

The Watsons go to Birmingham- 1963

Adapted by
**Reginald André
Jackson**
From the book by
**Christopher Paul
Curtis**

STUDY GUIDE

PROVIDED BY



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S
T H E A T R E

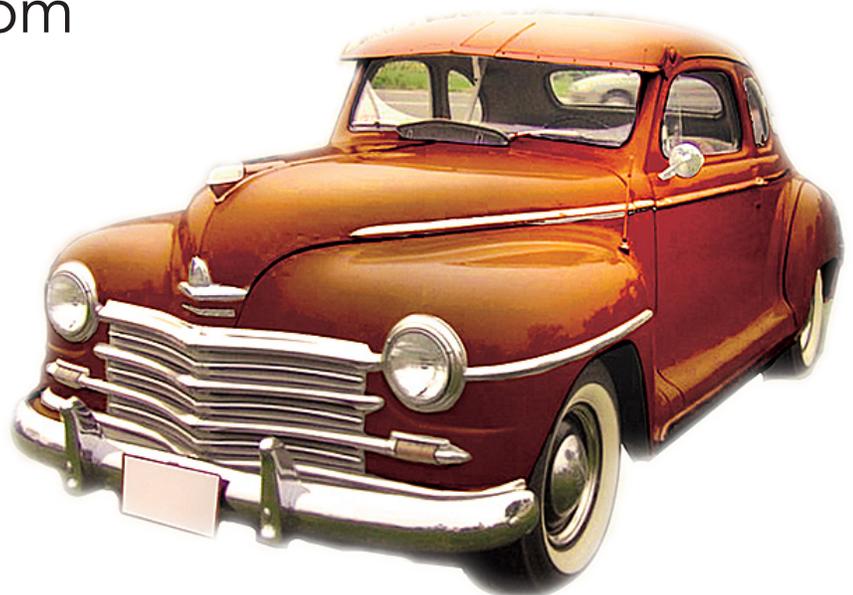
PERFORMANCE DATES & TIMES

SCHOOL PERFORMANCES:

- September 24-27 at 10am
- October 1-4 at 10am
- October 8-11 at 10am
- October 15-18 at 10am
- October 3, 4, 17, & 18 at 12:30pm

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES:

- September 28 & 29 at 2:30pm
- October 12 at 2:30pm & 7:30pm
- October 13 at 2:30pm



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This classroom guide for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963* is designed for Alabama students ranging from grades K-12. It offers activities to help you integrate classroom activities into English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Music, and Theatre curricula.

All activities in this guide are linked to the Alabama State Department of Education content standards.

The standards that are represented in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963* are:

SS.3.11.1:	ELA 3.1.3:	ELA 5.3.4:	M. 3.16.1:
SS.3.11.2:	ELA 3.3.1:	ELA 7.3.1:	M. 3.16.2:
SS.6.13.1:	ELA 3.3.2:	ELA 7.3.2:	M. 3.16.3:
SS.6.13.2:	ELA 3.3.3:	ELA 7.3.3:	M. 3.16.4:
SS.6.13.3:	ELA 3.3.4:	ELA 7.3.4:	M. 3.16.5:
	ELA 5.3.3:	ELA 7.3.5:	M. 3.16.6:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Note to Fellow Educators.....	5
Your Role as the Audience.....	6
Plot Summary.....	7
Theatre	
Discussion Questions.....	8
English Language Arts	
BCT Must Reads.....	10
Read All About It!.....	12
Character Creations.....	14
History	
Go Back in Time.....	16
Math & Geography	
Where in the World are the Watson's?.....	17
Social Studies	
Civil Rights Timeline.....	18
Music	
Chase Your Blues Away.....	19

A NOTE TO FELLOW EDUCATORS

Greetings!

We are excited for you and your students to attend *The Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963* adapted by Reginald Andre' Jackson from the book by Christopher Paul Curtis at the Birmingham Children's Theatre. We invite you to use this packet in your classroom to prepare for and reflect on your upcoming visit.

This packet is designed to assist you in introducing the play's plot, characters, settings, language, and themes to your students. We encourage you to use these activities prior to the show to guide your students to a better understanding and enjoyment of what they will see at the theatre, and also after you visit to reinforce the show's themes and tie them into the STEM curriculum.

Thank you for helping to extend the learning process beyond theatre walls and for instilling an appreciation of the arts in the lives of Birmingham children.

See you at the theatre!

Birmingham Children's Theatre

YOUR ROLE AS THE AUDIENCE

Dear Audience Members,

Birmingham Children's Theatre is excited to welcome you as a member of our audience! Theatre is a world of imagination and fun, where the impossible comes to life. The audience is an extremely important part of our storytelling, so before you attend a performance we want to share a few theatre etiquette guidelines with you.

Do:

- Feel free to laugh, gasp, and applaud!
- Participate when asked
- Arrive on time (30 min early is a good goal)
- Turn off and put away ALL electronics
- Sit in your assigned seating (an usher will help you)

Don't:

- Talk, wave, or shout during the performance
- Eat or drink

Thank you for playing your part! We are excited to share our production with you!

Birmingham Children's Theatre

PLOT SUMMARY

Ten-year-old Kenny chronicles the events of a fateful summer for the Watsons as the family piles into their "Brown Bomber" and heads to Birmingham, only to find themselves caught up in the tragic bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Christopher Paul Curtis's Newbery Medal and Coretta Scott King Award-winning book comes to life with the beloved story of a family's bond and endurance amidst one of the darkest periods in America's history.



THEATRE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE:

1. The Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963 is a stage play.

What is a stage play?

- How is a play similar to a TV show or movie?
- How is it different?

2. Who Performs the parts (roles) in a play?

- What kinds of skills do you think performers need to have to perform in plays?
- Who else works on plays?
(Remember: you may not see them on stage!)

DURING THE PERFORMANCE:

1. When you watch a play, you are a member of the audience.

What kinds of things should you do as an audience member?

Examples:

- Pay attention
- Laugh when something funny happens
- Clap if you enjoy something

2. What kinds of things should you not do as an audience member?

Examples:

- Talk to your neighbor
- Use a cellphone during the performance
- Yell at the actors (unless they ask you to!)



THEATRE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONT.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE:

1. What did you think of the play?
 - If you'd read *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* beforehand, how was the book similar to the play?
 - How was it different?
2. Describe the performers in the play.
 - What did they do to make their characters special (different from other characters)?
 - How did they use their bodies to play their characters (using voice, movement, etc.)?
 - Did you see anyone else who worked on the play besides the performers on stage?
3. Describe the characters' costumes.
 - What did each character's costume tell you about that character?
 - Did any of the performers change costumes?
 - If so, why do you think they needed to change costumes?
4. Describe the set of the play.
 - Did it have a lot of locations?
 - Did it look like a place you've been before?
 - How did different lighting change how the set looked for different scenes?
5. Did the play have music in it?
 - If so, was it only in the background, or did it help tell the story?
 - What instruments did you hear in the music?
6. If you were going to direct *The Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963*, how would your production be different than the play you saw by BCT?

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

BCT MUST READS

For each of our main stage productions at BCT, we choose a theme related to the show. Then, we create a list of BCT Must-Reads on that Theme.

Themes are the main ideas behind a book or other literary work.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963 has several themes of varying importance, including racism, prejudice, and discrimination; family relationships; growing up; friendship; humor; and grief.

FICTION - AFRICAN-AMERICAN

Belle Teal by Ann M. Martin
The Cay by Theodore Taylor
Francie by Karen English
Iggie's House by Judy Blume
The Land; Roll of Thunder
Hear My Cry
Let the Circle Be Unbroken
The Road to Memphis
Maniac Magee by Jerry Spinelli
M.C. Higgins, The Great by Virginia Hamilton
Witness by Karen Hesse

FICTION - PREJUDICE

Adaline Falling Star by Mary Pope Osborne
Bat 6 by Virginia Euwer
Wolff Crusader by Edward Bloor
The Divine Wind: A Love Story
by Gary Disher Samir
Yonatan by Daniella Carmi
Saving Shiloh by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

NONFICTION

The Day Martin Luther King, Jr. Was Shot:
A Photo History of the Civil Rights Movement by James Haskins
Free at Last: A History of the Civil Rights Movement and
Those Who Died in the Struggle by Sara Bullard
Oh, Freedom! Kids Talk About the Civil Rights Movement with
the People Who Made it Happen by Casey King and Linda Barret Osborne
Martin's Big Words by Doreen Rappaport
Mississippi Challenge by Mildred Pitts Walter
The 1960s by Gini Holland
Separate but Not Equal: The Dream and the Struggle by James Haskins

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

BCT MUST READS CONT.

Read them as a class or let students choose two or more to read.
Then use these questions for discussion or book reports:

THEME:

How did the different themes show in each book? Explain.

SETTING:

Describe the settings of each book.

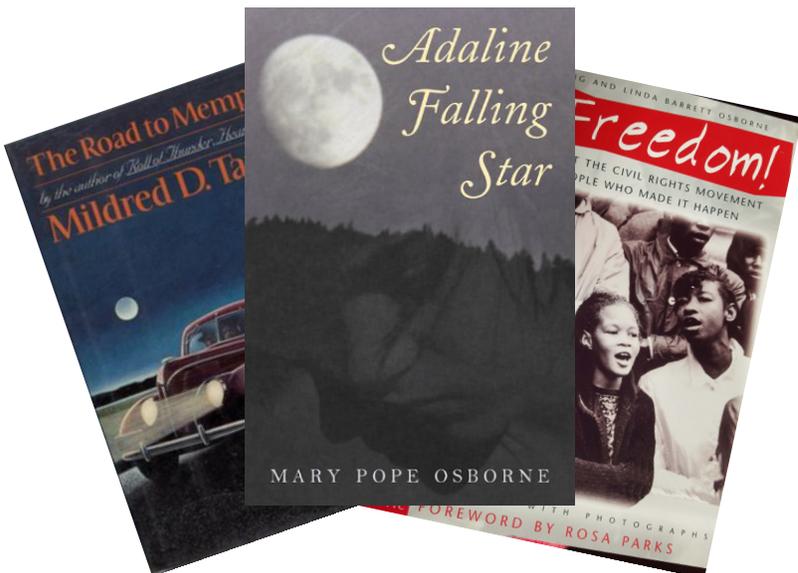
- What details can you remember?
- Were the settings similar to a place you know or a place you've visited?
- How were the settings similar to each other? How were they different?

CHARACTERS:

1. Who were the main characters of each book?
2. Did any characters show up in more than one book?
3. Were the characters of one book similar another book's characters in any other ways?
4. How were the characters related to the theme? Explain.

PLOT:

1. What did the main characters of the books want most?
2. Did anyone or anything stand between the main characters and their goals?
3. Did the main characters get what they wanted? How?
4. How were the plots of the books similar? How were they different?



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

Using the template on page 12, design and write your own newspaper. Give it a catchy title, and on the front page, draw a picture of something that happens in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963*. Write an article to accompany the picture. If you need help, go to the library and look at some of the different ways newspapers attract their readers' attention. For example, your article could be about something serious, like the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, or something funny, like Byron's getting his lips stuck to the mirror of the Brown Bomber.

Birmingham Seethes - -

Hate-Triggered Church Blast Kills 4 Little Girls

King Asks For Federal Intervention

WASHINGTON (UPI) — President Kennedy kept in close touch with developments today in the explosive Birmingham racial crisis, one of the gravest in the nation's recent history.

Among the first messages to reach his desk in early morning hours were demands from integrationist leader, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for federal intervention in Alabama.

King wired the Chief Executive that he would "sincerely plead with my people to remain non-violent in the face of this terrible provocation. However, I'm convinced that unless some immediate steps are taken by the federal government to restore a sense of confidence in the protection of life, limb and property, my pleas will fall on deaf ears and we shall see in Birmingham and Alabama the worst racial holocaust this nation has ever seen."



UNIDENTIFIED Negro woman is comforted by friends on the scene after a church was bombed, killing four children in Birmingham, Ala., yesterday. The woman had just been told that her daughter was a victim of the blast.

F.B.I. Sent In, Guard Put On Alert, Mayor Asks State Troops

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP)—Officials took extraordinary steps today to head off any new racial violence in bomb-shaken Birmingham after a dynamite blast killed four Negro girls, caused hours of terror and brought outraged protests from national Negro leaders.

The U. S. Justice Department sent in three top officials and a force of FBI agents with bomb experts. City officials joined church leaders in a special telecast urging citizens to be calm.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. flew into town to urge Negroes to be nonviolent — just as he did in May when the bombing of a Negro motel touched off rioting by Negroes.

National Guardsmen were placed on alert. Gov. George C. Wallace sent 300 state troopers to Birmingham.

Mayor Albert Boutwell said the blast yesterday morning of confidence in the protection of life, limb and property. . . We shall see in Birmingham and Alabama the worst racial holocaust the nation has ever seen."

"The executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Roy Wilkins, wired the President from New York that unless the federal government offers more than "pity and piecemeal aid against this type of bestiality," Negroes will "employ such methods as our desperation may dictate in defense of the lives of our people."

"The shock, outrage and anger of American citizens of both races at this callous and deliberate mass murder will make anything less than a strongly enforced civil rights bill a confession that the federal government is willing to occupy a spectator role in the life and death struggle of a beleaguered mi-

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

A large rounded rectangular frame containing a writing template. At the top is a wide, empty rounded rectangle. Below it, the page is divided into two columns. The left column has 15 horizontal lines, with the top line indented. The right column has a large empty rounded rectangle at the top and 10 horizontal lines below it.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

CHARACTER CREATIONS

Is there someone you know who might make a good character in a story or book? Think about what makes that person unique, and how he or she might react to a certain situation. Maybe your mother is a gardener. What if she came across something unusual-fairies, perhaps-in her garden? Write a short story about it on page 14.

1. What is your character's name?

2. What are your character's favorite things?

3. Where is your character from?

4. How does your character act around other people?

5. What does your character like to do?

6. Draw your character in the box.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

A large rounded rectangular box with a black outline. Inside, at the top, is a smaller rounded rectangular box, also with a black outline, intended for a title or heading. Below this box are 18 horizontal black lines of varying lengths, arranged to provide space for writing.

GEOGRAPHY & MATH

WHERE IN THE WORLD ARE THE WATSONS?

The Watsons drive from Flint, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama on Interstate 75. After you watch, look at a road map to track the Watsons' progress. Try to find interesting sites along I-75, perhaps one in each state they would pass through.

After the play, answer the following questions:

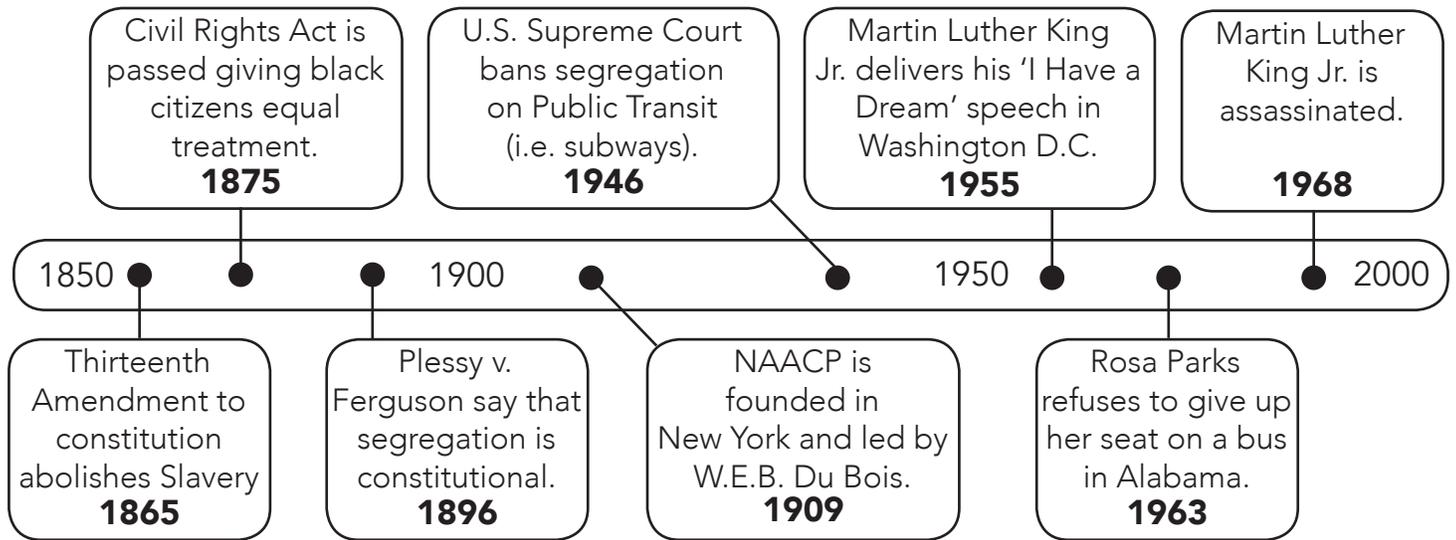
1. How many miles did the Watsons travel round trip?

2. If the Brown Bomber goes only forty-five miles per hour, how long will the trip take?

3. Did the Watsons take the most direct route to Birmingham? If not, what other highways might they have taken?

SOCIAL STUDIES

TIMELINE - THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT



1. Which happened earlier? Circle one.

A. Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat or B. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his speech

2. What year was the NAACP founded? _____

3. How many years after slavery was abolished was the civil rights act passed? _____

4. What year was segregation banned on Public Transits? _____

5. What is the span (number of years shown) of this timeline? _____

6. What year was segregation made constitutional? _____

7. Barack Obama was elected president in 2008.
Could this event be shown on this timeline? _____

8. What event happened in 1968? _____

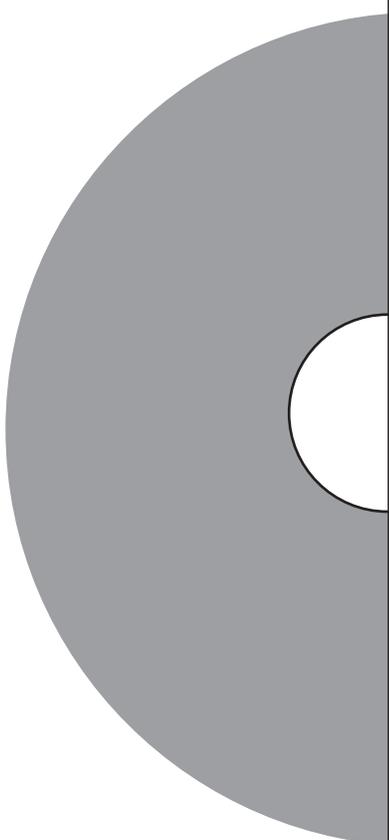
9. What is this timeline about? _____

10. Who delivered the speech 'I Have a Dream'? _____

MUSIC

CHASE YOUR BLUES AWAY

The Watsons play music on their new record player--the True-Tone AB-700, Ultra Glide--all the way to Birmingham. Momma likes "Under the Boardwalk," but Kenny prefers "Yakety Yak." Are there any special songs that you listen to when you're feeling down or when you're in a great mood? Make a music mix tape or CD of these songs and copy it for your friends. Ask them to do the same and find out what songs are important to them.



TRACK LIST	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	



BIRMINGHAM
CHILDREN'S
T H E A T R E

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

QUESTIONS? CONTACT JESSIE KISOR AT
jessie@bct123.org

