities.
5. August 20, 1963 - the bombing of attorney Arthur Shores' home.
6. Sept. 4, 1963 - the second bombing of Arthur Shores' home, injuring his wife.
7. Sept. 7, 1963 - the fire-bombing of the home of Dr. A. G. Gaston.
8. Sept. 15, 1963 - the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, taking the lives of four girls and injuring several.
9. June 27, 1963 - the fatal shooting of Blain Gordon Jr. (16), a mentally ill youth, by Birmingham policemen.
10. August, 1963 - the fatal shooting of David Scott by a Birmingham policeman.
11. Sept. 4, 1963 - the fatal shooting of John Coley (20) by Birmingham police following the second bombing of attorney Shores' home.
12. Sept. 15, 1963 - the fatal shooting of Johnnie Robinson (16) by Birmingham police following the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.
13. Sept. 7, 1963 - the shooting of Charles Gray by Birmingham police.
14. Sept. 5, 1963 - the shooting of a mentally ill youth Sylvester Alexander by Birmingham police.
15. Sept. 4, 1963 - the shooting of Lyman Thomas, who was near John Coley when he was killed by Birmingham police.
16. Sept. 15, 1963 - the shooting of Billy Charles by Birmingham police following the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.
17. Sept. 15, 1963 - the beating of Ben Bolden on Sunday night by Birmingham police.
18. Sept. 15, 1963 - the injuring of George Benjamin Sr. on Sunday night by Birmingham police.
19. Sept. 15, 1963 - the shooting in the head of Charles Lane by State Troopers.
20. Sept. 15, 1963 - the firing of 12 shots into the home of Francis Garrett by Birmingham police attempting to make people get off the street and into houses.

Your continued interest and support is again solicited.

Sincerely yours,  
*Rev. C. Herbert Oliver*  
Secretary

cc0964.11

**Source:** <https://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis63.htm>

**Type:** Mixed media

**Description:** Timeline with links to text and images; identifies significant events in the Civil Rights Movement January- June 1963 including the drastic actions of newly elected Governor, George Wallace

#### **Alabama Governor Wallace Takes Office (Jan)**

Newly-elected Alabama Governor George Wallace takes power on January 14, 1963. In his campaign for office, Wallace is supported by the Ku Klux Klan and White Citizens Council. With few Blacks registered to vote in Alabama, he wins a land-slide victory on a rabid anti-Black, pro-segregation, "states-rights," platform. He takes his oath of office standing on the gold star commemorating the spot where Jefferson Davis was sworn in as President of the Confederacy in 1861 and declares: "*I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.*"

Wallace immediately fires Director of Public Safety Floyd Mann — a professional lawman who had saved the lives [Freedom Riders](#) when they were attacked by the Klan and who had wanted the state Highway Patrol to enforce the law against mob violence. Wallace replaces Mann with "Colonel" Al Lingo, a vicious racist with little law enforcement experience. Under Lingo's command, the Highway Patrol is renamed the State Troopers. It is expanded and transformed into Alabama's armed force for defending segregation and suppressing the Black freedom movement with arrests and brutal violence.

For more information on the Alabama Civil Rights Movement:

Books: [Alabama Movement](#)

Web: [Alabama Movement](#)

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