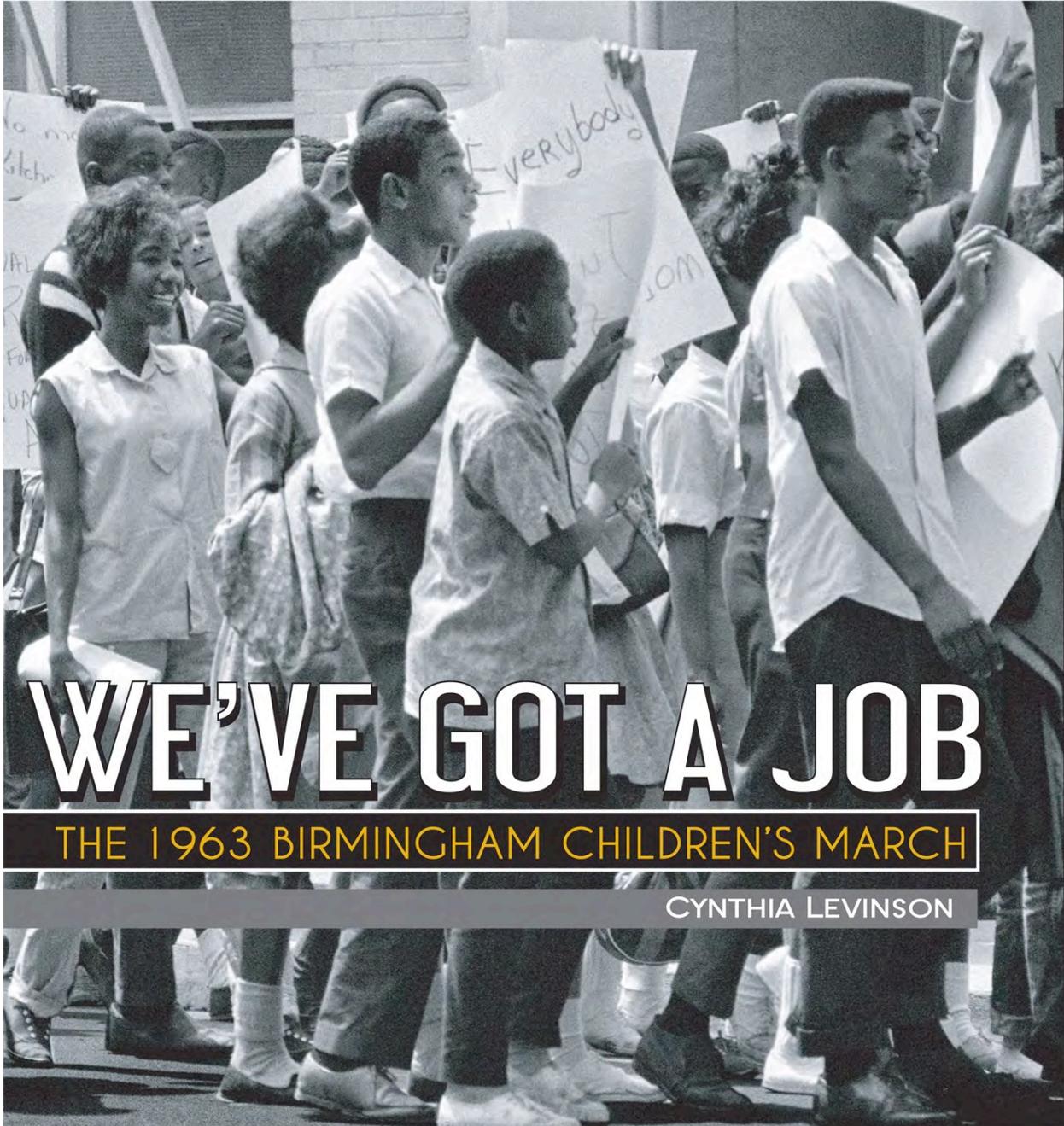


A Teacher's Guide to
WE'VE GOT A JOB
THE 1963 BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S MARCH
Written By Cynthia Levinson



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PRAISE FOR WE'VE GOT A JOB

“With *We've Got a Job*, Cynthia Levinson tells the incredible story of a key piece of civil rights history that many young people today may not know about. Readers will be riveted by the true stories of children like Audrey, Wash, James and Arletta and be reminded that just like them, they are never too young to stand up and make a difference.” ~ **Marian Wright Edelman, President, Children's Defense Fund**

“This is the story I have been missing all my life... *We've Got a Job* moves to the top of my nonfiction list purchases for any middle or high school collection.” **Diane Chen from School Library Journal's blog Practically Paradise.**

“Levinson builds her dramatic account around the experiences of four young arrestees... A moving account of young people rising at a pivotal historical moment...” **Kirkus, starred review** ★

“The most compelling component is Levinson's dramatic re-creation of the courageous children's crusade and the change it helped bring about in the face of widespread prejudice and brutality.” **Publishers Weekly, starred review** ★

”Even with the many fine books out there about the role of young people in the Civil Rights era, this highly readable photo-essay will hold [Young Adult] readers...A fascinating look at a rarely covered event.” **Booklist, starred review** ★

We've Got A Job... is amazing... This title...may be the most important historical account of the Civil Rights movement.” **School Library Journal**

“The book is done extraordinarily well with a depth of knowledge not often encountered in young people's books.” **Southern Poverty Law Center**

“I'm giving the highest honor and recommendation, very rare on my blog, to this book, **highly recommended with star**, and hope that every child and teen will read it... [A]dults will be deeply touched as well.” **Boys and Literacy**

According to the major book distributors Baker & Taylor, *We've Got A Job* is “the cat's meow!”

STORY SUMMARY

We've Got a Job tells the little-known story of the 4,000 black elementary-, middle-, and high school students who voluntarily went to jail in Birmingham, Alabama, between May 2 and May 11, 1963. Fulfilling Mahatma Gandhi's and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s precept to fill the jails, they succeeded where adults had failed in desegregating one of the most racially violent cities in America. Focusing on four of the original participants who have participated in extensive interviews, *We've Got a Job* recounts the astonishing events before, during, and after the Children's March.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cynthia Levinson holds degrees from Wellesley College and Harvard University and also attended the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs. A former teacher and educational policy consultant and researcher, she has published articles in *Appleseeds*, *Calliope*, *Cobblestone*, *Dig*, *Faces*, and *Odyssey*.



TEACHER'S GUIDE CONTENTS

1. Pre-Reading Activities

Activities and discussion starters to activate students' prior knowledge.

2. Chapter Guides

Chapter guides may be used to encourage whole class discussions, lead teacher-guided reading groups, or provide structure for students working either in cooperative small groups or independently. **The guide is not meant to be assigned to students in its entirety.**

Each chapter guide includes:

- ▶ **Pre-Reading** questions that students can answer before reading each chapter that activate prior knowledge.
- ▶ **Key Words** related to the Civil Rights Movement. Choose a few words from each list and guide students in using context clues to infer meanings.
- ▶ **Discussion Starters** inspired by Bloom's Taxonomy, ranging from basic comprehension question to higher level thinking skills.
- ▶ **Connect** with activities that tie in to the chapter and deepen understanding.

The chapter guides address the following Common Core State Standards:

- ☑ Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- ☑ Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.
- ☑ Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

- ☑ Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.
- ☑ Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent.
- ☑ Explain how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text, identifying which reasons and evidence support which point(s).
- ☑ Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.
- ☑ Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes;
- ☑ Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- ☑ Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

3. Culminating Activities

Following the chapter guides, you'll find suggested culminating projects that address the multiple intelligences identified by Dr. Howard Gardner: Bodily-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Logical-Mathematical, Musical, Verbal-linguistic and Visual-spatial. Consider having students choose a culminating activity that best matches their learning styles.

4. Author Interview with Cynthia Levinson

PRE-READING

1. Look at the front cover of *We've Got A Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March* by Cynthia Levinson. What do you notice about the different expressions on the faces of the marchers? What do you think their signs might say?

Next, look at the photo on the inside title page. How does the feel of this photo compare to the one on the cover? What emotions are present in the photos?

2. What other protest marches have you heard about? What do these marches all have in common? Based on your background knowledge, what can you predict about the 1963 Birmingham Children's March?

3. What makes someone a hero? Jot down your definition and name some examples of heroes. Compare your answers with those of your classmates. How many famous heroes were named compared with "everyday" heroes?

4. Read the summary on the book jacket. What is this book about? Make a t-chart with the background knowledge you'll bring to the story and questions you have before reading (see below):

WHAT I KNOW ABOUT THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT	QUESTIONS I HAVE:

5. Read the lyrics excerpted from the song "We've Got a Job" (located after the table of contents). What do these words mean? What does it mean to "get through?"

PROLOGUE

KEY WORDS



✓ protested	✓ segregation	✓ dignity	✓ retaliated
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: What would your parents say if you told them you wanted to go to jail for a good cause?

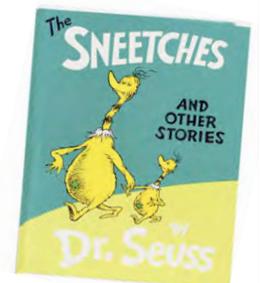
1. What surprised you about Audrey Faye Hendrick's story?
2. How did Audrey's family influence her decision?
3. Did Audrey's parents do the right thing in letting her go? Why or why not?



CONNECT!

In the author's note on name-calling, Levinson writes that insulting terms like *pickaninnies* "allowed whites to lump all black children together and ignore them rather than to see each child as an individual."

Read aloud Dr. Seuss's book *The Sneetches*. How does Levinson's comment on name-calling play out in this story?



CHAPTER ONE: AUDREY FAYE HENDRICKS

KEY WORDS



✓ ordinance	✓ mandated	✓ tactics	✓ demonstrations
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: Tell or write about a time when you did something brave. What were you afraid might happen? How did it turn out? If you had the chance, would you do it again?

1. Why did many black people refer to their hometown as “Bombingham?”
2. In which year did Audrey’s father refuse to give up his seat on the bus? When did Rosa Parks refuse to give up her seat?
3. Was Audrey’s father brave or foolish? Explain your thinking.
4. What were some of the places where blacks and whites were segregated?
5. Why didn’t most doctors at the University of Alabama hospital learn the names of their patients? How does this connect with the author’s note on name-calling (on page 3). How would you feel if someone called you by a different name?
6. How did the practice of segregation come about in the South?
7. How did Art Hanes, the mayor of Birmingham, justify the segregation of parks? What is your reaction to his line of reasoning? How do you think he would have felt about “separate but equal” if the facilities were switched, with blacks using the white facilities and whites using the black facilities?

8. How did Audrey's parents try to end segregation? What efforts did others make?
9. What event turned Audrey from observer to activist?



CONNECT!

How did Audrey learn the “lesson of giving?” Write or tell about a time when you didn't get something you had wanted. How does your experience compare with Audrey's?

Go to this Library of Congress link to see a photo of a classroom of white students in a 1963 classroom in Maryland:

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/hhh.md1001.photos.081791p/>. How does this compare with the photo of the segregated classroom on page 8?

Visit the National Jukebox from the Library of Congress site and search for “Dixie” <http://www.loc.gov/jukebox/>. What do some of the lyrics of these songs suggest about whites' attitudes towards blacks?

CHAPTER TWO: WASHINGTON BOOKER III

KEY WORDS



✓ unattainable	✓ prosecuted	✓ integration	✓ acquitted
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: What time do you wake up to get ready for school? What routines do you have to get ready in the morning? What does your family do as a treat? At what age did you (or will you) get your first job?

How might riding a bus be dangerous? Who were the Freedom Riders?

1. Look at the photo on page 12. How do these students feel? What do you think Shuttlesworth is saying?
2. Read the description of the home where Wash lived until age nine. Compare and contrast this with your own home.
3. What is Bull Connor's job description? How is this ironic?
4. What did Police Chief Connor tell his officers to do when the Greyhound bus pulled into Birmingham?
6. Compare and contrast the punishment that a few white rioters received with that of Shuttlesworth's punishment. What is your reaction to the difference?
7. When Wash learned of the student marches, he thought the students "were crazy." If Wash and Audrey had met during this time, what might they have said to each other?



Connect!

Why do you think some of the assailants attacked reporters and destroyed filming equipment? Sketch a scene from one of the “photos” that would have been destroyed and add a caption.

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to draw a sketch of a scene from a photo that was destroyed.

CHAPTER THREE: JAMES W. STEWART

KEY WORDS



✓ slur	✓ confront	✓ dismantle
✓ petition	✓ rioted	✓ patronizing

DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: If you were to take a photo of a crime being committed, what might the photo look like? How would the criminals be dressed? What would be happening in the photo?

1. Compare James's home with that of Audrey's and Wash's homes. How might their upbringing affect their views in life?
2. Look at the photo of the sit-in on page 20. How does this compare with your earlier idea of what a "crime photo" would look like?
3. When James' friends from the projects came to his house, what surprised them? How did James respond to their surprise? How might this thinking have shaped him as an activist?
4. What difference did James' skin color make during his adolescent years? Discuss both the pros and cons.
5. What does James say about the way that middle-class blacks dealt with whites? What about the way blacks from low-income homes dealt with whites? Why do you think there was a difference?

6. Why did the University of Alabama expel the first black woman they ever admitted?
7. How did most black ministers in Birmingham react to Shuttlesworth's ideas? Why? Why did the president of the local Baptist seminary support segregation?
8. What event inspired James to finally become an activist?
9. Why was James reluctant to participate in lunch counter sit-ins? What did he decide to do instead?



Connect!

Brainstorm a list of ways you could protest against something you feel is unfair. Put a star next to the one you would feel most comfortable doing. Which one makes you the most uncomfortable?



CHAPTER FOUR: ARNETTA STREETER

KEY WORDS



✓ selective buying	✓ campaign	✓ sit-in	✓ retaliation
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: If you and some friends started your own club at school, what would you call it? What would be the main purpose of your club?

How would you react if someone tried to harm you?

Look at the photo at the start of the chapter. Without reading the caption, what do you think is happening in the photo?

1. Why was Arnetta comfortable around white people growing up?
2. When talking about the lightness of her skin, Arnetta says, “I was black, and it was no doubt about it in my mind, I never had any desires to pass.” What does she mean?
3. When Mr. Streeter sat at the front of the bus with his family, a black woman told him, “You don’t do anything like that when you have children with you.” Do you agree with her? Is it better to protect children from harm or let them be a part of changing unfair laws? Explain your thinking.
4. What did Martin Luther King, Jr. say about hate? Reverend Tony Cooper, one of the Movement organizers, said that non-violence “was a beautiful concept...but

when you're getting your head knocked in, you really gotta think hard." What is your reaction to this statement?

5. How was Arnetta trained for participation in non-violent protests? Why did this training seem to be more difficult for the males in the group than for the females? What would have been the most difficult part of the training for you?

6. Although Arnetta knew she could be arrested, attacked or killed, she said, "We could hardly wait until they started the demonstrations." Why do you think she felt this way?



CONNECT!

Read the 10 Commandments of Non-Violence that Arnetta and other participants had to sign. Which commandment do you think would be the most difficult one to follow? List this commandment on the front of a notecard. On the back, explain why you chose this one. Break up into groups according to which commandment you chose. How does your classmates' reasoning compare with yours?

CHAPTER FIVE: COLLISION COURSE

KEY WORDS



✓ boycotts	✓ mass meetings
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: What would you do if someone told you there was a bomb nearby? What would make you decide not to run away?

1. What did the Audrey, Wash, James and Arnetta all have in common growing up?
2. The author writes that “blacks intersecting with whites” is not the same as “blacks and whites interacting.” What does this mean?
3. Which goals did black and white leaders have in common? How did their goals differ?
4. How did churches play an integral role in the organization of the Civil Rights Movement?
5. How were Audrey, James, and Arnetta affected by the mass meetings? What effect did these meetings have specifically on James?
6. What was Sidney Smyer’s motivation for resolving racial problems in Birmingham?
7. When Smyer and other city leaders asked that the city parks be reopened, their petition was called “A Plea for Courage and Common Sense.” Is this a fitting title? Why or why not?
7. How did Birmingham come to have two city governments for a time?



CONNECT!

Ask different students to each read aloud one of the quotes from the excerpt of Reverend Ralph Abernathy's speech on page 41 while the rest of the class listens in silence.

Repeat the activity, but this time let the class respond as those in the congregation did by calling out the words in parentheses. How does the crowd's response change the atmosphere of the room?

CHAPTER SIX: PROJECT C

KEY WORDS



✓ bail	✓ unconstitutional	✓ desegregated	✓ tactic	✓ incarcerated
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: What do you think Dr. Martin Luther King's mantra may have been?

1. Why was King's plan called "Project C?"
2. How did the black waitress at the Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro react when four black college students sat in the area designated for whites? What do you think of her reaction?
3. Why did "fill up the jails" become Dr. Martin Luther King's mantra?
4. Why was Albany called a "stunning defeat" for the civil rights movement? How might it have been a success? What lessons were learned by leaders of the movement?
5. Why was success in Birmingham critical for King and his movement?
6. Why did leaders have such a hard time recruiting people for protests? What might you have said or done to round up more volunteers?
7. What was King's predicament the night before the Good Friday March?
8. Why did the children of Birmingham heed the call to action when most of the adults did not?



CONNECT!

King and other Movement leaders had to calculate the time needed for demonstrators to walk to their protest sites, how many people were needed to fill the seats at each lunch counter, etc.

Carry out similar calculations to figure out the logistics of a cafeteria sit-in at your school. How long would it take students from different classrooms to walk to the cafeteria, and how many empty seats would be available at any given time?

Once students have made these calculations, have them reflect on the time and effort that Movement organizers must have invested in planning their events.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE FOOT SOLDIERS

KEY WORDS



✓oppress	✓picketing
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: When you feel scared, what do you do to calm yourself down?

1. What approach did James Bevel use to try to motivate the Birmingham children to act? How did the children react?
2. Why did Bevel think that children would be more effective protestors than their parents? Do you agree? Why or why not?
3. How did Arnetta's parents react to her arrest? How would your parents react?
4. Why was Minnie Martha Turnipseed expelled from school? If she had been male, do you think she would have been expelled? Why or why not?
5. The author writes, "Birmingham's black population was fractured over Project C." Explain what this statement means.
6. How did Audrey, Wash, James and Arnetta react to the idea of marching in the protests? Do their reactions fit with what you know about their personalities?



CONNECT!

- ▶ Role-play Bevel's and Dr. King's views on letting children participate in the march. Hold a debate with a moderator and questions from the audience.

CHAPTER EIGHT: MAY 2. D-DAY

KEY WORDS



✓ racial equality

✓ disperse

DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: If you knew you were going to be arrested, how would you feel? Would your feelings change if you knew that your arrest was for a good cause?

1. How did the black children know that it was time for their march?
2. How did teachers react when the students left school in droves? How do you think your teachers would react in a similar situation?
3. Why did Arnetta cry when she saw the crowd outside the church?
4. Look at the photo spread of children boarding the bus to be taken to jail on pages 76 and 77. What do their expressions say?



CONNECT!

Music played an integral part in the Civil Rights Movement. Listen to some of those songs here: <http://ctl.du.edu/spirituals/freedom/civil.cfm> What mood do these songs evoke? What are some contemporary songs that evoke a similar mood in you?

CHAPTER NINE: MAY 3. DOUBLE D-DAY

KEY WORDS



✓ decoy	✓ bystanders	✓ Miranda Rights
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: What is your definition of a hero? What is your definition of bravery? How does fear enter into your definitions?

1. What was the marcher's plan of action on May 3, Double D-Day?
2. How did Bull Connor's police force deal with the marchers?
3. Why do you think Arnetta's parents drove her back to the church after she changed into her dry clothes? What do you think was going through their minds?
4. How did Wash react to what he saw in the streets? Do you think he helped the cause or hurt it? Explain your thinking.
5. How did Double D-Day unite the black community of Birmingham?
6. At the next mass meeting, rock-throwers like Wash were scolded, but the police who mistreated the marchers were not. What is your reaction to this?



CONNECT!

Look back at your definition of a hero. At what point did Audrey start to feel afraid? What about James? At what point did they become heroes?

Draw a portrait in words of a hero using a blank outline of a person like the one below. In their head, write what a hero might be thinking. Draw a heart on their chest and write what a hero might be feeling. In the feet and arms, write some actions that a hero might carry out.



CHAPTER TEN: VIEWS FROM OTHER SIDES

KEY WORDS



✓ retaliation	✓ apartheid
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: How do you think the white children of Birmingham felt about segregation?

1. Why was it impossible to know how the majority of whites in Birmingham felt about integration?
2. What were some of the misconceptions that most white people held about black people? What were some of the social and economic conditions that contributed to these gross misconceptions? Which one was the most shocking to you?
3. How was the children's march viewed by others across the U.S.? Were their opinions justified? Why or why not?
4. Many white people blamed "outsiders" for the trouble in Birmingham. How did this shifting of blame effect white people's opinions of the protests?
5. King said, "The ultimate tragedy of Birmingham was not the brutality of the bad people but the silence of the good people." In what other instances, either historical or contemporary, does this theory also apply?
6. What happened to the white people who openly supported integration?
7. Why did most white children not know what was happening with integration efforts in their own city?



CONNECT!

Charles Entrekin, a white high school student in 1963, said that the Birmingham papers weren't covering the news; they were publishing public opinion. Even the black-owned *Birmingham World* newspaper didn't report everything about the protests. Yet the *New York Times* was publishing "revealing stories about what was going on in Birmingham."

Choose one of the incidences from the book and write three different articles that reflect how each of the newspapers listed below would have reported it:

—The white-owned *Birmingham News* or *Birmingham Post-Herald*

—The black-owned *Birmingham World*

—The *New York Times*

How do these articles differ? How do opinion and point of view factor into the reporting?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: MAY 4-6, 1963

KEY WORDS



✓ attorney	✓ strategists
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: How might headlines around country and the world have announced the protests in Birmingham?

1. How did James Bevel get the protesters to stop the violence against the police?
2. Why didn't the federal government want to intervene in Birmingham?
3. What was the Biracial Subcommittee?
4. When James' parents first wanted to post bail and have him freed from prison, he said he wanted to stay with the other protesters. The second time they tried, James left willingly. How do you think the other protesters viewed his decision to leave? Did they blame him? Would you? How do you think he felt about leaving the others behind in jail?
5. What were the "miracles" that occurred on Sunday, May 5? Why are they referred to as miracles?
6. How did the singing of the prayer in the courtyard affect the white workers at the jail? What do you think was running through their minds?



CONNECT!

How did music play a role in the jails? Watch this BBC video of Joan Baez singing “We Shall Overcome” in 1965, two years after the Birmingham Children’s March: www.youtube.com/watch?v=qilhC0f1o8E. What do you notice about the audience? Could this have been filmed in Birmingham? Why or why not? For a recent PBS version, watch Joan Baez sing this song in the White House over 40 years later: www.youtube.com/watch?v=yId_ABmtw-w.

Watch this film on the footage of the protest in Birmingham, which opens with the song “We Shall Overcome.”

Using iMovie or a site such as www.animoto.com, create a video that shows the changes in Civil Rights that have occurred since 1963 thanks to the efforts of the Birmingham children. If you could go back in time and show the video to Wash, James, Arnetta and Audrey as children, how do you think they would each react?

CHAPTER TWELVE: MAY 7-10, 1963

KEY WORDS



✓ Emancipation Proclamation

DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: What day in your life might you dub your “Jubilee Day?”

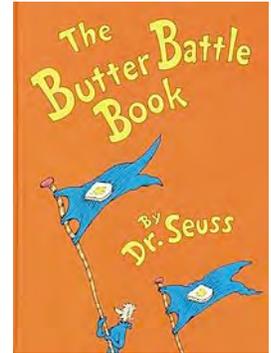
1. Why was May 7 called “Jubilee Day” in Birmingham?
2. What happened to change the mood of Jubilee Day?
3. How did the media and the potential for more bad publicity affect the Senior Citizens Committee?
4. What compromises did the Biracial Subcommittee reach? How did Shuttlesworth react? Do you agree with his reaction? Why or why not?
5. How did Connor show his “bad faith” after the agreement was reached?
6. What was agreed upon in the Biracial Agreement? Do you think this was a fair compromise? Why or why not? What was missing from the compromise? Why didn't the black and white communities read the agreement at the same press conference? How were these press conferences different?



CONNECT!

What skills are needed for compromise? Have students brainstorm a list.

Give them a list of possible topics to debate—this might include something historical (like the compromising that is described in this chapter), something more personal (such as a new school mascot), or something fictitious, such as the situation in Dr. Seuss's *The Butter Battle Book*.



Let students role play both sides of an issue and come to a compromise. Have them reflect on the challenges and rewards of their process.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: MAY 11-MAY 23

KEY WORD



✓ constitutional

DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: Look at the photo on the opening pages of this chapter. What do you think the policemen are thinking and feeling? What are they expecting will happen?

1. How did the Ku Klux Klan react to the agreement?
2. When the crowd outside the bombed Gaston Motel started throwing bricks at police officers, Wyatt T. Walker pleaded with the crowd to put down the bricks and go home. One man responded, “How come we have to go home every time *they* start violence?” How would you answer his question?
3. How does one act of violence set off a cause and effect chain reaction?
4. How did people across the country react to the events in Birmingham? How would the segregationists in Birmingham have felt about this? How would those fighting for equality in Birmingham have felt?
5. When over 1,000 students were expelled from school over their role in the protests, how did Bevel and Dr. King each react? Which reaction do you agree with? Why?
6. What did the courts ultimately decide about the school expulsions?



CONNECT!

Look at the wording of the flyer that Bevel distributed to thousands of students without Dr. Martin Luther King's approval. Rewrite this flyer as it might have read if Bevel and Dr. King had created the flyer together.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: FREEDOM AND FURY

KEY WORDS



✓ repeal	✓ escalating
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: How would you react if you were finally able to do something or go somewhere that you'd always dreamed of?

1. Why does the author dub "A Little Closer to Freedom" the perfect title for Shuttlesworth's speech?
2. List the positive changes that came about in the months after the marches, then list the places that were still not integrated. What do you notice about this list?
3. How did the Children's March in Birmingham affect other cities?
4. In his televised national address, President John F. Kennedy said, "This nation...will not be fully free until all of its citizens are free." What does this statement mean? Do you agree with it? Why or why not?
5. What happened when black students tried to attend all-white schools?
6. What were the ramifications of the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church? How do you feel about Wash and others hurting white people in retaliation for the bombings?
7. A white lawyer, Charles Morgan, told other white businessmen, "The death of those four little girls was your fault as much as it was the guy who made the bomb...Every person in this community who has in any way contributed...to the popularity of hatred is at least as guilty, or more so, than the demented fool who threw that bomb." What is your reaction to this statement?



CONNECT!

Compare the events in this chapter with Christopher Paul Curtis's novel *The Watson's Go to Birmingham—1963*. If James, Arnetta, Wash and Audrey had met the characters in this book, how might they have affected each other?



CHAPTER FIFTEEN: AFTERWORD

KEY WORDS



✓ resentment	✓ substandard
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DISCUSSION STARTERS

PRE-READING: What do you think became of James, Audrey, Wash and Arnetta?

1. When speaking of the 1963 Birmingham Children's March, Reverend Abraham Lincoln Woods said, "The young people recognized their 'somebody-ness.'" What did he mean by this?
2. How did their participation in the children's marches change the lives of James, Audrey, Wash and Arnetta? What do they think of young black people today?



CONNECT!

James said, "Children are not too young to be involved in what would appear to be adult issues." What "adult issues" do you feel passionate about? How could you make a change?

CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

The following projects incorporate Dr. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. Consider having students choose a culminating project that best matches their learning styles.

MAY I QUOTE YOU?

(Bodily-Kinesthetic, Linguistic)



Look at the quotations that begin each chapter. How do these words help to summarize the main idea of each chapter?

Have groups of three or four students each choose one chapter to interpret for the class—they may choose to mime, sing, role-play, or a combination of two or three elements. Have them begin by writing the quote that begins their chapter on a piece of poster board. Students should then create a short performance that emphasizes the chapter's main idea without using the quote.

Before the groups make their presentations, display the quotations in random order. After each group performs, see if the other students can match the correct quotation with the performance they just saw.

LET IT FLOW

(Visual-Spatial)

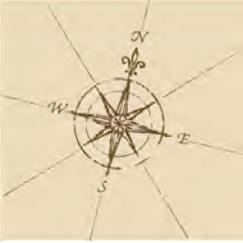
Create a flow chart that shows how the actions of the Birmingham children led to the Civil Rights Act of 1963. Outline the boxes with positive actions in one color, and those with negative actions in a different color. What might have happened if none of the negative acts had occurred? Would the Civil Rights Act have been signed sooner?



Now make another flowchart showing what might have happened if violence had been allowed to take over the movement. Would the end result have been the Civil Rights Act?

MAP IT

(Mathematical)



Use Google Maps (www.maps.google.com) to create a map of the significant events in the book. Use the map in the back of the book on page 160 to help you, and save each location on your Google Map. Calculate the distances the protesters marched.

Zoom in so that your map is the same scale as the map in the book. Look at the satellite photos of the places on the Google Map and compare them to the photos in the book. Have they changed? How?

PLAY IT OUT

(Visual-Spatial, Linguistic)

When Audrey was arrested, she had a board game with her that she brought to jail. Create a board game with four game pieces that represent Audrey, Arnetta, Wash and James. Along the board game path, create spaces for both setbacks and victories in each of their paths to activism.



Online board game templates are available here: <http://jc-schools.net/tutorials/gameboard.html> along with templates for spinners, die, and game cards.

LET US SING

(Musical)



Using the Library of Congress National Jukebox sound recordings and sheet music (www.loc.gov/jukebox), create an annotated playlist that reflects the experiences of Wash, James, Audrey and Arnetta. How would songs that Wash might choose differ from the others' song choices?

Design a free CD cover with <http://bighugelabs.com/cd.php>. Once you have assembled the CD cover, slip the annotated song list inside.

PATH TO ACTIVISM

(Interpersonal, Intrapersonal)

Examine the paths to activism that Audrey, James, Wash and Arnetta each took. What led them down their paths? Which of their paths would you have likely followed? Create one of their timelines on <http://timeglider.com>.



On the timeline, highlight the single event that made the biggest impression on you. Why did you feel this event was the most significant? Compare the timeline you created with those made by other classmates. Did anyone else think the same event was the most significant?

WORD IN PICTURES

(Interpersonal, Linguistic)

The Civil Rights Movement achieved results with words and peaceful actions, not violence. Create your own message of peace with words. Go to <http://www.tagxedo.com/gallery.html> to see examples of how words and images can speak volumes. Create your own “tagxedo” at the site using words from the book—speeches, excerpts or songs—paired with an image that you think represents the Civil Rights movement. Below is an example of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King’s *I Have A Dream* speech incorporated into a symbol of peace.



AN INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR CYNTHIA LEVINSON



How did you get the idea to write your book *WE'VE GOT A JOB: THE 1963 BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN'S MARCH*?

I started out writing kids nonfiction for the Carus Group, which includes not only the well known fiction magazines SPIDER and CRICKET but also the nonfiction magazines FACES, COBBLESTONE, DIG, and many others. In one highly productive year, I published 10 articles in seven of their magazines. I love writing for them because I get to learn so much. But, learning new stuff takes time, lots of time.

So, after writing about an archeology experiment in Bolivia, the very first city in the Americas, preventing zoonoses in Cameroon, Portuguese culture in Massachusetts, and the philosophy of identity, among other disparate topics, I decided to write on something I knew about. Something that wouldn't require expensive phone calls to Europe, Africa, and South America. When I saw that COBBLESTONE wanted proposals for an issue on the Freedom Rides, I decided to write about music in the civil rights period. I was practically an expert. After all, when I was a teenager, I had sung "We Shall Overcome" to Joan Baez records and "Blowin' in the Wind" at Bob Dylan concerts.

When I researched the article, however, I discovered something that was as new to me as if I were writing about Maori moko (tattoos), another one of my off-the-wall subjects. It was something that I should have known about because I had lived through it, and I had studied it before; I had even taught it to junior high and high school students. But, it turned out that I was mortifyingly ignorant.

As a high school senior in May 1963, I knew that a racist police chief, named Bull Connor, in Birmingham, AL aimed fire hoses at, and set dogs on, and jailed demonstrators who were trying to end racial segregation there. Three years later, as an American History major in college, I took a course on Southern History, in which I learned even more about the era. Two years after that, I taught American History to eight-graders. But it wasn't until I did the work for this children's magazine that

I discovered that ALL of Connor's victims, ALL of the people who had been hosed, bitten, and jailed, were children--3,000 to 4,000 children.

Asking other people what they knew about these events, I learned that very few adults knew the story. I HAD to learn more!

Once you had the idea, what happened next? Did you let the idea simmer, or jot down ideas right away?

I didn't know enough to jot down ideas. Instead, I did two things--I started reading everything I could find on civil rights, and I looked at the children's book market to see what had already been written for kids about Birmingham. Fortunately, excellent sources for adults were available, including two Pulitzer-Prize-winning books and hundreds of recorded interviews with civil rights activists. I spent three months reading those.

Also fortunately, despite online and bibliographic research, I overlooked a very good book for kids specifically on the Children's March. Had I found it, I might have given up before I got started.

Then, after three intense months of reading and listening and talking to people by telephone, I took my first trip to Birmingham to see and hear in person.

How did you decide which parts of your story to tell?

That's a very good question because the story is rich and complex. Early drafts contained descriptions of incidents that were later deleted. As I learned more and found strands that were even more relevant, some background information had to be removed in the interests of length and balance. Some of these decisions I discussed with my editor; on others, we negotiated!

Probably the hardest decisions about how much detail to include related to the strand on the election of Birmingham's mayor. The change in government is a critical part of the story. But, how do you make municipal politics interesting to kids? When my editor said, after reading an early draft, that she felt as if she'd spent an entire month sitting in a city council meeting, I knew I had to cut out some of the arcane details.

The essential answer to this question, though, is that I didn't decide. More than

anything, my sources determined what stories I needed to tell. The book relates the experiences that Audrey, Wash, James, and Arnetta had and shared with me. My job was to intersperse what they lived through with enough context to give readers the big picture. In some cases, even the four of them didn't know the full story until they read the manuscript because they were in jail. (Also, they were kids, and what kid would rather pay attention to a mayoral election than hearing Martin Luther King preach!?)

How did you decide where to start and end this story?

One of the beauties of this story is that there is a natural arc. I suppose I could have begun with the slave trade or the three-fifths compromise to the Constitution or the Civil War or Reconstruction. But, even though I don't start the book this way, the substance clearly begins in 1956, with Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth's attempts to desegregate Birmingham. Since I was writing for older readers, I could work in 'flashbacks,' which do convey important events going back to the 19th century, but the children's involvement told me where to kick off the book.

Had it not been for James, I might have ended the book earlier than I did. The children marched in early May 1963, and the city rescinded its Segregation Ordinances in July. They had won. However, James was involved in two important, subsequent events.

In August 1963, tens of thousands of people marched on Washington demanding racial justice. This march was a direct outgrowth of the Birmingham Children's March, and James was there. He heard Dr. King intone, "I have a dream," a speech he had practiced at church meetings in Birmingham.

Less than three weeks later, racists bombed the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, which had been the headquarters for the marches. Fortunately, James wasn't in that church that morning--he, Audrey, Wash, and Arnetta went to different churches--but he knew one of the four girls killed, and he carried her casket at her funeral. Except for a short chapter that catches readers up to today, this was a powerfully meaningful place to end the book.

What was the biggest challenge in telling your story? What has been the biggest reward?

Oh, there are so many challenges in telling a story this complex--dealing with different historians' conflicting accounts, for instance (in other words, figuring out what really happened), and keeping my 1,000 footnotes straight. The biggest challenge, though, was finding the right people to tell the story.

During the three months I spent doing background reading, I figured out the main threads and outline of the story. So, I knew what needed to be conveyed: the pervasiveness of racial segregation in Birmingham, police brutality against integrationists, differences of opinion among black people about how to gain civil rights, and Dr. King's insistence on nonviolent protest. What I needed were the people whose lives were intertwined with those threads.

That stage required many more months of reading transcripts, looking at videos, interviewing historians and civil rights activists, going to churches in Birmingham, delving into archives, studying the secondary literature. I was seeking people who (1) had been active participants, not just observers, during the marches; (2) were willing to be interviewed multiple times and share their experiences, their family life, their fears and disappointments as well as their triumphs; and (3) provided different perspectives, thereby representing the various threads.

Audrey, Wash, James, and Arnetta exceeded all of those very demanding criteria. My biggest reward has been the honor of listening to them.

How long did it take to complete the book?

In a technical sense, I worked over a four-year span on WE'VE GOT A JOB. However, there was an 18-month hiatus while we looked for the right publisher. And then, once we gleefully signed with Peachtree, intermittent months interrupted the writing while my editor pulled out her hair trying to figure out what on earth to do with my tangle of a manuscript.

What is your writing process typically like?

I'd probably be a lot more productive if I had a writing process. Mostly, I stare at the computer screen for an agonizingly long time; then, I stare at my notes and research materials, then back at the screen. Eventually, I write part of a sentence, re-read everything I've written up until that fragment to see if it fits, and revise it all. The only way that fragments turn into complete sentences and sentences into

books is that I do this every day.

How did you become a writer?

Unlike many writers, I was not a kid who always wrote, who kept diaries or who dreamed of growing up to publish her very own Kindle novel. (In case you're wondering, I played with stuffed animals. And, I read.) Writing started to matter to me in high school, when I discovered that I didn't know what I thought about something until I wrote about it. If I couldn't write clearly, it was because I wasn't thinking clearly. For me, WRITING → THINKING.

To become A Writer, I had to reverse things. THINKING → WRITING. As you said, I had to jot down my thoughts, my ideas. This sounds cerebral but it wasn't at all. Twelve years ago, when I read a newspaper article about the cellist Yo-Yo Ma leaving his cello in a taxi in New York City, my first thought was, "that should be a children's book!" (Poor Mr. Ma.) Although MR. BELLOW LOST HIS CELLO was never published, it won a national manuscript award and, more importantly, started me on this career.

What advice to you have for young writers?

Read good stuff. Write stuff, even if it's not good. Share it with another writer so your stuff gets better. Repeat—often and forever.

When you aren't writing, what are some of your favorite things to do?

I don't play with stuffed animals anymore but I do play with my unstuffy granddaughters, husband, and friends. I also travel (six continents, so far), read, garden, cook, go to movies, and work out. And, I live in two places--Austin and Boston, which takes more than twice as much time as living in one.