

TheatreEspresso

WAKE UP TO HISTORY!



The Nine Who Dared *Crisis in Little Rock*

STUDY GUIDE

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The Nine Who Dared study guide is written by Bethany Dunakin. The study guide is based on the play of the same name, written by Wendy Lement, Derek Nelson and Cliff Odle.

About Theatre Espresso

Theatre Espresso creates, produces, and performs interactive dramas that bring history to life for students, in order to foster a generation of critical thinkers and true citizens. Since 1992, Theatre Espresso has toured its educational dramas to schools, museums, libraries, and courthouses throughout New England. Inspired by the highly successful Theatre-in-Education teams of Great Britain and by the belief that drama is a potent teaching tool, Theatre Espresso's work challenges students to make critical judgments, explore social relationships, reflect on the role of law and human rights in our society, and question accepted truths about the history of America. These plays confront students with complex situations—based on actual historical events—that provoke a variety of opinions and solutions. By asking students to consider themselves *participants in the drama*—inhabitants of 1706 Salem Village, members of the post-Civil War U.S. Congress, or Supreme Court Justices—the company engages students in examining contradictory events and testimony in order to reach their decision.

For more information about Theatre Espresso, visit our website at:

www.TheatreEspresso.org

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Learning Goals

- to understand the events leading up to the desegregation of Central High School and the extreme challenges faced by the first nine African American students to attend the school
- to examine the effect of racial segregation on society
- to explore the question of how a community can work together despite dramatically different points of view
- to explore how civic engagement can help challenge social injustices
- to practice critical thinking skills as students vocalize thoughts and feelings toward the above issues
- to relate the drama to contemporary issues of unequal access to quality public education in America

About the Play

On September 4, 1957, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus ordered the National Guard to prevent nine African American students from enrolling in previously all-white Central High School. Legal experts agreed that Faubus, by using the armed forces of a state to oppose the federal government, had launched the most critical challenge to the Constitution since the Civil War. Once enrolled, the nine students faced daily harassment, but were trained not to react to the barrage of insults and abuse. After months of being tormented, one of the students, Minnijean Brown, decided to fight back and was expelled from school. Minnijean's act of defiance sets the stage for Theatre Espresso's production of "The Nine Who Dared." Violence and discrimination against African Americans in Little Rock had increased as a result of school desegregation. Members of the community were conflicted about what to do next. For some, the cost of school desegregation was too high; for the safety of the students and the greater community, they sought to postpone integration of the schools. Others strongly believed that the students must stay in school, no matter what sacrifices had to be made.

Theatre Espresso presents multiple points-of-view and encourages students to think through the ethical and philosophical questions raised by implementing *Brown vs. Board of Education*. In role as members of the Little Rock community, students question key players, debate the issues and determine whether the remaining eight students should return to Central High immediately or wait until September when the violence has subsided. When the students do go back, what actions should school administrators and elected officials take to help protect them? What coping strategies should the eight students adopt in the face of harassment? Some of the incidents and language portrayed in the play might offend, but we need to see an honest picture of what the Little Rock Nine endured.

Historical Timeline

May 17, 1954: The United States Supreme Court rules racial segregation in public schools is unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. Five days later, the Little Rock School Board announces that it will begin desegregation in compliance with the Supreme Court's decision.

May 24, 1955: The Little Rock School Board votes to adopt the Superintendent Virgil Blossom's plan of gradual integration, beginning with the high school level in September 1957. Lower grades would be integrated over the next six years.

Spring 1957: Eighty of the 517 black students living in the Central High district express an interest in attending the school. After interviews with the Superintendent and staff, 17 are selected. Eight students later decide to stay at the all-black Horace Mann High School.

August 27, 1957: Seeking to prevent African American students from enrolling at Central High in September, the Mother's League of Central High School files a motion for a temporary injunction against integration.

August 29, 1957: Stating "that integration could lead to violence," Pulaski County Chancellor Murray Reed grants a temporary injunction, or ban, against school integration.

August 30, 1957: Federal Judge Ronald Davies nullifies the injunction and orders the School Board to proceed with its desegregation plan.

September 2, 1957: On Labor Day, Governor Orval Faubus calls upon the Arkansas National Guard to surround Central High School in order to prohibit African American students from entering. In a televised speech, he declares that this move is to prevent violence and keep the peace.

September 3, 1957: Judge Davies orders that schools will be desegregated on September 4, 1957.

September 20, 1957: Judge Ronald Davies rules that Faubus has used the National Guard to prevent integration, not preserve the peace. On Davies' orders, Faubus removes the Guard.

September 23, 1957: Nine African American students are escorted into Central High while an angry mob of over 1,000 protesters gather outside. Before the end of their first day of school, the Little Rock police remove the nine children for their safety.

September 24, 1957: Under orders from President Eisenhower, 1200 members of the 101st Airborne Division arrive in Little Rock. The Arkansas National Guard is now under federal command.

September 25, 1957: The Army troops escort the nine students back into Central High for their first full day of classes.

October 4, 1957: The Soviet Union successfully launches Sputnik I, the world's first artificial satellite. This event marked the start of the "space race" between the United States and the Soviet Union and overshadowed the Little Rock crisis in U.S. news coverage. Segregationists see this as an opportunity to stifle public criticism of Little Rock's response to integration.

December, 1957: After being taunted by white male students, Minnijean Brown dumps a bowl of chili on one of the boys' heads and is suspended for six days. She is later suspended and transfers to New Lincoln High School in New York City.

May, 1958: Henry Ashmore, editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*, is awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his editorials on school integration in Little Rock, which were critical of Governor Faubus. For its continued coverage of the crisis and its efforts to keep Little Rock in the national spotlight, the *Gazette* later won a second Pulitzer for public service. The paper was credited for doing "much to restore calmness and order to an overwrought community."

May 25, 1958: Senior Ernest Green becomes the first African American student to graduate from Central High School.

June 3, 1958: The Little Rock school board asks the court for permission to delay the desegregation plan.

June 21, 1958: Judge Harry Lemley grants the delay of integration until January 1961, stating that while the African American students have a constitutional right to attend white schools, the "time has not come for them to enjoy (that right.)"

September 12, 1958: The United States Supreme Court rules that Little Rock must continue with its desegregation plan. Governor Faubus calls for a public vote to determine whether Little Rock high schools should remain open, continuing integration, or close.

September 27, 1958: Citizens vote 19,470 to 7,561 against integration and the schools remain closed. The city's 3,698 high school students are forced to enroll elsewhere.

August 12, 1959: Little Rock public high schools reopen, nearly a month early, amidst more protest from segregationists.

Vocabulary

Brown v. Board of Education: the 1954 landmark Supreme Court decision which mandated the integration of public schools.

Segregation: the separation of a specific racial, religious, or other group from the general body of society.

Civil Rights: the rights to full legal, social, and economic equality extended to African Americans.

Lynching: putting a person to death by mob action without due process of law.

Kenneth Clark: the African American psychologist whose studies demonstrated that segregation of public schools does psychological harm to young African American children. His research was used as evidence in Brown v. Board of Education and was cited by the NAACP in their arguments against racial segregation.

National Guard: a dual state-Federal military force that can be called upon to protect citizens and their property in times of emergency. The National Guard can also be deployed to serve the U.S. abroad during times of war or crisis. Each state has command over its own National Guard, but shares that authority with the Federal government.

NAACP: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which was founded in 1909. Its mission is “to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.”

Emmett Till: a fourteen-year-old African American boy who, in 1955, was kidnapped and brutally murdered in Mississippi for supposedly whistling at a white woman. The subsequent trial and acquittal of the two men arrested for the crime received international attention and was seen as a key moment in the events leading to the civil rights movement.

Key Players

DAISY BATES, president of the Arkansas NAACP, provided guidance and support to the Little Rock Nine. In the fall of 1957, her home became the headquarters for those working to integrate Central High.

MINNIJEAN BROWN, one of the Little Rock Nine, was suspended and later expelled for retaliating against the students who harassed her during her first year at Little Rock High. She transferred to New York's New Lincoln School, where she graduated in 1959. After receiving a bachelor's and master's degree in social work, she went on to become a social activist and served in the Clinton Administration as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Workforce Diversity. She also taught social work at various colleges in Canada. She has received multiple awards for her work in the field of social justice.

REVEREND JC CRENCRAW, president of the Little Rock branch of the NAACP, worked with Daisy Bates to guide the African American students through their first year at Central High.

ELIZABETH ECKFORD is remembered for facing the angry mob outside of Central High all alone on September 4, 1957. After Little Rock schools were closed in 1958, she joined the U.S. Army and earned her G.E.D. She returned to Little Rock in 1960 and later attended Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio.

ERNEST GREEN, a senior when he entered Little Rock High in 1957, was the first African American student to graduate from the school. He earned a bachelor's and master's degree from Michigan State University and went on to serve as the director for the A. Phillip Randolph Education fund. He also worked as the Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Affairs under the Carter Administration. He is now a Managing Director at the investment firm Lehman Brothers in Washington, D.C.

ORVAL FAUBUS, Governor of Arkansas (1955-67). In 1957, citing public safety concerns, he defied the Supreme Court's decision to integrate schools by ordering the Arkansas National Guard to prevent African American students from entering Central High.

ELIZABETH PAISLEY HUCKABY, a vice principal at Central High School, was responsible for shepherding the Little Rock Nine through their first year at the school. She was a believer in integration, stating that "no public school system segregated by law on the basis of race is consistent with democracy."

CARLOTTA WALLS LANIER, the youngest of the Little Rock Nine, returned to Central High when it reopened, and graduated in 1960. She received her bachelor's degree from Colorado State College, and later founded a real estate brokerage firm, LaNier and Company. She is currently the president of the Little Rock Nine Foundation.

MAYOR WOODROW MANN, a supporter of desegregation, disagreed with Governor Faubus' decision to use the National Guard to keep the Little Rock Nine out of Central High, requesting that President Eisenhower send in Federal troops to protect the students. Because his actions were so unpopular, he was forced to move from Arkansas to Dallas, TX when his term ended in 1958.

THURGOOD MARSHALL, the chief counsel for the NAACP, argued and won the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* before the U.S. Supreme Court. He later went on to be the first African American Supreme Court Justice.

MELBA PATILLO, a junior when she entered Little Rock High in 1957, moved to Santa Rosa California when Little Rock Schools closed in 1958. She graduated from San Francisco State University and later earned a graduate degree in communications from Columbia University. She has worked as a communications consultant and a reporter for NBC. Her novel *Warriors Don't Cry: A Searing Memoir of the Battle to Desegregate Little Rock's Central High School*, was named the ALA Notable Book in 1995 and also won the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award. She also wrote *White is a State of Mind* which tells of her education in California.

GLORIA CECELIA RAY was a sophomore when she enrolled at Central High School. Her mother, a sociologist who worked for the State of Arkansas, was fired by Governor Faubus after refusing to withdraw Gloria from Central High School. She moved to Missouri the following year and graduated from Kansas City Central High School, which had also recently been integrated. She went on to become a patent attorney in Sweden and later Belgium, where she launched the international trade journal *Computers in Industry*, serving as its editor-in-chief.

TERENCE ROBERTS, a sophomore when he enrolled at Central High, moved to Los Angeles, California to complete his high school education. After receiving his Ph.D. in psychology from Southern Illinois University, Roberts became the director of the mental health unit of St. Helena Hospital in Deer Park, California. He later became the assistant dean of the UCLA School of Social Welfare and the chair of the psychology department at Antioch University in Los Angeles. He serves on numerous boards, including the Little Rock Nine Foundation.

JEFFERSON THOMAS, a sophomore when he entered Central High School, graduated from the school in 1960 and went on to work as an accountant for the U.S. Department of Defense.

THELMA MOTHERSHED WAIR, one of the Little Rock Nine, completed her junior year at Central High School in 1958. After Central High closed, she continued her education through summer school and correspondence courses and went on to earn a master's degree in guidance and counseling from Southern Illinois University. In addition to teaching home economics, she has also worked for numerous public service organizations.

Pre-Performance Activities

Pre-Performance Lesson: The Civil Rights Movement

Goal: to help students understand the historical context of the events of the story as well as the social and political climate in which they took place.

Objectives

1. to learn more facts about the civil rights movement.
2. to practice research skills
3. to use critical thinking skills in preparation for the audience participation portion of the drama

Method

1. As a class, ask students to brainstorm what events, key terms or people come to mind when they think of the American civil rights movement. If students are unfamiliar with this period in history, then you may provide them with a list (for example, Martin Luther King, Jr., Brown v. Board of Education, Rosa Parks, Montgomery Bus Boycotts, Emmett Till).
2. Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the topics. Have students complete a three-column chart of what they know about the topic, what they want to know about it, and what they learn as they research it.
3. As students research, ask them to complete a fact sheet that answers the following questions:
 - When did the event take place? If it is a person, give an important date which marked his or her involvement in the civil rights movement.
 - What is the significance of this person or event in the civil rights movement?
 - Give a brief description of the events or the person's role in African American civil rights.
 - What obstacles were encountered?
 - What strategies were used to overcome these obstacles?
4. Ask students to create a visual representation of their topic (a collage or drawing, for example). Students will present their visuals and fact sheets in a brief presentation to the rest of the class.
5. Follow-up: Use the visuals to create a timeline that can be displayed in the classroom.



Pre-Show Student Handout

The Nine Who Dared: Crisis in Little Rock

Directions: Read the play description below and answer the questions that follow.

About the Play

On September 4, 1957, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus ordered the National Guard to prevent nine African American students from enrolling in previously all-white Central High School. Legal experts agreed that Faubus, by using the armed forces of a state to oppose the federal government, had launched the most critical challenge to the Constitution since the Civil War. Once enrolled, the nine students faced daily harassment, but were trained not to react to the barrage of insults and abuse. After months of being tormented, one of the students, Minnijean Brown, decided to fight back and was expelled from school. Minnijean's act of defiance sets the stage for Theatre Espresso's production of "The Nine Who Dared." Violence and discrimination against African Americans in Little Rock had increased as a result of school desegregation. Members of the community were conflicted about what to do next. For some, the cost of school desegregation was too high; for the safety of the students and the greater community, they sought to postpone integration of the schools. Others strongly believed that the students must stay in school, no matter what sacrifices had to be made.

In role as members of the Little Rock community, students question key players, debate the issues and determine whether the remaining eight students should return to Central High immediately or wait until September when the violence has subsided. When the students do go back, what actions should school administrators and elected officials take to help protect them? What coping strategies should the eight students adopt in the face of harassment?

Reading Questions:

1. What is the setting of this story (time and place)?
2. Describe your vision of Minnijean Brown. What kind of a character do you think she will be?
3. What will be your responsibility as an audience member in this interactive play?
4. What questions do you have after reading this description of the play?

Post-Performance Activities

Post-Performance Lesson 1: School Segregation Today

Goal: to connect the themes of the play to current events

Objectives

1. to research modern day instances of school inequality
2. to compare current examples of racial discrimination to racial segregation, as portrayed in the drama
3. to share students' research with classmates
4. to practice close reading and analytical skills by reading an article for facts and opinions.

Method

1. Using the additional resources cited at the end of the study guide, choose readings for the class. Using the jigsaw method, ask students to read the information in small groups and present their findings to the class. Use the following questions to guide their reading and presentations:
 - What evidence does the author give that there is inequality in public schools?
 - What similarities and differences can you see between this story and the situation in schools prior to *Brown v. Board of Education*?
 - Do you think that this is an example of racial inequality? Why or why not? If so, what can be done about it?
2. Follow up: Ask students to write a persuasive essay or speech that describes the problem and their recommendation for what should be done to eliminate school inequality.

Post-Performance Lesson 2: Taking a Stand

Goal: to explore the options of the characters when faced with harassment and abuse as well as the consequences of their possible responses

Objectives:

1. to review the thoughts and suggestions made by students during the performance
2. to revisit the events that were dramatized in the play
3. to relate the play to students' own experiences with harassment

Method:

1. Using the questions in the post-performance handout included in this packet, ask students to reflect upon their thoughts about the drama.
2. Lead a brief class discussion about what the audience voted for and what students think might happen next.
3. Ask students to recall the interactive segments of the drama. What were some of the suggestions offered to Melba and Ernest for how they should respond to future harassment and/or abuse? What suggestions were offered to Miss Huckaby regarding the majority of white students who didn't participate in the harassment, but didn't try to prevent it either? What could school administrators do to help change the racially charged atmosphere at the school? Ask students if they can think of additional suggestions not mentioned during the performance.
4. Describe examples from the play when white students reached out to help the nine African-American students. What was at stake for these students?
5. Choose volunteers from the class to act out a scene from the play that involved harassment (brief scenes are included in the following pages). Following the scene, ask the class to suggest what the character who is being harassed could do in response. Re-create the scene using student suggestions.
6. Follow-up: ask students to write a letter to one of the Little Rock Nine with suggestions about what they can do as they return to school.

Scenes for Post Performance Lesson 2

SCENE 1: Minnijean and Nancy in the hallway

(Minnijean enters. Her path is blocked by Nancy.)

MINNIJEAN: Do you mind?

NANCY: Maybe I do.

MINNIJEAN: Quit fooling around. I've got to get to class.

NANCY: You gonna make me?

MINNIJEAN: I don't make trash. I take it down to the dump.

NANCY: Who you calling trash?

NEXT STEP:

Ask students if Minnijean or Nancy could have handled the situation differently. Have a student volunteer step in and improvise the scene based on his/her suggestions.

SCENE 2: Minnijean in the cafeteria

Melba, Ernest and Minnijean stand in line at the cafeteria with their mimed trays. Three white students taunt them.

ANDY: Hey, Minnijean, you got gym today? Too bad, 'cause we just threw your clothes in the boy's toilet. (laughs)

MELBA: (stage whisper to Minnijean) Don't say anything.

NANCY: Is that you, Minnijean? Miss Huckaby wanted me to give you a message about choir practice. (Nancy smiles as she approaches Minnijean. Nancy makes a motion as if to hand her a note from Huckaby, but instead pretends to toss a glass of water in Minnijean's face. Nancy runs off laughing. Minnijean slowly wipes her face and fumes.)

ERNEST: (stage whisper to Minnijean) Keep your cool. They're not worth it.

MINNIJEAN: (speaks to an imaginary cafeteria worker). Chili please. (grabs the imaginary bowl and places it on her tray).

NANCY: Hey, Minnijean, sit with us. We want to see how a monkey picks up a spoon.

ERNEST: Come on, Minnijean.

MELBA: There's a free table over there.

Melba and Ernest move to the table during the following, but the students block Minnijean. She lifts her tray trying to get around them.

Next steps:

Freeze the scene, and recreate it using the following two scenarios:

1. Ask the students what Minnijean should do next. The teacher chooses another student to take her place and act out his or her suggestion. Improvise the rest of the scene.
2. Ask if any other character could intervene on Minnijean's behalf. What would the consequences be? Ask a student to step in as one of the other characters and improvise the rest of the scene.



Post-Show Student Handout

The Nine Who Dared

Follow-up Questions

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. During the performance of *The Nine Who Dared*, the audience was asked to vote on different options for the African American students who were integrating Little Rock High School. What were these options?
2. What did you vote for, and why?
3. Did you participate in the discussion? If yes, what thoughts did you contribute? If not, what would you have added to the discussion if you had been called on by the actors?
4. What did the audience decide? What do you think will happen as a result?
5. What unanswered questions do you have?

Additional Resources

Beals, Melba. *Warriors Don't Cry: a searing memoir of the battle to integrate Little Rock's Central High*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.

Fradin, Judith Bloom and Dennis Brindell Fradin: *The Power of One: Daisy Bates and The Little Rock Nine*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Huckaby, Elizabeth. *Crisis at Central High, Little Rock, 1957–58*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.

Kozol, Jonathan. *Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005.

Websites:

Little Rock Central High School 40th Anniversary site: <http://www.centralhigh57.org/index.html>

Little Rock Central High School National Historical Site: <http://www.nps.gov/chsc/>

The Little Rock Nine Foundation: <http://www.littlerock9.com/>

Teacher Domain interview with Kenneth Clark:

<http://www.teachersdomain.org/resources/iml04/soc/ush/civil/clark/index.htm>

Articles on School Segregation Today:

http://educationalissues.suite101.com/article.cfm/segregation_in_modern_america

http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_education_edblog/2008/01/school-segregat.html

http://www.civilrights.org/press_room/buzz_clips/civilrightsorg-stories/op-ed-segregated-schools.html

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/16/AR2005101601146.html>

<http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2005/American-Apartheid-Education1sep05.htm>

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/judicial/2006-11-14-deseg_x.htm

http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/18_03/clos183.shtml

Booking a Program

To bring *The Confession of Ann Putnam*, *Justice at War*, *The Trial of Anthony Burns*, *Uprising on King Street* or our teacher development workshop *Drama Across the Curriculum* to your school, please contact Derek Nelson.

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