

WARRIORS DON'T CRY: Questions to Consider

Defining Segregation: Chapters 1-3 (1-4 unabridged version)

- Melba writes, "Black folks aren't born expecting segregation...Instead the humiliating expectations and traditions of segregation creep over you slowly stealing a teaspoonful of your self-esteem each day" (3, abridged; 6, unabridged). How does Melba learn those expectations and traditions? What does she know about segregation by the time she is eight? twelve?
- How do the "humiliating expectations and traditions of segregation" shape the attitudes and actions of the adults in Melba's family?
- Why do you think the adults in Melba's family decide not to call the police when a white man tries to rape Melba?

Becoming a "Warrior": Chapters 4-8 (5-9 unabridged version)

- In what sense are Melba and the other eight students "warriors"? What qualities do warriors have? How do these qualities help the Little Rock Nine throughout the school year? What role does the media (TV, newspaper, radio, etc.) play in this year-long crisis? How important is the media and its role?
- In this section of the book, Melba reflects on the meaning of the word freedom. How are her experiences at Central High altering or deepening her understanding of the term?
- What does the word freedom mean to you? What experiences have shaped your understanding of the term?

Inside Central High: Chapters 7-8 (10-13 unabridged version)

- How do the adults at Central High--the principal, vice principal, teachers--respond to the arrival of the African American students? What effect do their responses have on Melba and the other African American students? What effect do you think they have on white students at Central High?
- What part do you think peer pressure plays in determining how the white students respond to the African American students?
- What do Melba's remarks about feeling both proud and sad while being escorted into the school by federal troops (abridged page 95; unabridged page 132) indicate about her sense of herself as an individual and as a citizen?
- How do Melba's dealings with the press help her find her voice? What other experiences contribute to a feeling that she can make a difference? That her opinions matter? What experiences undermine that feeling?

Responses to Desegregation: Chapters 9-12 (14-20 unabridged version)

- Two confrontations are described in this section of the book. The first is a meeting with the superintendent of schools. The second is the roundtable discussion for black and white students. In what respects are these encounters similar? What differences seem most striking? Which is the more likely to widen perspectives and/or shatter stereotypes?
- How does Melba's enrollment at Central High School affect her relationship with her old friends? Why do you think they are no longer willing to socialize with her?
- How do Melba and the other eight African American students respond to the stresses at Central High?
- What does Melba mean when she writes that "integration is a much bigger word than I thought (page 113 in the abridged and page 154 of the unabridged)?"

Legacies: Pages 183-226 abridged (262-312 unabridged version)

- Why does Link feel responsible for Mrs. Healy? Why do you think his parents do not feel as responsible for her welfare?
- How does racism shape Link's friendship with Melba?
- School officials tell the Greens that only members of their family can attend the graduation, but the family secretly arranges for two outsiders to attend: one is a reporter for a black newspaper and the other is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Why do you think the family invites these two strangers to the graduation? Why do you think they both choose to attend? What does their presence suggest about the effect the nine students have had on African Americans throughout the nation?

What have Melba and the other African American students accomplished? To what extent have they made a difference in Little Rock? In cities across the nation? To people around the world? Why do you think Melba comes to see her Central High experience as "a positive force that has shaped the course of my life"? How has it shaped her identity?