The Little Rock Nine

Aligns with standards H.12.3.4, H12.3.5, H13.3.3, H13.3.5, and H 13.3.6 for third grade Social Studies. Created 10/15.

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Vocabulary

**segregation**
Forced separation of certain people, commonly because of skin color

**federal court**
The judicial branch of the government: the people who evaluate laws for the whole United States

**mob**
A large group of people, usually angry and trying to cause trouble

**integration**
Bring together people, such as people with different skin colors

**escort**
To go with someone for protection

**mentor**
A person who advises and trains others

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**Conversation**

Has someone ever treated you unfairly? How did it make you feel? How did you respond?

Imagine you went home today and were told you could not come back to school. How would you feel? Why is school important?

What would you do if you were one of the Little Rock Nine?

How can you be a friend to someone who is different than you are?
Creating questions

People who study history are like detectives. They ask, “Why are things like this?” They go back and look at all the events leading up to the moment in time.

Civil rights are the laws that say everyone should be treated with respect, no matter what they look like, no matter how much money they make, no matter who they vote for, or no matter which religion they practice.

What do you know about civil rights? Maybe you’ve seen something in a movie or read about something in a book. Now ask yourself, what questions could you ask to learn more? Be specific!

| What I know | What I want to know |

Stop and ask questions as you read through the passages about the Little Rock Nine.
African Americans and white people used to not go to school together. The United States said they were to attend “separate but equal” schools. Do you think the schools were ever separate but equal? They were separate, but the white schools were sometimes better or closer than other schools.

In 1954, the United States federal court said that segregation was not legal anymore. The Little Rock School District began making plans for African Americans to attend school with white students.

This might not seem like a big deal today, but in the 1950s, people were mad. Some white people felt they were better than black people just because of the color of their skin.

In 1957, the Little Rock School District began making a plan that allowed black people to go to white schools. The governor of Arkansas, however, did not want this to happen, even though the federal court said it was against the law to refuse. He called the Arkansas National Guard to block the nine African American students, who became known as the Little Rock Nine, from coming in to Central High School. That meant that people from the army kept the Little Rock Nine from going into the school. Instead, the guardsmen turned the students back onto the street, where a large group of white, angry protesters let the students know they did not want them there. One of the Little Rock Nine, Elizabeth Eckford, said, “I tried to see a friendly face somewhere in the mob—someone who maybe would help. I looked into the face of an old woman and it seemed a kind face, but when I looked at her again, she spat on me.” (2)
The federal court told Arkansas’s governor he had to allow the Little Rock Nine into Central High School. Two weeks later, the students went into Central High School. But again an angry mob of over 1,000 protestors formed. They caused so much trouble that the Little Rock police feared they couldn’t control the crowd, and removed the African American students from school to keep them safe.

Things got so out of control that the president of the United States got involved. He called in the U.S. Army and asked them to escort the Little Rock Nine to their classes. He had to do this to protect them from getting called names, kicked, hit, or shoved. The U.S. Army stayed for over a month to help the students. When the Army left, the Little Rock Nine still faced people wanting to harm them every day. People called them names. People hit them and shoved them in the hallways. People made sure the students couldn't do things like play basketball or join the band. But every day the Little Rock Nine came back to school.

The oldest student of the Little Rock Nine, Ernest Green, became the first African American to graduate from Central High School at the end of the school year. Dr. Martin Luther King Junior attended his graduation. (2)

But the problems did not end right away. The next school year, the governor closed all four Little Rock high schools. That meant that no one was allowed to go to school in 1958-59. Teachers still had to go to work, even though they had no students to teach. Students tried to go to other schools in nearby towns, and some moved in with relatives across the state to attend different schools. This time became known as “The Lost Year.” In September of 1959, the federal court said Little Rock high schools had to open back up, and so integration continued.

The Little Rock Nine went on to have successful careers. Now the high school is recognized by the United States as an important place in history. There are statues of the Little Rock Nine next to the state capital. We can thank their bravery for our classrooms today.

Names of the Little Rock Nine:
- Minnijean Brown
- Elizabeth Eckford
- Ernest Green
- Thelma Mothershed
- Melba Pattillo
- Gloria Ray
- Terrence Roberts
- Jefferson Thomas
- Carlotta Walls
CAUSE: In 1954, the United States federal court said that segregation was not legal anymore.

EFFECT: The Little Rock police escorted the Little Rock Nine back home after they had been at school for part of a day.

CAUSE: Arkansas’s governor closed all of the high schools for the 1958-59 school year.

EFFECT: 

CAUSE: 

EFFECT: 
Write it out

Why were the Little Rock Nine important? How do they affect your life as a student? Write it out, then draw a picture.
Daisy Bates

Daisy Bates and her husband, L.C. Bates, were important people in the African American community in Little Rock. They owned a newspaper and were involved in the civil rights movement. She became a leader in the movement to integrate the Little Rock School District.

Daisy Bates helped students to attend Central High School, and encouraged them when things became hard. She arranged for protection, and gave them a lot of advice.

Mrs. Bates continued to be a leader in the civil rights movement. She even spoke before Martin Luther King Junior’s “I Have a Dream” speech.

In Arkansas, we celebrate Daisy Bates and her help to the Little Rock Nine on the third Monday in February (along with President’s Day).

Primary Sources:

Primary sources are original records from someone who experienced the event they are talking about. The Little Rock Nine did not have many friends helping them out. Here is an excerpt from Lessons from Little Rock by Terrence Roberts that talks about a friend he made at Central High School.

“It was in this [math] class that I met Robin Woods, a white student who shared her textbook with me. Since my books and other school supplies were routinely destroyed by fellow students, I would come to class often without a book or supplies. Robin simply pulled her desk next to mine one day and we shared her book. This act did not win her friends or favor“ (122-123).


Why do you think this was important for Terrence Roberts to write about? Why is it good to read primary sources?

Check out more primary sources about the Little Rock Nine with your teacher!
Daisy Bates was a role model and mentor to the Little Rock Nine. Who is your role model? Draw a picture and then write about what the person you chose had taught you.
We Shall Not Be Moved

“We Shall Not Be Moved” is a hymn that was used as a protest song during the civil rights era. Music has played an important part in our United States history. Here is one song that is still sung today. What do you think this song refers to?

We shall not, we shall not be moved
We shall not, we shall not be moved
Just like a tree that’s standing by the water
We shall not be moved

We shall not, we shall not be moved
We shall not, we shall not be moved
We're fighting for our freedom,
We shall not be moved

Word Search

Find the following words:

civil rights
Daisy Bates
escort
federal court
integration
Little Rock Nine
mentor
mob
segregation

S WA O E A C D P B T K B E O
Y S U C V G A M O T F U N H I
I Z E J A Z Y M G O B I R B H
N N K G U O O J I D N R C P Y
T I F B R N X T T K O I Q B R
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T M Q K L C I R E I S D I F M
I P O T X G F Q O R O I X P T
O G T V H A G A G C P N S A J
N I S T S E T A B Y S I A D I
L O S G J W C P T C T E M Y R
Q Y K B Q C A O H T L G J E J
Timeline of Events

May 17, 1954
The U.S. federal court says schools must be integrated.

September 4, 1957
The Little Rock Nine try to enter Central High School, but were blocked by the National Guard.

September 25, 1957
The Little Rock Nine enter Central High School again, but the mob grows so crazy, the Little Rock police escort them home in the middle of class.

1958-1959
The Little Rock School District closes all high schools in Little Rock in what becomes known as “The Lost Year.”

May 24, 1955
The Little Rock School Board makes a plan to integrate schools in 1957.

May 27, 1958
Ernest Green, the oldest of the Little Rock Nine, becomes the first African American to graduate from Central High School.

September 23, 1957
The U.S. Army escorts the Little Rock Nine to their first full day of class. The Army stays for over a month.

How does a timeline help your understanding?

Act It Out

Imagine someone who looked or acted different to you came to your school. What could you say to that person to make him/her feel welcome? What could you do if some people were making fun of the new person?

Act out different scenarios.
More resources

- The Mosaic Templars Cultural Center has several classroom programs, lesson plans, and loan boxes on the civil rights movement.
- The Little Rock Nine Stand Up For Their Rights (History Speaks: Picture Books Plus Reader’s Theater) by Eileen Lucas.
- The Power of One: Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine by Dennis Brindell Fradin and Judith Bloom Fradin
- National Park Service lesson plans: http://www.nps.gov/chsc/learn/education/lessonplansandteacherguides.htm

Primary resources

- Video of the Little Rock Nine being escorted into school: http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/media-detail.aspx?medialID=7374
- Oral interviews with the Little Rock Nine: http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2007/10/01/us/20071001_LITTLEROCK_GRAPHIC.html?_r=0
- NBC Learn has several videos if you search “Little Rock Nine.” https://www.nbclearn.com/

Sources


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