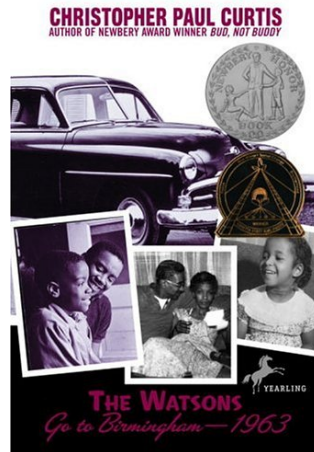


The Watsons go to Birmingham-1963

By

Jeff Mendenhall



Featured Selection:

The Watsons go to Birmingham-1963, Christopher Paul Curtis, Yearling

The Watsons go to Birmingham-1963 is about an African-American family that lives in Flint, Michigan, but travels to Birmingham to visit their Grandmother. Kenny, a 10-year-old boy, is the narrator for the family which is made up of his mother, father, his brother Byron, and his sister Joey. Byron is a tough kid that gets into trouble often, so the family decides to take a trip to Alabama where Kenny's Grandmother live and have threatened to leave Byron there, with a noted disciplinarian. During their time in Alabama the family witnesses some heavy racism, that of which Kenny has a hard time shaking off, even when he is back in Michigan. This is a good book to take a child's perspective of racism and the mental agony that it can cause.

Related Materials:

- *What if the Zebras lost their Stripes* by John Reitano. Paulist Press, 1998
This book tries to teach us that love looks beyond superficial difference. In this book some zebras lose their black stripes, while others lose the white stripes. The book questions us about many things such as; "Would the zebras recognize their common identity, or would they begin to notice their new differences in color and start to fight?" Also, "Would they move to separate lands, or would the young zebras be allowed to laugh and play together?" This book relates in that it discusses going beyond race, which we find out many people, especially in the South, were not able to do in the 1960s.

- *Goin' Somewhere Special* by Patricia C. McKissack. Atheneum & Anne Schwartz Books, 2001

This book gives us a look at a young girl, 'Tricia Ann, growing up in segregated Nashville in the 1950s. The book discusses some of the Jim Crow Laws in which African Americans were forbidden to enter certain restaurants, hotels, to sit on certain park benches, and many other laws that seem childish and extremely prejudice. This is relative to our book to show us that there were some places that African-Americans were not welcome.

- *Life Under the Jim Crow Laws (Way People Live)* by Charles George. Greenhaven Press, 2000

This book gives us a brief history about slaves and the different types of plantations that they may have been living on. Other chapters also focus on daily life, schools, jobs, and the lack of civil rights under these repressive laws, while the final chapter discusses the civil rights movement. This book gives us a background about some of the ridiculous laws that African-Americans, such as the Watsons, had to suffer through.

- *Abby Takes a Stand: Scraps of Time #1* by Patricia C. McKissack. Viking Juvenile, 1995

Abby, a 10-year-old girl living in Nashville is at a downtown store with her mother as she makes an exchange. It is in this downtown neighborhood where she experiences something that changes her views. She finds a flyer advertising a restaurant with a merry-go-round and being a 10-year-old girl she decides to go to this eatery. She causes a commotion as the manager states, "And you know we don't serve Negroes in here. Have you forgotten your place?" Abby shows us that there were public places that she was not welcome, just like the Watsons.

- *The Bus Ride that Changed History: The Story of Rosa Parks* by Pamela Duncan Edwards. Houghton Mifflin, 1995

This book discusses some of the segregation laws that surround the time directly before the civil rights movement. This is the story of Rosa Parks, an African-American woman that would not give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus. This book shows us changes in time, while our book shows us the changes from northern United States to southern United States and how they were treated in each.

Goals:

- Students will be able to discuss the differences between the treatments of African-Americans in the north as compared to how they were treated in the south.
- Students will be able to talk about the similarities and differences between the three siblings and come up with presumptions on why they are similar and different.

Reading:

- 5.1.1 Read aloud grade-level-appropriate narrative text (stories) and expository text (information) fluently and accurately and with appropriate timing, changes in voice, and expression.
- 5.2.4 Draw inferences, conclusions, or generalizations about text and support them with textual evidence and prior knowledge.
- 5.3.2 Identify the main problem or conflict of the plot and explain how it is resolved.
- 5.4.1 Discuss ideas for writing, keep a list or notebook of ideas, and use graphic organizers to plan writing.

Math:

- 5.7.2 Decide when and how to break a problem into simpler parts.

Science:

- 5.3.8 Investigate, observe, and describe that heating and cooling cause changes in the properties of materials, such as water turning into steam by boiling and water turning into ice by freezing. Notice that many kinds of changes occur faster at higher temperatures*.

Unit Plan:

Pre-Reading:

- The students will quick-write everything in which they know about the time period (1960s). This may include how people dressed, the roles of men and women, famous people at the time, the treatment of minorities, music, important events etc.

Small Group

- The students will use what they their quick-write to create a timeline from 1960 to 1970.

Small Group then Whole Class

- The class will play tag in the gymnasium, only being allowed to use the borders of the basketball court. Twenty-Five percent of the class will start out as “taggers.” Every time a person is tagged, they then will also become a “tagger.” This is to simulate the feelings of the Watsons as being out-numbered and cornered as they go from Flint to Birmingham.

P.E.: Whole Class

Reading:

- After day one, students will read to one another in small groups.

Day 1 is Teacher Read –Aloud; Small Group

- Students will identify the conflict within the text, at first on their own, then discuss in small groups.

Student Reading: Individual, Small Group

Responding:

- Have students draw inferences as they read how whites and African-Americans were treated differently. Students will write about why they believe they were treated differently in each instance.

Written Language: Individual; Teacher will grade for completion

- Students will compare and contrast the three siblings, Kenny, Byron, and Joey, using a Venn diagram or a web. Discuss how the relationships between them, especially Kenny and Byron. How do they change throughout the book, especially after the church bombing? (Each student will keep this and a class Venn diagram will be kept)

Written Language: Individual, Whole Class; Teacher will grade by completion and accuracy

- Write in a journal as one of the characters. The students will have at least one entry for every chapter that their character is in. At the end, students will read their favorite entry to the class and discuss why it is their favorite.

Written Language: Individual; Teacher will use a rubric to grade the journal

Oral Language: Whole Class; Teacher will grade by participation, both as the student reads and listens

Exploring:

- Draw on a map where the conflict began to occur, as well as where it worsened. Research what states seceded from the Union before the Civil War. Have students discuss their findings in a whole class setting.

Social Studies (Geography): Individual, Whole Class; Teacher will check for completion, as well as accuracy

- The class will have a chance to listen to an expert on civil rights issues as Indiana Civil Rights Commissioner Alpha Blackburn will join us as a guest speaker.

Culminating Activity: Whole Class

- Students will listen to popular music from the 1960s periodically during journal time.

Music: Whole Class

Applying:

- Students will research pictures of different civil rights rallies, as well as important African-Americans such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks. Students will create a collage. The students must use at least five pictures.

Art: Individual; Teacher will check for completion

- Students will figure the distance of the drive from Flint, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama. Next, they will find out how much money the Watson's had to spend in

gas (30 cents per gallon) assuming that their car averaged 20 miles per gallon with a 15 gallon tank.

Math: Whole Class; Teacher will check for the work as well as the correct answer

- Students will do an activity in which they will stick their fingers to an ice-tray. This is in response to when Byron gets his lips stuck to a mirror, as well as other references to cold weather. By doing this, students should understand that when water freezes it turns into ice.

Science: Small Groups

Day 1 Discussion about segregation, providing students background knowledge for the upcoming novel (Quick-write & Timeline), Tag	Day 2 Teacher will read Chapter 1, Students read Chapter 2; journal, music	Day 3 Chapter 3; journal	Day 4 Chapter 4; journal, music	Day 5 Chapter 5; journal, compare/contrast siblings
Day 6 Chapter 6; journal, music	Day 7 Chapter 7; journal, Ice-Tray experiment	Day 8 Chapter 8; journal, music	Day 9 Chapter 9; journal, figure the cost of the drive	Day 10 Chapter 10; journal, compare/contrast siblings
Day 11 Chapter 11; journal	Day 12 Chapter 12; journal, Civil Rights commissioner Alpha Blackburn as guest speaker	Day 13 Chapter 13; journal, map the conflict & research about seceded states	Day 14 Chapter 14; journal, how are whites & African-Americans treated differently	Day 15 Chapter 15; journal, groups will discuss characters

<p>Day 16 discuss the conflict & result(s), create collage</p>	<p>Day 17 Students will read their favorite journal entry to the class</p>			
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Assignment Checklist:

- _____ Journal Entries
- _____ Comparing/Contrasting Siblings
- _____ Conflict & Result(s)
- _____ Treatment of whites vs. African-Americans
- _____ Collage of rallies
- _____ Map of the drive to Birmingham/how & seceding states
- _____ Venn Diagram

Credit: Jeff Mendenhall, www.amazon.com,
<http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780385321754&view=tg>