

## **Week 9**

### **Overview:**

This week you will complete a performance task to practice for the Smarter Balanced Assessment which you will be taking in just a few short weeks! Your teacher will guide you through the steps necessary to complete the writing at the end of the performance task. If you are working independently, follow all the instructions on the handout.

## Birmingham, Alabama

In 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States made a decision that public school segregation was unconstitutional, thus paving the way for desegregation. A year later, Rosa Parks sat down on a public transportation bus and refused to get up for a white passenger, sparking a citywide bus boycott. In the next several years, amid much racial unrest, African American students entered Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, North Carolina A&T University, and the University of Mississippi. In August 1963, Martin Luther King, calling for nonviolent equality, gave his "I Have a Dream" speech to more than 250,000 people in the March on Washington.

During these tumultuous years, the plight of the African American as well as the fear and anger of the white society filled newspapers and magazines, and became the subject in literary circles. Every Civil Rights story or article had a bias, a specific purpose, and an intended audience. Objectivity was rare.

In September of 1963, the racial problems exploded, literally, when a bomb blew up on a Sunday morning in a church in Birmingham, Alabama. Four African American girls were killed, crushed by the rubble of the falling building.

The story of the bombing has been told many times in many ways and from many different points of view. You are about to read two versions of the story. The first version is a ballad. A ballad tells a sad story through much dialogue and the interaction of several characters. The second account of the bombing is a newspaper article written in Chicago, Illinois -- not Birmingham. As you read the two texts, think about the purpose of each text and the techniques the authors use to accomplish their purposes.

### READ THE TEXTS:

1. Randall Dudley's "The Ballad of Birmingham"
2. Claude Sitton's "Birmingham Bomb Kills 4 Negro Girls In Church" (Abridged)

### Selected Response Questions

1. In Dudley Randall's "The Ballad of Birmingham," the relationship of mother and daughter
  - A. Highlights the natural speech patterns and dialogue of an African American family.
  - B. Is heightened by the use of rhyme and song-like rhythm
  - C. Develops the theme of ironic and irreversible loss
  - D. Allows the poet to withhold important information until later in the poem
2. The purpose of "Birmingham Bomb Kills 4 Negro Girls In Church" is
  - A. To give an obituary for the four girls killed in the bombing.
  - B. To explain the racial tensions that the city of Birmingham was facing in 1963.
  - C. To highlight the irony between the title of the Sunday school lesson, "The Love That Forgives," and the death of the children.
  - D. To present an objective account of the events surrounding the event.

3. The best example of a similarity between the two texts is that
- A. Both texts have characters that propel the story: the mother and daughter in the ballad and the list of four girls in the news article.
  - B. Both texts present a story using facts and emotions.
  - C. Both texts explore the irony of the bombing: the ballad explores the personal irony of the family while the news article explores the public irony of the current, historic situation.
  - D. Both texts seek to create strong emotion in their readers.

### Short Constructed Response

After you have read the two texts, think about how you would react to the text and the information in the text on a personal level. Explain your reaction and what specific elements of each text caused you to react in this manner.

### Extended Writing Prompt

**Extended Writing Prompt:** Compare and contrast the purposes for which Dudley writes his poem, "The Ballad of Birmingham," and Sitton writes his news article, "Birmingham Bomb Kills 4 Negro Girls In Church." For each text, determine who is telling the story and what choices the author makes to accomplish his purpose. Be sure to use specific evidence from the texts to support your response.

- In your extended writing response, be sure to:
- Introduce your thesis
- Include discussion of both passages
- Mention the authors and titles
- Support your thesis with relevant evidence from the texts
- Organize the evidence
- Give commentary on the evidence showing how it supports your thesis
- Establish and maintain a formal style
- Provide a concluding statement or section that wraps up your ideas
- Check your work for correct grammar, usage, capitalization, spelling, and punctuation

## **Ballad of Birmingham**

**Dudley Randall**

*(On the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963)*

“Mother dear, may I go downtown  
Instead of out to play,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
In a Freedom March today?”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For the dogs are fierce and wild,  
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails  
Aren’t good for a little child.”

“But, mother, I won’t be alone.  
Other children will go with me,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
To make our country free.”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For I fear those guns will fire.  
But you may go to church instead  
And sing in the children’s choir.”

She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair,  
And bathed rose petal sweet,  
And drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,  
And white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know her child  
Was in the sacred place,  
But that smile was the last smile  
To come upon her face.

For when she heard the explosion,  
Her eyes grew wet and wild.  
She raced through the streets of Birmingham  
Calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,  
Then lifted out a shoe.  
“O, here’s the shoe my baby wore,  
But, baby, where are you?”

## **Birmingham Bomb Kills 4 Negro Girls In Church (Abridged)**

**By Claude Sitton Special to The New York Times**

Birmingham, Ala., Sept. 15--A bomb severely damaged a Negro church today during Sunday school services, killing four Negro girls and setting off racial rioting and other violence in which two Negro boys were shot to death.

The four girls killed in the blast had just heard Mrs. Ella C. Demand, their teacher, complete the Sunday school lesson for the day. The subject was "The Love That Forgives."

During the period between the class and an assembly in the main auditorium, they went to the women's lounge in the basement, at the northeast corner of the church.

The blast occurred at about 10:25 A.M.

Church members said they found the girls huddled together beneath a pile of masonry debris.

The dead were identified by University Hospital officials as:

Cynthia Wesley, 14, the only child of Claude A. Wesley, principal of the Lewis Elementary School, and Mrs. Wesley, a teacher there.

Denise McNair, 11, also an only child, whose parents are teachers.

Carol Robertson, 14, whose parents are teachers and whose grandmother, Mrs. Sallie Anderson, is one of the Negro members of a biracial committee established by Mayor Boutwell to deal with racial problems.

Addie Mae Collins, 14, about whom no information was immediately available.

The blast blew gaping holes through walls in the church basement. Floors of offices in the rear of the sanctuary appeared near collapse. Stairways were blocked by splintered window frames, glass and timbers. Chief Police Inspector W. J. Haley said the impact of the blast indicated that at least 15 sticks of dynamite might have caused it.