



Black & White:
The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor

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By Larry Dane Brimmer

Because student questions are the beginning point of learning, the following activities use student reactions and thoughts as the starting point for a deeper look at *Black & White* and the history behind the interaction of Fred Shuttlesworth and Eugene ‘Bull’ Connor. The suggested activities are based on Kathy Short’s cycle of inquiry (2009) and are meant to encourage critical thinking about the book, the historical period and the characters portrayed.

Use one of the response strategies to look at the book as a whole, or use different strategies for various chapters, choosing at least one from each category in order to push student thinking. You can find further information and examples of these strategies in *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers* (Short & Harste, 1996) or on Kathy Short’s website <http://uacoe.arizona.edu/short/strategies.htm>

Connections:

Connections give readers an entry point into the narrative. Through connections they can understand or empathize with a character or event because of an experience in their own personal history.

- **Post-Full Thinking:** students read the assigned section, placing post-it notes on pages or photos that make them think of something that happened to them, to friends or families, or in another book they have read. In small discussion groups, students take turns sharing their post-it notes and connections.
- **Graffiti Board:** each person in the group takes a corner of a big sheet of paper and records in graffiti-fashion their responses to the book. It can be quotes, sketches or connections, with the focus on initial responses to the book. Group members then share their graffiti, possibly followed by charting or webbing to organize their connections.
- **Collage Reading:** students mark quotes in the book that are significant. One person starts by reading a quote. The student may leave it at that, or may choose to add a brief comment about the personal significance of the quote. Another student then jumps in with a significant quote. There is no discussion of the quotes until after anyone who wishes has shared their selection with the group or class.

Invitation:

These activities help readers identify and focus on parts of the narrative they wonder and think about, inviting a thoughtful reaction to the book.

- **Save the Last Word For Me:** students make note of passages that catch their attention because they are interesting, puzzling, powerful or contradictory. They then write the quote on a 3x5 card, and their personal response on the other side. In small groups, a student begins by sharing the quote, and the other group

members discuss their thinking about the quote. When the discussion dies down, the student then reads his/her response and explains why he/she picked the quote, having the 'last word'. Another member then begins the discussion with a quote he/she selected.

- Sketch to Stretch: a symbolic drawing is often more challenging to create than writing a reaction with words. Students create a graphic or visual image of what the chapter/book meant to them. This is not an illustration but a symbolic rendering of the meaning of a passage. Group members comment on the drawing before the student shares the meaning. Group members can then discuss the different ideas that were raised by the sketches.
- Written Conversation: students have a conversation back and forth with another student, writing on a shared piece of paper. No talking is allowed.

Tension:

Identifying tensions help readers focus on parts of the story that are puzzling to them personally. Tensions often introduce and invite discussion about different perspectives.

- Webbing What's On My Mind: After sharing initial connections and responses, the group webs issues, themes and discussions that they could discuss. They decide on one tension that is the most interesting, and discuss it, adding new ideas to their web as they come up.
- Chart a Conversation: fill in a chart with the categories I Like, I Dislike, Patterns, Problems/Puzzles. Each group fills in the chart, discussing what they write down. They share with the class what they wrote, and add in a different color items or issues that other groups thought of. They then discuss issues in their groups that they had not discussed before.

Investigation:

Investigations allow readers to focus on an idea, event or person in the book they want to explore more in depth.

- Power is a huge issue in the struggle for civil rights. Students begin a web with POWER in the middle, adding links for the many kinds of power displayed in *Black & White* and other books paired with it. After adding to the power web several times over the course of the study, the teacher types up all the power words and gives the groups a set of the words. They cut them up and organize them in big categories that make sense to that group. Each group then presents their organization to the class. Over the course of the study, the students consider how their concept of power changes or expands.
- Comparison Charts or Venn Diagrams: Choose two people, issues, organizations, or philosophical approaches to promoting change. Use some sort of graphic organizer to compare the two choices and how they are alike or different.
- Heart Maps: After discussing *Black & White*, choose either Fred Shuttlesworth or Eugene 'Bull' Connor, whichever person the group would like to look at more closely. The group then maps his heart, using spatial relationships, color and size

to show the values and beliefs he held and how important each was in relationship to his other values or beliefs. The same strategy can be used to look at characters in books paired with *Black & White*.

Book-pairing:

Pairing books gives yet another perspective on the struggle for civil rights.

- Pairing *Black & White* and fiction to draw some students more effectively into the historical documentary, making the history come alive in a different way. Use the same discussion strategies listed above to look at the fiction.
- Pair the book with a picture book that helps illustrate Jim Crow laws and what it was like living in a segregated society.
- Pair the book with biographies of other activists. Create a big web showing activists, places, events and methods of protests.
- Pair the book with other documentaries that profile an event in the struggle for civil rights (e.g. the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Selma-Montgomery Walk, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the Woolworths sit-in, the Freedom Rides...) On a map, record where different events took place in order to create a sense of where the activity pockets were.

Selected bibliography of books that would pair well with *Black & White*:

Novels

- *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* – 1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis
- *Fire From the Rock* by Sharon Draper
- *A Tugging String* by David Greenberg
- *One Crazy Summer*, by Rita Williams-Garcia

Fictional Picture books

- *Goin' Somewhere Special* by Patricia McKissack, illustrated by Jerry Pinkney
- *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E. B. Lewis
- *Ruth and the Green Book* by Calvin Alexander Ramsey with Gwen Strauss, illustrated by Floyd Cooper
- *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue
- *Freedom Summer* by Deborah Wiles, illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue
- *A Sweet Smell of Roses* by Angela Johnson, illustrated by Eric Velasquez

Documentaries

- *Birmingham Sunday* by Larry Dane Brimner
- *Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary* by Elizabeth Partridge
- *Birmingham, 1963* by Carole Boston Weatherford
- *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott* by Russell Freedman

- *Delivering Justice: W. W. Law and the Fight for Civil Rights* by Jim Haskins, illustrated by Benny Andrews
- *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* by Chris Crowe
- *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball* by Kadir Nelson
- *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney
- *They Called Themselves the K.K.K.: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Biographies

- *Rosa* by Nikki Giovanni, illustrated by **Bryan Collier**
- *Talkin' About Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman* by Nikki Grimes, illustrated by E. B. Lewis
- *When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson*, by Pam Munoz Ryan and illustrated by Brian Selznick
- *Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Doreen Rappaport, illustrated by Brian Collier
- *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges
- *Richard Wright and the Library Card* by William Miller, illustrated by Gregory Christie
- *We Are One: The Story of Bayard Rustin* by Larry Dane Brimner
- *Claudette Colvin*, by Phillip Hoose

Poetry

- *This is the Dream* by Diane ZuHorn Shore

Final Inquiry Project:

Students researches a question that is of interest to them personally, then prepares a short presentation to the class (poster board, power point, artifact collection) in which they present what they discovered. Here are some ideas to get the juices rolling:

- Read the ACMHR behavior code at the front of the book. Read a biography of Ghandi to see where the ideas for peaceful protest originated. Consider also the Quakers and how they promoted peace with protest? How does this contrast with the methods of the KKK? Who has what kind of power in each type of action?
- Draw the changes that occur in Shuttleworth's life that makes him an actionist. Do the same for Bull, noting events that made him take a political stand against integration.
- Look up the Southern Manifesto: pick one of the authors or signatories mentioned in the sidebar on page 25 of *Black & White*. What justification did they use to keep segregation alive? Did their politics change after the passing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964?
- Why did Fred tackle the same two issues over and over: voter registration for blacks and hiring black police officers? Why were those issues critical?

- Several organizations worked at desegregation in the South. What are the differences between them? Consider the ACMHR, NAACP, SCLC, and CORE.
- Look up some history on the Ku Klux Klan. What was the basis they used to morally support the notion of white supremacy?
- What gave Fred the courage to continue to fight for civil rights in Birmingham?
- Look at some of the music that became popular with the Civil Rights Movement. NPR collected some of the well-known songs and profiled them. Listen to the lyrics. What was significant about the words? What are the origins of songs like 'We Shall Overcome'? <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=99315652>
- On page 60 of *Black & White*, singer Henry Belafonte is mentioned. Look at his life and his connection to the Civil Rights Movement. Look also at the lives of popular musicians and what they did to protest segregation: Marian Anderson, Louis Armstrong, John Coltrane...
<http://jazz.about.com/od/historyjazztimeline/a/JazzCivilRights.htm>
- Fred believed in attacking Civil Rights on several fronts: "Never set a hen on one egg. Fill the nest up and some of the biddies will hatch." What were some of the fronts he was working on? Why were those fronts important?
- Imagine what it would be like to have Fred Shuttlesworth as a father. What kind of emotions would you have over the years as he fought for civil rights in Birmingham?
- Who were significant figures who fought for the rights of other groups like Native Americans, migrant workers, Japanese-Americans...?

Learning activity sheet for *Black & White* developed by Susan Corapi

References:

Short, K. (2009). Inquiry as a Stance on Curriculum. In *Moving the PYP Forward: International Perspectives on Inquiry Learning* (pp. 11-26). S Davidson & S. Carber, eds., London: John Catt Pub

Short, K. and Harste, J., with Burke, C. (1996) *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Ballad of Birmingham

by Dudley Randall

(On the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963)

“Mother dear, may I go downtown
Instead of out to play,
And march the streets of Birmingham
In a Freedom March today?”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,
For the dogs are fierce and wild,
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails
Aren’t good for a little child.”

“But, mother, I won’t be alone,
Other children will go with me,
And march the streets of Birmingham
To make our country free.”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,
For I fear those guns will fire.
But you may go to church instead
And sing in the children’s choir.”

She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair,
And bathed rose petal sweet,
And drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,
And white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know her child
Was in the sacred place,
But that smile was the last smile
To come upon her face.

For when she heard the explosion,
Her eyes grew wet and wild,
She raced through the streets of Birmingham
Calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,
Then lifted out a shoe.
“O, here’s the shoe my baby wore,
But, baby, where are you?”

Dudley Randall, “Ballad of Birmingham” from *Cities Burning* © 1968 by Dudley Randall. Source: *Cities Burning* (Broadside Press, 1968)