

Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins

Lesson Summary

Students will explore how segregation affected everyday life and ways to respond to injustice and discrimination. This will lead into discussion of civil disobedience, non-violent demonstrations, and the power of the written word. After engaging students in a discussion of segregation, the teacher reads *Freedom on the Menu* to second graders. The teacher then leads students in discussion of major issues raised by the text. Students brainstorm slogans and design signs that they would have carried on the picket lines.

Introduction

On February 1, 1960, four African-American students of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University sat at a white-only lunch counter inside a Greensboro, North Carolina Woolworth's store. While sit-ins had been held elsewhere in the United States, the Greensboro sit-in catalyzed a wave of nonviolent protest against private-sector segregation.

Materials

- Photo handout
- Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* by Carole Boston Weatherford
- Discussion questions
- Markers and paper

Procedures

1. Distribute photo handout to students. Define segregation for the students and ask them to find examples of segregation in the pictures. Explain that segregation was part of a larger set of laws called Jim Crow laws. Cite several laws that affected children: separate rooms or sections of restaurants and libraries, separate schools, theaters, lunch counters and public parks, and separate ticket offices and entrances to circuses and other shows. One North Carolina law stated, "Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them."
2. Read the book to the entire class. As you show students different pictures, ask them to identify the characters in the pictures (e.g. Mother, Sister, Brother, Connie).
3. After reading the book to the students, engage them in class discussion. Ask them to explain the difference between fiction and non-fiction. Explain that while the story is fiction, the Greensboro sit-ins were real, so this book combines fiction and history. Some questions to prompt discussion might include:
 - How did Connie feel about the whites-only lunch counter?

- Why wouldn't Aunt Gertie use the colored-only drinking fountain?
 - How did (different characters) feel about the sit-ins?
 - Why did Connie want her sister to carry the flag?
 - Mama told Connie, "Some rules need to be broken." How do we know what rules should be followed and which should be broken?
 - Should Sister have joined the sit-ins and risked arrest?
4. Ask students what kinds of signs might be most effective in a protest and why. Brainstorm ideas as a group for effective signs. Distribute markers and paper for students to make their own signs as if they would be participating in the sit-in protests.

Related Resources

[Greensboro Sit-Ins: Launch of a Civil Rights Movement](#)

A website dedicated to providing information about the sit-ins. Collects many interesting artifacts, including newspaper articles from 1960 until the present and photographs of the protests. An extensive multimedia archive augments the site.

[February One: The Story of the Greensboro Four](#)

This is an Independent Lens documentary about the sit-ins. The accompanying website includes information about the Greensboro Four, as well as supplemental lesson plans and resources.