

## **Week 5**

### **Overview:**

It's time to launch into the novel The Lions of Little Rock, which you will actually begin reading next week. This week you will engage in reading, research and writing activities that will introduce you to the events directly related to the historical context of the novel. You will also be introduced to the author and the main character of the book.

### **Assignments:**

- 1. **Background WebQuest for The Lions of Little Rock**
- 2. **Pre-Writing: Facing a Fear**
- 3. **Character Profile: Getting to Know Marlee**
- 4. **Investigating Primary Sources: Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957-1958**

## **Background WebQuest for The Lions of Little Rock**

**STEP 1:** Learn about important events that led up to the Civil Rights Movement.

Watch "Emmett Till – Legacy" video on Biography.com

<http://www.biography.com/people/emmett-till-507515/videos/emmett-till-legacy-109203523793?page=1>

### **QUESTIONS**

1. According to the video, how old was Emmett Till when he was tortured and killed?
  
2. Based on the knowledge you now have of this time period, what can you infer as to why Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam decided to kidnap and kill Emmett Till?
  
3. Why do you think Emmett Till's mother would have wanted an open casket at his funeral?
  
4. Even though they finally confessed to the murder, what protected Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam from being convicted of Emmett Till's murder?
  
5. Emmett Till's death "provided an important catalyst for the civil rights movement" because:

Watch the video "The Integration of Central High School" on the History Channel.com:

<http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/central-high-school-integration>

### **QUESTIONS**

1. How many students led the fight to integrate the school in Little Rock Arkansas and who helped find the students and organize the effort?

2. Did the governor of Arkansas help or hinder their effort? Explain.
3. What intervention finally made it possible for black students to attend Central High School in Little Rock?
4. This group of students is often referred to as "warriors." Why do you think that term has been given to them?

**STEP 2:** Learn about the author of *The Lions of Little Rock* and her motivation and purpose for writing the book.

Read the author interview with Kristin Levine "The Power of Friendship and Quiet Strength" at BookPage.com:

<http://bookpage.com/interview/the-power-of-friendship-and-quiet-strength#.VrjGYza8z8t>

1. Kristin Levine always intended to write a book about "the lost year".
  - a. true
  - b. false
2. What does Kristin Levine state as her reasoning for writing about "the lost year"?
3. Summarize the friendship Melba Pattillo Beals describes in her memoir, *Warriors Don't Cry*.
4. Does Kristin Levine believe the characters in her book would have been friends in reality? Explain your answer.

5. In her own words, Kristin Levine felt she wasn't qualified "as a white woman ... [she] wasn't qualified to write about race". What does she ultimately learn about the topic of racism?

## **Pre-Writing: Facing a Fear** (WG.10)

In *The Lions of Little Rock*, the main character, Marlee, learns to overcome a fear with guidance from her friend, Liz. But Marlee has to practice and it doesn't happen quickly.

Think about a fear you might have. It can be something you are afraid of doing, such as speaking in front of a group or going on a roller coaster, or it can be a fear OF something, like spiders or snakes.

**Pre-writing activity:** In the space below, write a paragraph in which you complete the following task:

*Describe a fear that you have, or a fear that you have had in the past. Make sure to talk about a time when that fear affected what you were doing. Then, discuss how you have tried to overcome that fear OR what you might do to conquer that fear.*

## Character Profile: Getting to Know Marlee (RL.6.1, RL.6.6, W.6.10)

**Directions:** Authors let us get to know characters through several ways: their actions, their words, other characters' words, and sometimes by just describing them outright.

The following quotes describe Marlee, the seventh-grade main character of *The Lions of Little Rock*. Read each of the quotes below to learn about Marlee. Below each statement, explain what you think the author is revealing about Marlee's life, her personality, or her appearance. The first one is done for you.

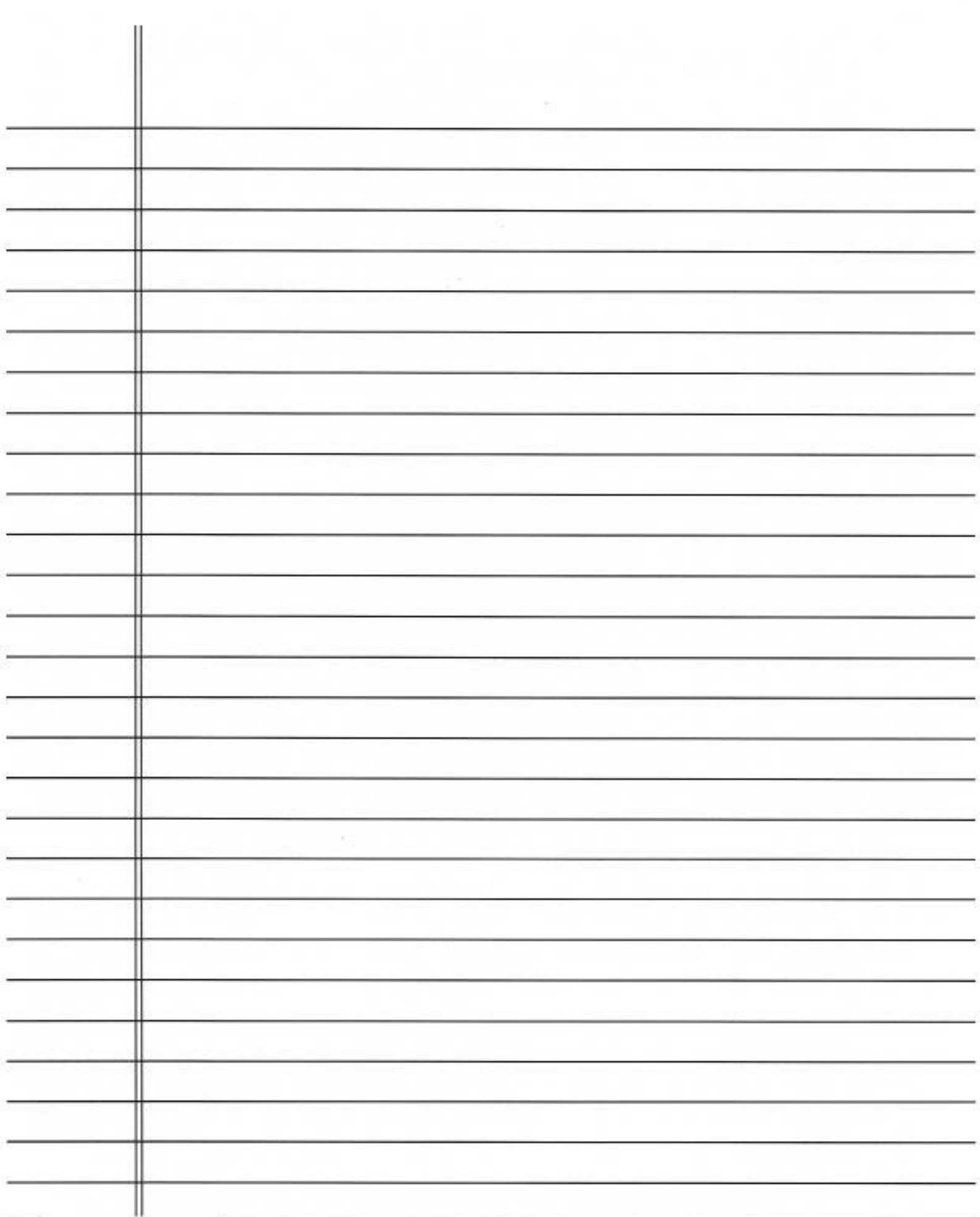
1. "I talk a lot. Just not out loud where anyone can hear."

*Marlee is quiet and withdrawn, though she has a lot of thoughts she just doesn't share.*

2. "I know it sounds odd, but I much prefer numbers to words. In math, you always get the same answer, no matter how you do the problem. But with words, *blue* can be a thousand different shades! *Two* is always *two*. I like that."
3. "It was embarrassing. I shouldn't need my older sister to fuss over me or tell me what to do. But I did. Without her, I was afraid I'd just get quieter and quieter, until even Mother and Father didn't remember I was there."
4. "Ever since the Soviets sent up that Sputnik satellite last year, I've been studying really hard. Maybe I'll study mathematics at college and become a rocket scientist."
5. "People sometimes think I'm stupid because I'm so quiet. But I'm not stupid, I'm scared. Scared my voice will get all squeaky and people will laugh. Worried I'll look dumb if I say the wrong thing. Concerned about being a show-off if I get the answer right."

Now, write a paragraph that describes what you know about Marlee. Make sure your paragraph has

- a topic sentence
- at least three supporting sentences that give descriptions of Marlee and examples from the quotations above
- a conclusion sentence



**Investigating Primary Source Images: Little Rock, Arkansas,  
1957 – 1958** (RI.6.1, RI.6.7, SL.6.1b and c, RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.7)



### IMAGE 1: THE LITTLE ROCK NINE



#### PART A: ANALYZING THE IMAGE

1. What interesting things do you see in the image?
2. Where do you think these students are going?
3. Why might there be armed soldiers with them?
4. How might these students be feeling?

Source:

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/brown-aftermath.html>

#### PART B: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A Supreme Court case in 1896 called *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruled that schools could be “separate but equal”. In other words, as long as black schools were as good as white schools, cities could require black students to attend separate schools from whites. But black schools were rarely, if ever, as good as the white schools in terms of resources and facilities.

In 1954, the Supreme Court overturned its previous decision. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Court ruled that schools throughout the United States had to be desegregated. No longer could states or cities force black students to attend separate schools. This new law angered many people, particularly in the Southern states like Arkansas, and schools were slow to desegregate.

This image is from September 25, 1957. On this day, nine black students (chosen for their good grades and behavior) entered and began school at the previously all-white Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. They were met by an angry crowd of white protestors who spat at them, yelled obscenities, and made threats. Thankfully, federal troops had been sent to the school to escort the nine students into the building. Eight of the nine students completed the school year at Central High despite daily protests, verbal and physical abuse, and constant media attention. Today, these students are hailed as heroes for their bravery.

#### PART C: CRITICAL THINKING

Imagine that you are one of the black students in the image above. It is September 25, 1957. When you arrive at school, you are surrounded by hundreds of people yelling terrible things and holding mean signs. Federal soldiers approach you and tell you that they will escort you into school. What do you do?

- A. Get back in the car and return to your former all black high school.
- B. Get back in the car and wait for another day to begin Central High.
- C. Scream back at the protestors that you have a right to attend this school.
- D. Follow the federal soldiers and hope they will protect you.

## IMAGE 2: NO SCHOOL



### PART A: ANALYZING THE IMAGE

- 1) What interesting things do you see in the image?
- 2) What do you think this boy is doing?
- 3) Why might he have to go to "school" by watching television?
- 4) What kind of effect do you think a situation like this might have on students in this town?

Source:

[http://www.usnews.com/usnews/photography/70thanniversary/50s/school\\_integration/school6.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/photography/70thanniversary/50s/school_integration/school6.htm)

### PART B: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In order to avoid further integration, Governor Faubus closed Little Rock's four public high schools (black and white) in September 1958. The high schools remained closed for one year.

During that year, thousands of students watched televised courses conducted by white teachers in the Little Rock School District. The teen in this image, for instance, is watching a math lesson. Many students were frustrated by this method of education. Instead of the usual 87 subjects to choose from, students were only taught English, history, math, and science. In addition, students were unable to ask teachers questions, get feedback, or interact with their peers.

Other displaced white students went to private schools. Three Catholic schools already existed in Little Rock, and two new private schools opened. There were no private schools for black students.

Still other teenagers signed up for *correspondence courses*, classes offered at universities where students could send in their assignments through the mail. Finally, some families sent their teenagers to live with relatives across the country so that their children could attend a high school.

The Lost Year, as it came to be known, had a great impact on all of the students and families of Little Rock.

**PART C: CRITICAL THINKING** Imagine that you are a junior at Central High School in 1958. You plan to go to college and you know this is the most important year of your high school career. You just learned that Central High School is closed indefinitely. What do you do?

- A. Watch the television courses and hope that they schools open soon.
- B. Sign up for one the correspondence courses that are being offered at the college.
- C. Ask you parents if you can live with an out-of-state relative until this all blows over.
- D. Attend one of the all-white private schools in Little Rock.