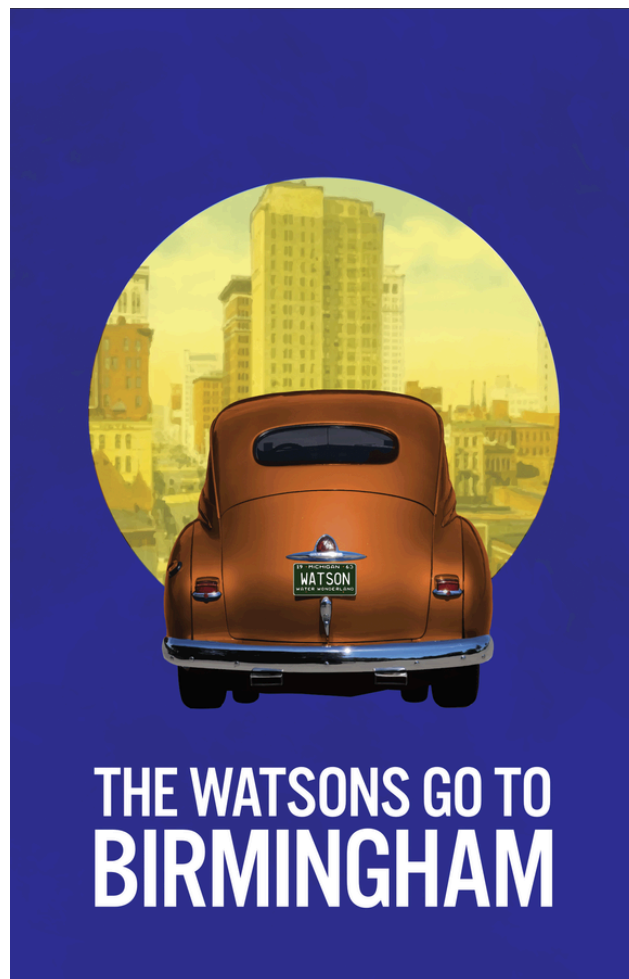


THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM

STUDY GUIDE



Adapted by Cheryl L. West
Directed by Keith Arthur Bolden

Dear Educators,

Welcome to Season 53 at Alabama Shakespeare Festival! We are thrilled you are joining us for this production, and we hope your visit to the State Theatre of Alabama will prove to be transformational for you and your students. Please also check out our companion guide, as you'll find additional helpful information there as you're planning your trip to visit us!

The amount of effort it takes to coordinate a trip from the classroom to the theater is not lost on us. Thank you for recognizing the value of live theatre for your students! We at ASF believe in the transformative power of the arts and its ability to educate, entertain, and inspire.

ASF is committed to supporting educators in the classroom. By engaging with this play and all others in our regular season, teachers will be able to address several standards in the state and national curriculum. We hope that all study materials and lesson activities are useful for classroom educators, though not exhaustive.

Viewing a performance at Alabama Shakespeare Festival and participating in the post-performance discussion can serve as a powerful springboard for positive classroom discourse, detailed and specific writing, and rich individual student exploration. Below you will find just a few of the possibilities for aligning your study of our productions to National Core Arts and Alabama Course of Study literacy standards.

See you at the theater!

ASF Education Team

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ALABAMA COURSE OF STUDY:

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

[ELA21.W.6.1] Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

[ELA22.W.6.2] Write informative or explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

[ELA15.RI.6.5] Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, or section fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.

[ELA16.RI.6.6] Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.

[ELA12.RI.9-10.3] Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

[ELA4.RL.11-12.4] Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

[ELA5.RL.11-12.5] Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS *cont.*

[ELA7.RL.11-12.7] Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text. (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist.)

SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

SS.4.14 Analyze the modern Civil Rights Movement to determine the social, political, and economic impact on Alabama.

SS.AAS.4.14 Identify the purpose of the Civil Rights Movement; recognize important issues, leaders, and results of the movement.

SS.6.2.5 Recognize the goals of the early Civil Rights Movement and the purpose of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

SS.6.9.1 Identify key persons and events of the modern Civil Rights Movement.

SS.AAS.6.9 Define Civil Rights Movement; identify key figures and events of the Civil Rights Movement, including Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Montgomery Bus Boycott, and the **16th Street Baptist Church Bombing**;

NATIONAL CORE ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

TH.Re7.1 Perceive and analyze artistic work.

TH.Re8.1 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

TH.Re9.1 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

TH.Cn10.1 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

TH.Cn11.1 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

PLOT

“...Grandma Sands will spank a grizzly bear if he needs it.”

Cheryl L. West's adaptation of *Watsons* comes to life in a poignant and transformative way live on stage, while maintaining the charm and warmth of Christopher Paul Curtis' original novel. The play follows the fictional story of ten-year-old Kenny Watson, his quirky, loving family (the “Weird Watsons”), and their eventful road trip from Flint, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama in the summer of 1963. As the play opens, we hear the sound of an old Plymouth's (nicknamed the “Brown Bomber”) ignition starting, and lights rise to reveal Kenny, the play's protagonist, hiding behind the family couch witnessing his family appearing before him on stage frozen in a kaleidoscope of moments in his memory. Upon the mention of “Alabama,” the audience is whisked into reality, through time, and taken back on a journey through Kenny's memory of his family's fateful road trip toward one of the darkest moments in America's history.

Kenny's defiant older brother, Byron, pledges his allegiance to the “trouble tribe,” and after a few bad run-ins, the Watson family decides a trip down South to visit Grandma Sands might be just the right medicine for Byron's rebellion. With each passing mile, the Watsons encounter the tensions, cultural differences, and dangers of the 1960s Civil Rights era. Despite those dangers, the family aims to make their visit a fun family adventure. One day, as Kenny heads back from taking his little sister Joey to Sunday school, he's stopped in his tracks by a loud, concussive boom. Grandma's church — 16th Street Baptist Church — is bombed leaving four innocent little girls dead and one severely injured. Kenny hears screams and cries all around, and swirling up in the debris, he spots his sister's shoe. He runs all the way back to Grandma Sands, finding Joey alive and okay. The family hurriedly packs to return to Michigan a week early. Their time in Alabama proves to be a harrowing experience for every member of the family, but especially Kenny who struggles to cope with the trauma.

CHARACTERS

Kenny Watson - A curious, sensitive, and imaginative 10 year old who serves as the play's protagonist and narrator.

Byron Watson - Kenny's older brother, a rebellious troublemaker.

Daddy (Daniel) Watson - The humorous and supportive patriarch of the family.

Mamma (Wilona) Watson - A loving but strict matriarch; the only member of the family not born in Flint, Michigan.

Joey (Joetta Corrine) Watson - The youngest Watson sibling; she often tattles on her brothers but looks up to them both.

Grandma Sands - Wilona's mother who lives in Birmingham, Alabama; a strict disciplinarian.

Buphead - Byron's best friend and partner in crime.

Additional Characters:

Wool Pooh, Alabama Southerner/Racist, TV Commentator, Radio Announcer

Think about it: This piece is known as “historical fiction,” meaning it's a fictional story that takes place during a pivotal moment in history. In what ways do you think the fictional characters' — especially the children's — experiences in this play help make the true events more relatable to the audience? Explain.



SETTING

Flint, Michigan and Birmingham, Alabama. Winter to Summer, 1963.

REFERENCES TO KNOW

Agitators — A term popularized during the Civil Rights Movement to describe people who are blamed for political or civil unrest; usually to discount those from northern states who supported the movement.

Appalachia — A valley that settlers used to more easily migrate from as far south as Alabama and north as New England. This area presented unique dangers for Black Americans due to its largely isolated remoteness and deeply entrenched racism.

Bomb-Bama — A derogatory slang term used by some Americans due to the many bombings of Black homes and institutions that occurred in cities like Birmingham leading up to and during the 1960s Civil Rights demonstrations.

Brown Bomber — The Watson family car. A 1948 brown Plymouth built by Chrysler. It was one of the premier “economy cars” of the decade, making it very popular.

Conk/Butter — A popular hairstyle that was worn by some African American men between the 1940s and the early 60s. The name comes from a lye-based gel “congolene” used to chemically straighten hair.

Forty-Fives “45” — A 7-inch vinyl record that plays at 45 revolutions per minute (RPM). The name is derived from its speed; these 7-inch discs were also referred to as “singles,” and often featured a single song.

Green Book — The *Negro Motorist Green Book* was a guidebook for road travel compiled by Victor Hugo Green during the segregation era that identified businesses, rest areas, and hotels that would accept Black Americans across the country.

Heart of Dixie — A nickname for Alabama. Dixie was a coined name for Southern states, especially the Confederate states that left the Union during the Civil War. Alabama was dubbed the “Heart of Dixie” because Montgomery, AL was the first Confederate capital.

Juvenile Delinquent — A young person who behaves in an unacceptable way. The term also describes a minor who breaks the law and is found guilty in juvenile court.

Outhouse — Small buildings (usually found around older homes without modern plumbing) that contained a latrine or toilet that stood separate from the main dwelling or structure.

The “World-Famous” Watson Pet Hospital — A nook behind the couch where the Watson family pets always used to go whenever they were hurt or sick. Byron claimed it had “magical healing powers.”

Prejudice — A favoring or dislike of something or someone without good reason; usually a preconceived opinion or judgement that is based on stereotypes and generalizations rather than facts.

Redneck — An offensive, disparaging term used to describe white Americans from rural areas (typically from the south) who are perceived to be unsophisticated.

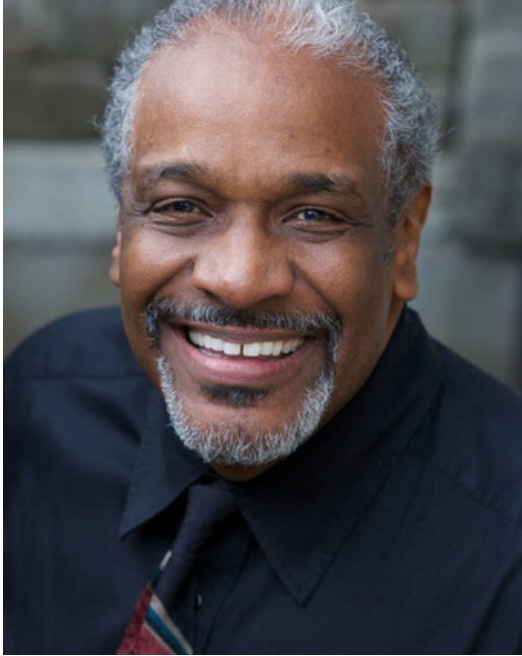
Segregation — the action of separating people, historically on the basis of race and/or gender. Segregation implies the physical separation of people in everyday activities, professional life, and in the exercise of civil rights.

The Ultra-Glide — Though fictional, devices like it were height of technology in the 1960s. This unique portable “drive around” record player made it possible to keep vinyl records from skipping or scratching when the car went over any bumps.

Wool Pooh — A character that Kenny’s older brother Byron invents as a way of discouraging his younger siblings from swimming in a whirlpool they happen upon in Birmingham, Alabama.

Yankee — A term associated with Americans from the upper New England states; most often used during the 1950s and 60s to distinguish folks who were not born and raised as “true Southerners.”





MEET THE AUTHOR: Christopher Paul Curtis

Christopher Paul Curtis is an American author of children's literature. He was born on May 10, 1953, in Flint, Michigan, a city that serves as a setting in several of his books. After high school, he began working with his father on the assembly line at the Fisher Body Plant No. 1 while attending the Flint branch of the University of Michigan. His first book, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963*, was created after he quit his job at the Flint Fisher Body plant and dedicated a year to writing. In the year 2000, Curtis received the prestigious Newbery Medal, awarded by the American Library Association (ALA) to the author of the most distinguished American children's book of the year. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963* has received numerous awards and has been adapted both for television and the stage. Curtis has also received wide notoriety and great success with other popular books like *Bud, Not Buddy*, *Elijah of Buxton*, and *The Mighty Miss Malone*. Curtis still writes and currently lives with his wife and children in Windsor, Ontario.

MEET THE ADAPTER: Cheryl L. West

*"In my family, if you could tell a good story,
they liked to see you coming."*

Cheryl L. West was born in Chicago in 1965. Prior to her work as a playwright, she was a teacher and social worker. She is the recipient of several awards such as the Charlotte B. Chorpenning Playwright Award (2016) honoring the canon of work she has created, the American Alliance For Theatre & Education Distinguished Play Award (2016 – *Akeelah and the Bee*), and the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. Her other notable plays include *Holiday Heart* (1994), which was adapted for Showtime in 2000 starring Ving Rhames and Alfre Woodard; *Jar the Floor* (1995), winner of the NAACP Best Play Award; *Play On!* (1997), a Broadway musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* with songs by Duke Ellington; and *Pullman Porter Blues* (2012). West's stage adaptation of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963* was co-commissioned by Seattle Children's Theatre, LaunchPad — UC Santa Barbara, and Chicago Children's Theatre. Throughout her decades-long career and 20 full-length plays (and counting), the Seattle-based artist has embraced complex characters and celebrated the power of intergenerational stories, while honoring the African American experience. www.cheryllwest.com



Think about it: Both of these accomplished artists had jobs in other unrelated fields/industries before beginning their careers as writers. How do you think those unique perspectives might have impacted their work? Explain.

MEET THE FOUR LITTLE GIRLS:

DENISE MCNAIR



1951—1963

CYNTHIA WESLEY



1949—1963

ADDIE MAE COLLINS



1949—1963

CAROL ROBERTSON



1949—1963

BACKGROUND

On a quiet Sunday morning, September 15, 1963 shortly after 10:00am the **16th Street Baptist Church** was bombed in an act of racially motivated terrorism by the Ku Klux Klan. The bomb exploded in the back outer stairwell of the church, ripping through the walls and windows. Sixteenth Street Baptist (est. 1873) was the first Black church to be organized in Birmingham, Alabama shortly after the city was formed and was a frequent Civil Rights meeting place for prominent leaders. Four young girls — Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Addie Mae Collins, and Carol Robertson — were tragically killed and nearly two dozen others were injured. Of the survivors was the younger sibling of Addie Mae, **Sarah Collins**, who was blinded by the blast. Sarah was the last to see the other four girls alive. The bombing occurred just days after Birmingham City Schools were integrated. This heinous attack lent new urgency to the Civil Rights Movement.



12-year old Sarah Collins, the “fifth little girl,” recovering at Hillman Hospital following the horrific church bombing. c1963
Photo by: Frank Dandridge/LIFE Images



A massive crater caused by the church bombing. The force of the blast blew out the windows in the building across the street and mangled the parked cars outside. c1963. AP Photo.

Although the FBI identified three suspects within months of the bombing, FBI director J. Edgar Hoover refused to act, and no trials or convictions would take place until 1977, 2001, and 2002. A fourth suspect died of natural causes in 1994 without ever coming to trial. In 2020, Sarah Collins-Rudolph petitioned Governor Kay Ivey for restitution for the injuries and trauma she has continually endured as a result of the attack. Though an apology was issued at Collins-Rudolph’s request, justice has yet to be served for the “fifth little girl.”

Think about it: The victims of this horrific attack were preparing for Sunday services when the bomb exploded. The senseless loss of young lives in such a sacred space illuminated the brutality of racism and the depths to which hatred can sink. Why do you think this particular event galvanized more active supporters of the Civil Rights Movement? Explain.

PAIRED TEXT: "THE ROSES" BY THOMAS GARDENER JR.

Birmingham Civil Rights Poet

On Sunday, September 15, 1963, Thomas Gardener Jr. was only a few blocks away from the 16th Street Baptist Church when the explosion claimed the lives of four young girls preparing for Sunday service. He knew each of the young girls and their families personally. Today, Gardener is a local Civil Rights poet and activist. When Condelezza Rice came to Birmingham, Alabama to induct the Four Little Girls into the Gallery of Distinguished Citizens, Gardener would be tapped to pen a poetic tribute in their honor. He titled the poem "The Roses."

"The Roses"

by Thomas Gardener Jr.

Scour the pages of history, I doubt if one could find
A nastier stain, a bloodier blot
On the escutcheon of mankind.

It seared the consciousness of a nation,
It touched the marrow in our bones,
But it stiffened our spines to face down tyranny,
The hoses, dogs, and stones.

No longer will we weep, prostrate beside your graves,
For you were sacrificial lambs,
by which a nation would be saved.

Freedom is so sacred, oh, the price she imposes.
**No longer shall we complain of thorns,
Enough to have the roses.**



Thomas Gardener Jr.

"For years it has been said that although it was the Supreme Court decision **Brown v. Board of Education** that **broke the legal back of segregation**, it was the murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi and **the deaths of the four little girls in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church** that **broke the moral back of segregation.**"

— Thomas Gardener Jr.

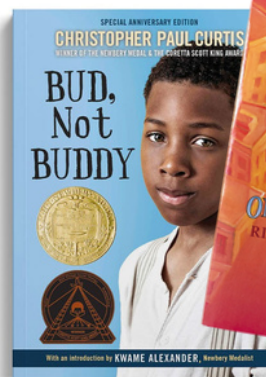
Think about it: Take a moment to reflect on each stanza of this poem. Analyze the highlighted line "no longer shall we complain of thorns, enough to have the roses." What do you think the author meant by using this phrase? What do you think is the call to action? Explain.

FURTHER READING

Here's a short (not exhaustive) list of other books and poems that explore similar themes to *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963*. After you've studied *Watsons*, check out some of these titles! Keep making discoveries!

- *Abby Takes a Stand*: 1960 novel by Patricia McKissack
- ***Bud, Not Buddy*** novel by Christopher Paul Curtis
- *Dear Ruby, Hear Our Hearts* book by Ruby Bridges
- ***New Kid*** novel by Jerry Craft
- ***One Crazy Summer*** novel by Rita Williams-Garcia
- *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* novel by Mildred D. Taylor
- *Ruth and the Green Book* novel by Alexander Ramsey Calvin
- *The Ballad of Birmingham* poem by Dudley Randall
- *The Hill We Climb* poem by Amanda Gorman
- *The Mighty Miss Malone* novel by Christopher Paul Curtis

One Crazy Summer by
Rita Williams-Garcia



Bud, Not Buddy
by Christopher Paul Curtis



New Kid by Jerry Craft

THE LONG ROAD TO CIVIL RIGHTS: BIRMINGHAM 1963

Curated by Dr. Susan Willis, ASF Dramaturg

Think about it: Numerous incidents occurred in the struggle for civil rights in 1963. The next year would bring the **Civil Rights Act**, but the fight would continue. Think about the progress made in the US and around the world since 1963. Can you identify any challenges still before us today? Explain.

January 14, 1963

George Wallace inaugurated as Alabama's governor. His speech pledges "**segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.**"

April 2, 1963

Police Chief "Bull" Connor defeated in Birmingham mayoral bid.

April 3, 1963

Rev. Shuttlesworth's nonviolent "**Birmingham Campaign**" to confront local segregation in businesses and schools gains support of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led by Dr. Martin Luther King. The film *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962) opens in Birmingham.

April 12, 1963

The City Council refuses all applications for a parade permit from Shuttlesworth and King, but they decide to have the marches and are arrested and jailed.

April 16, 1963

Dr. King starts writing the "**Letter from Birmingham Jail**," a major civil rights statement.

May 2, 1963

The Children's Crusade begins; nonviolent school students march to city hall to protest.

May 3, 1963

Police Chief "Bull" Connor stops the children's march with police dogs and fire hoses; police arrest hundreds of children. Pictures flood television reports and national and international newspapers.

May 10, 1963

Local business leaders agree to begin desegregation.

May 11, 1963

The black-owned Gaston Motel is bombed.

June 11, 1963

Gov. Wallace makes his "**stand in the schoolhouse door**" to prevent Black students from entering the University of Alabama.

August 28, 1963

250,000-strong Freedom **March on Washington, D.C.** led by 8 civil rights organizations; **Dr. King gives "I Have a Dream" speech.**

September 4, 1963

Black students begin to integrate previously all-white **Birmingham City Schools.**

September 15, 1963

White supremacists bomb **16th Street Baptist Church** in an act of racially motivated terrorism, killing four young girls and injuring dozens.

November 22, 1963

President Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.



May 3, 1963. Birmingham. Young marchers blasted with fire hoses.



The Children's March. May 2, 1963. 2,000 foot soldiers. 16th Street Baptist can be seen in the background.



Birmingham Newspaper headline. Monday, September 16, 1963.

Dr. Martin Luther King waves to a crowd of thousands at the March on Washington. August 1963.

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY: COSTUME & SCENIC ELEMENTS

THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM

Adapted by Cheryl L. West

Based on the book: "The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963" by Christopher Paul Curtis



Scenic rendering of ASF's production of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*.
Scenic Design by Isabel A. & Moriah Curley-Clay



Daniel "Dad"

Wilona "Mom"

Grandma Sands

Byron

Kenny

"Joey"

Costume renderings of ASF's production of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*. "Sunday Morning." Costume Design by Ramona Ward.

Think about it: Take a look at the scenic and costume renderings above. Knowing that the purpose of these design elements is to add meaning while fulfilling the needs of the story, what specific details or design choices do you notice here that serve the play? Explain.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Imagine you are going on a long road trip with members of your own family, and you are in charge of the planning. How would you prepare for the trip? Where would you want to go? Why? What might be challenging about the journey? Explain.
2. As previously described, *Watsons* is regarded as historical fiction. Though the Watson family was born out of the mind of Christopher Paul Curtis, the events within the story are historically accurate. Why do you think the author chose to tell this particular story through the lens of children rather than the adults? Do you think that choice is effective? Why or why not?
3. What challenges do you expect the cast and crew might face in bringing this well-known children's novel to life on stage? How do you think this experience — seeing the play — might differ from reading the book? Explain.

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the end of the play, Kenny makes a birthday wish, having overcome his fears following the events in Birmingham. He doesn't tell us, but what do you think he wishes for? Explain.
2. If you've previously read the novel, how does this stage adaptation differ from the original work? Are there any elements that are more emphasized for the stage? Did Cheryl L. West's version live up to your expectations? Explain.
3. If you could pinpoint a moral, lesson, or call to action from this piece. What would that be? Did you connect with and elements of the story? Explain.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

I. On your feet: Poetry in Motion! Take a moment to review the poem on page 8. Divide the class into four small groups. Give a print-out to each group, and assign them a stanza of the poem. Step 1. Ask the students to read through their stanza and devise a few still images to represent any significant phrases. Step 2. Have the students work on performing their stanza with the lines of text and incorporating the still images. Step 3. Pair the groups and have them perform their stanza for their peers. Step 4. Arrange the groups around the room (or create a "performance space") and have them perform the poem as one long sequence. Discuss.

Variation: Teachers, you may allow your students to get creative and add props, use items in the classroom, or bring items from home to enhance the performance! Get creative! For more advanced students, you may choose separate poems (there's a few on page 8) and have the groups perform the entire work separately. A grading rubric is attached below to use if you wish!

II. At your desk: Roadmap to Birmingham! Want to travel with the Watson family? Use the activity sheet attached below to map out the Watsons' trip from Flint, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama using major plot points from the story. Get creative! Use colored pencils or markers to highlight states and mark areas where the family made pitstops. When you're done, answer the activity questions included below. Great geography lesson!

Teachers: You will find additional activity sheets attached below! Use them however you like. Please let us know if you find these helpful or have other ideas for additional resources.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Anticipation Activity pg. 13

Responding to Live Theatre: Critical Response pg. 14

Roadmap to Birmingham pg. 15

Poetry in Motion Performance Rubric pg. 16

ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

The Roses of Birmingham

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jx3LW7p6xsY>

Negro Motorist Green Book: Smithsonian Institute

<https://negromotoristgreenbook.si.edu/>

'Fifth Little Girl' in Birmingham Church Bombing And Her Nurse at Hospital Reunite

<https://www.birminghamtimes.com/2022/09/after-6-decades-fifth-little-girl-in-birmingham-church-bombing-and-her-nurse-reunite/>

"Summer of 1963" — Integrating Alabama's Schools

<https://www.wsfa.com/2023/02/21/summer-1963-integrating-alabamas-schools/>

'Segregation Forever': A Fiery Pledge Forgiven, But Not Forgotten

<https://www.npr.org/2013/01/14/169080969/segregation-forever-a-fiery-pledge-forgiven-but-not-forgotten>

About Cheryl L. West

www.cheryllwest.com

ANTICIPATION ACTIVITY: AGREE or DISAGREE PRE-SHOW (MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL)

Before you see the show, respond to the following statements as honestly as possible by circling your response. Then, explain your answer with an example.

SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree, D – Disagree, SD – Strongly Disagree

STATEMENT #1: Humor is always helpful in difficult situations.

SA | A | D | SD

Explain your answer with an example:

STATEMENT #2: Everyone deserves a second chance.

SA | A | D | SD

Explain your answer with an example:

STATEMENT #3: A family bond is unbreakable.

SA | A | D | SD

Explain your answer with an example:

A variation of this activity: “Four Corners.” Make signs with the SA, A, D, and SD labels. Then, ask the students to stand in the middle of the classroom. Repeat each question aloud (or create new ones) and allow them to move to the corner of the room that best represents their opinion. Discuss.

RESPONDING TO LIVE THEATRE

POST-SHOW (MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL)

THE WATSONS GO TO BIRMINGHAM

CRITICAL REVIEW

Directions: Imagine you are the official theatre critic for this production at ASF! For each area of the production, give thoughtful and honest feedback. Be specific and answer each prompt using complete sentences. Use the back of the page if necessary.

I. Playwright/Story

Use the space below to discuss elements of the story. What worked well? Did anything strike you negatively?

II. Performance/Acting

Use the space below to give constructive feedback about the actors' performances in the production. Was there a performer whom you particularly enjoyed? What could have been better?

III. Directing

Use the space below to discuss the overall direction and interpretation of this production. Remember, nothing happens by accident. Did anything surprise you?

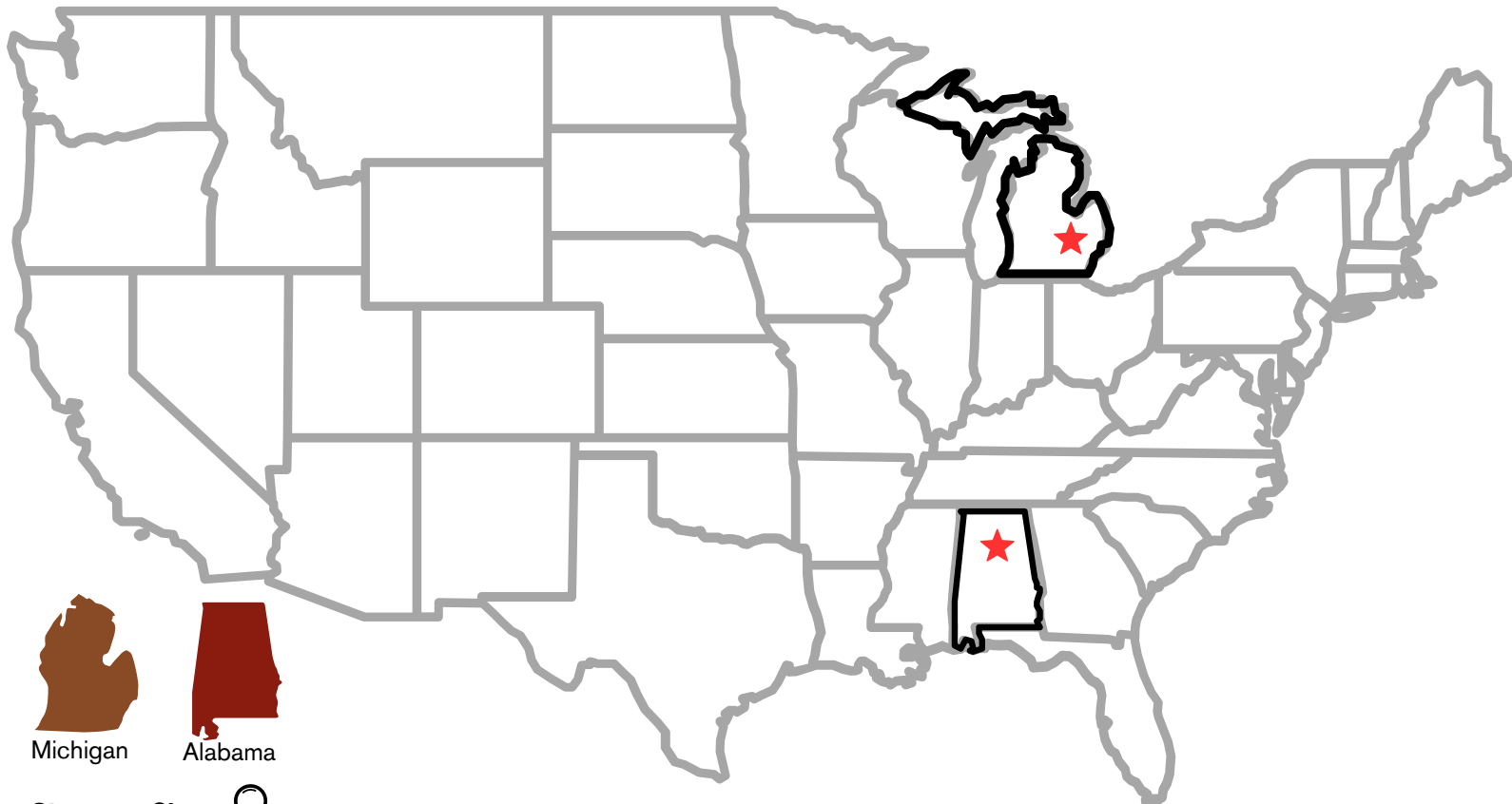
IV. Technical Elements

Use the space below to discuss the lighting, sound, scenery, and costumes for this production. Were you transported to a different time/place? Did these elements effectively serve the story? Explain.

ROADMAP TO BIRMINGHAM: (MIDDLE SCHOOL)

HELP THE WATSON FAMILY MAP OUT THEIR ROUTE TO BIRMINGHAM

Directions: Use the U.S. map and clues below to map the route of the Watsons' trip from Flint, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama. Use colored pencils or markers to highlight and label each state they pass through and mark each city in which they stop. Then, use the clues to answer the activity questions.



Storymap Clues: 🔍

The Watsons begin their journey in **Flint, Michigan**, waking up at 5:00 a.m. to get on the road.

The family loads up the car and begins traveling southbound on I-75, making a pit stop in **Toledo, Ohio** to use the restroom and eat a packed lunch.

Back on the road, the family continues traveling south, passing through **Kentucky** and pulling over in the dark of night in **Knoxville, Tennessee** to use the restroom. The family realizes they've reached the foothills of Appalachia. The family quickly loads up and gets back on the road.

By dawn's break, they finally reach **Alabama**, passing through **Oakman**. After a tense encounter with a white southerner, they finally reach **Birmingham, Alabama**. The trip took 14 hours and 30 minutes.

Activity Questions (use another sheet of paper or the back of this page to complete):

1. What is the name of the special guidebook the Watsons bring with them to travel down South (answer can be found on pg. 5)? What is its purpose?
2. What does the "I" in I-75 stand for? This system of travel was developed in 1956.
3. How many states does the Watson family pass through?
4. How many cities do the Watsons stop in on their way to Birmingham? For what purpose?
5. How long did it take the Watson family to drive from Flint, MI to Birmingham, AL?

Helpful note: Teachers, it may be helpful to project an image of a labeled U.S. map to assist with this activity. For additional geography practice, have students identify and label as many states as they can on their own!

POETRY IN MOTION RUBRIC:

(MIDDLE SCHOOL, HIGH SCHOOL)

Criteria	Exemplary (20)	Proficient (15)	Basic (10)	Needs Improvement (5)	Points
Interpretation of the Poem	The performance enhances the meaning of the text. Demonstrates a deep understanding of the poem.	A solid interpretation that captures poem's essence and shows a clear understanding of the text.	Shows a basic understanding of the poem, but the interpretation lacks depth or originality.	Shows little understanding of the poem and its themes.	/20
Creativity	Highly original with inventive and moving use of movement.	Interesting choices but may not fully explore themes of the poem.	The performance demonstrates some creativity with very simplistic choices.	The performance lacks creativity and employs minimal use of movement.	/20
Collaboration/ Ensemble	The group works seamlessly together; the performance feels cohesive.	The group collaborates well, but some elements aren't fully synched.	The group's effort and collaboration is uneven; some members dominate.	A noticeable lack of collaboration; the group's work feels disjointed. Poor communication.	/20
Physicality/ Movement	Movement is highly expressive and purposeful; dynamic use of space.	Movement supports the text, though not fully expressive; use of space supports the performance.	Movement is present but limited; distracts the audience. The use of space lacks intentionality.	Minimal use of physicality OR is inappropriate for the poem's themes. Performance feels static or distracting.	/20
Overall Impact	The performance leaves a powerful and lasting impression.	The performance is engaging but the message lacks impact.	The performance is somewhat engaging but lacks overall impact.	The performance struggles to engage the audience; fails to convey the meaning of the piece.	/20
Total Points	/100				