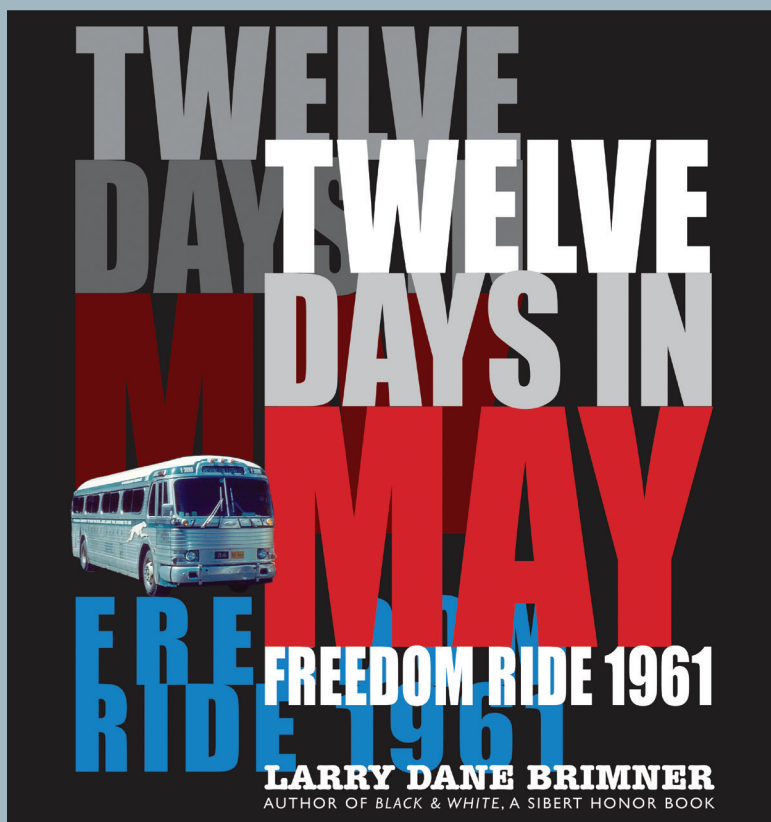


# Educator's Guide



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Five of the original thirteen Freedom Riders study a map of the route they plan to take from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans, Louisiana. They are (left to right): Edward Blankenheim, James Farmer, Genevieve Hughes, the Reverend Benjamin Cox, and Henry “Hank” Thomas.

AP Images

## Introduction

Larry Dane Brimmer begins his journalistic narrative about Freedom Ride 1961 with the four Supreme Court decisions that provided the foundation for this key event in the civil rights movement. Day-by-day accounts present not only what happened, but the context—the time, the politics, the cultural and political climate—so that today’s fourth through eighth grade students can get a fuller understanding of the significance of the Ride.

Key players are introduced; segregation is revealed; violent confrontations are described; and on-the-spot decisions and responses are discussed. Along with many photographs, this is moment-to-moment history that offers your students a sense of what segregation was like in the South and how dedicated and courageous the Freedom Riders were.

This guide provides activities, discussion questions, and content reviews that connect to language arts, history, geography, government, ethics, and critical thinking. Common Core standards are noted with each activity.

# Before Reading

## **SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY; LANGUAGE: SPEAKING AND LISTENING**

Introduce your students to some of the riders and goals of Freedom Ride 1961. Watch the first two and a half minutes of *Freedom Riders*, a documentary on the civil rights movement in the U.S.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66\\_kqSG6aHI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66_kqSG6aHI)

They will learn why several of the riders wanted to be a part of this event. By viewing just this short segment, your class will gain an understanding of the situation so they can get more from their study of *Twelve Days in May*. Discuss what they learned from the film and what questions it raised.

[SL 6.1, 6.2]

Note: The entire film runs just short of two hours. At the end of your study you might want to view it in its entirety with your students.

# Vocabulary

## **LANGUAGE ARTS: READING, VOCABULARY**

As your students read *Twelve Days in May*, they will come across words and terms that may be unfamiliar but are particular to the times and events depicted in the book. They should create study cards for each. The front of each card should have the word or term and the back its meaning and a sentence using the word. Below are some words and terms to get them started:

separate-but-equal rule  
interstate  
segregation  
nonviolence  
trespassing

Quakers  
racism  
bail  
humiliated  
white supremacist

[RH 6.4]

# Questions of Fact

## **LANGUAGE ARTS: READING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING; SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY**

These questions give you an opportunity to check in on how well your students are following, understanding, and retaining what they are reading. Tell the class that they should answer these questions with specific examples and information from the text.

1. Where, when, and why did the first lunch counter sit-in take place?
2. What were the stated goals of the 1961 Freedom Ride?
3. What criteria did James Farmer use to determine who would be the first Freedom Riders?
4. Why was it important that white men and women were participants on the Freedom Ride?
5. What was the “shoe-in” that Charles Person staged “by accident?”
6. Who was the first Freedom Rider to be arrested and what were the circumstances? Why did he refuse to allow Ed Blankenheim to post his bail?
7. Why were John Lewis and Al Bigelow attacked on May 9? Where did the attack take place? How did Lewis and Bigelow respond? What did John Lewis say to his attackers?
8. Who is Janie Miller and what was her role in the 1961 Freedom Ride?
9. Why was the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR) formed? What role did it play in Freedom Ride 1961?
10. When many of the Freedom Riders were unable to continue, what group offered to fill in for them? How did they convince James Farmer to allow them to step in? [RH 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4]

# Questions for Discussion

## LANGUAGE ARTS: SPEAKING AND LISTENING, CRITICAL THINKING, RESEARCH; SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY

1. Discuss with your students the practice of nonviolent response to confrontation. Why was it important for the Freedom Riders to be trained in nonviolence? Many of the riders were badly injured. Do your students believe that not fighting back made it worse or better for them? Each student should assess whether they have the ability to react nonviolently in violent situations. [RH 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, SL 6.1]
2. One of the tactics the Freedom Riders followed was “jail-no-bail.” What did they hope to gain by staying in jail? On what occasion was it more advantageous to pay the fine and leave town? [RH 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4; SL 6.1]
3. First-person accounts and primary source material bring to life the struggle of the civil rights movement and the Freedom Ride of May 1961. Students should go beyond the photographs in *Twelve Days in May* to hear the voices and read the writings of several key people involved.
  - Charles Person interview  
<https://vimeo.com/70330473>
  - “Life Remembered: Ben Cox, one of Freedom Riders,” June 16, 2011; *News-Gazette* (IL)  
<http://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/2011-06-16/life-remembered-ben-cox-one-freedom-riders.html>
  - Celebrating Black History Month: “Albert Bigelow” by Brett Hoover  
<http://ivy50.com/blackhistory/story.aspx?sid=3/11/2009>
  - Letters and telegrams from James Farmer, founder of CORE, to President John F. Kennedy  
<https://www.jfklibrary.org/Education/Students/Leaders-in-the-Struggle-for-Civil-Rights/James-Farmer.aspx>

Discuss what new insights and understandings your students gained by exploring these resources.

[RH 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.6, 6.9; SL 6.1, 6.2]

4. Have your students look carefully at the photograph on page 62. Do they think the children were willing participants or were they following the dictates of their parents? Discuss when children are old enough to make their own decisions about their actions and beliefs.

[RH 6.1, 6.2, 6.7; SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.4]

# Activities

## SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY, GOVERNMENT LAW

1. The four Supreme Court decisions that are presented in Twelve Days in May laid the foundation for the May 1961 Freedom Ride. Each student should complete a chart similar to the one below:

Civil Rights Supreme Court Rulings			
Date	Case	Issue	Decision

[RH 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7]

## LANGUAGE ARTS: RESEARCH, SPEAKING AND LISTENING, WRITING; COOPERATIVE LEARNING; SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY

2. Who were the original thirteen Freedom Riders? We know their names, and your students have read short biographies of them on pages 88–97, but your students can research the riders to learn more. Divide your class into two groups. One group will create research reports on their assigned

Freedom Riders. The reports can be given as PowerPoint presentations or speeches. The other group will research and write reports in the first person, and then present them as if they are the subjects, speaking directly to the class. [RH 6.1, 6.2; WHST 6.2, 6.4, 6.6, 6.9, SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5]

## **LANGUAGE ARTS: RESEARCH, WRITING; COOPERATIVE LEARNING; ART**

3. The story of Irene Morgan doesn't end on page 6. Morgan lived a courageous and productive life before passing away in 2007. Have your students research her life's work. They should note her accomplishments and the accolades bestowed on her. Useful information can be found at the following pages:

- <http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc3500/sc3520/015200/015242/html/15242bio.html>
- [http://robin01532.tripod.com/articles/articles\\_ireneobit.html](http://robin01532.tripod.com/articles/articles_ireneobit.html)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5kPC4aQn6yg>

As a class, create a frieze depicting the important events and work of Irene Morgan. Each team developing a particular part of the frieze should determine the art style as well as particular subject and then work together to complete it. [WHST 6.2, 6.4, 6.7, 6.9; SL 6.1, 6.5]

## **LANGUAGE ARTS: RESEARCH, WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING, CRITICAL THINKING; SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY, ETHICS**

4. "In the South, it is blacks to the back, whites only at the front. Segregation. Keep the races apart. . . . They call it Jim Crow" (page 20). Have your students research the origin of the term and cite specific

examples of how Jim Crow laws defined life in the South. Students should present their findings in reports that they give orally to the class. Some useful websites are below:

- <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/jim-crow>
- <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>
- <http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/1-segregated/jim-crow.html>  
[RH 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4; WHST 6.2, 6.4, 6.7, 6.8; SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.4]

## **LANGUAGE ARTS: READING, VOCABULARY, CRITICAL THINKING, RESEARCH, WRITING, SPEAKING AND LISTENING; COOPERATIVE LEARNING; USING TECHNOLOGY**

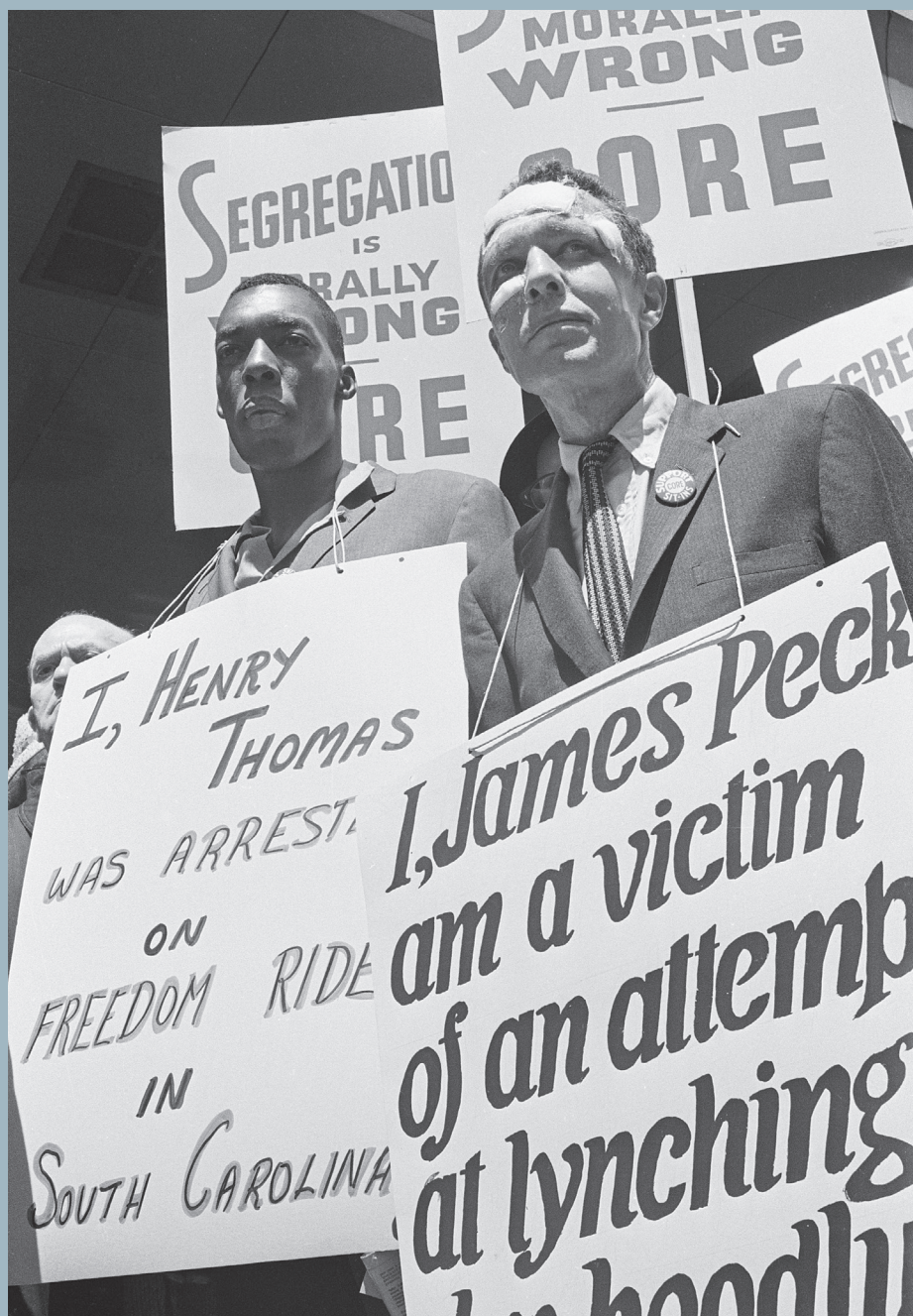
5. Have students read closely the paragraph at the bottom of page 78, and the section beginning with the paragraph at the bottom of page 82, through the end of page 84. Divide students into small groups of 3 or 4 to discuss the meaning of these passages and relate them to the entire book, defining any words as necessary. Then, as a class, create a list of five to six goals Freedom Ride 1961 accomplished.

Divide the class into groups and assign each group one of the accomplishments from the list. Each group should research their subject and put together a presentation for their fellow students. They should write reports, write and perform brief oral presentations, draw political cartoons, make photo scrapbooks, create videos, power points visuals, and use any available multimedia to communicate the importance and short and long-term effect of the accomplishment.

Each group's presentation should make persuasive arguments to show why and how "their result" was the most important of all. After all presentations have been made, the class should vote on which one they feel was the key result.

[RH 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.6, 6.7, WHST 6.1, 6.4, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9; SL 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5]





On May 17, 1961, just days after being beaten in Alabama, James Peck (right) and Hank Thomas (left) stand on a protest line at the Trailways bus station in New York City's Port Authority Bus Terminal.

**SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY; LANGUAGE ARTS: ORGANIZING INFORMATION**

6. The Freedom Ride was one of many tactics used to fight segregation. Others included marches, boycotts, hunger strikes, and mass demonstrations. From *Twelve Days in May*, your students know about the lunch counter sit-in in Greensboro, NC, by students at A&T University in February 1960. Have your students gather information about these and other strategies that were used. They should cite specific instances, including whether they were successful or not. They should organize their findings on a chart similar to the one below.

Fighting Segregation and Discrimination					
Date	Type of Protest	Location	Participants	Initial Results	Final Result
February 1960	Lunch counter sit-in	Woolworth's, Greensboro, North Carolina	Four black North Carolina A&T University students	Refused service	Grew in size with sit-ins across the nation

[RH 6.1, 6.7; WHST 6.2, 6.2, 6.4; SL 6.1, 6.4, 6.5]

**SOCIAL STUDIES: HISTORY; USING MULTIMEDIA**

7. Birmingham, Alabama, was one of the stops on the May 1961 Freedom Ride. It was also the center of actions throughout the civil rights movement, many of them involving violence. Now it is the home of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, which serves to educate people about the history of the civil rights movement in America and specifically in Birmingham. Your students can take a virtual tour of the Institute hosted by Ahmed Ward, its Director of Education and Exhibitions, at the website below.
- <https://www.c-span.org/video/?314619-1/birmingham-civil-rights-institute>



Recovered luggage sits beside the road as firefighters attempt to extinguish the blaze on May 14.

Photograph by Joseph Postiglione,  
Courtesy of Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

# TWELVE DAYS IN MAY FREEDOM RIDE 1961

by Larry Dane Brimner

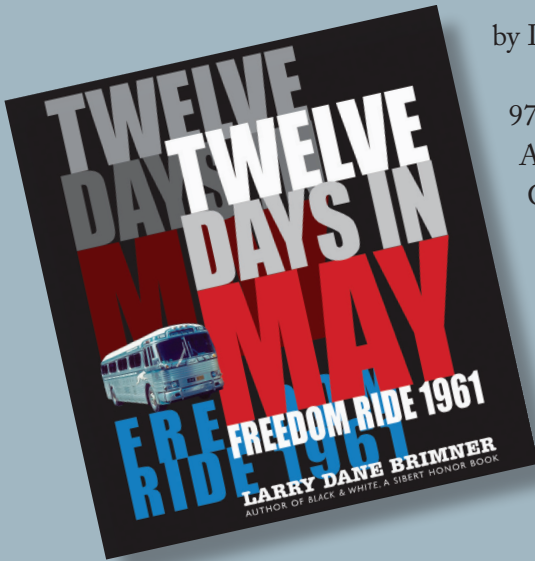
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ELA-literacy.

This guide was prepared by Clifford Wohl, Educational Consultant



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