

Studying The Civil Rights Movement Through *The Help*

By: Beth Brang

Rationale

Should every person relate to and understand African American literature, or is it just for African Americans? "*African American Literature is everyone's literature.*" This quote by my CTI Professor Brenda Flanagan, resonated with me because it made complete sense and seemed so straightforward and simple; however, I had never heard that before. When I first heard this, it was exactly what I needed to hear in order to have some courage to teach a unit on the Civil Rights Movement. It is a shame that I am using the word courage to teach literature in an English class, but it is intimidating. As a white woman who was not alive during this time period, I was scared, and felt that it wasn't my place to teach this unit. However, the fact that I even thought this proved how much I needed to teach it in order to open up my mind as well as my students' minds that this literature is everyone's literature. Some of the texts written during the Civil Rights period may be written by and be about African Americans, but it is just as important for Americans of every race to understand and to analyze this literature. This moment in our history is vital to understand because of the impact it had. In order to understand our present and our future, I believe it is necessary to understand our past as well. This gives us a better understanding of people of every race. In addition, this time period has wonderful texts such as songs, novels, plays, poems, art, and nonfiction. This is why I am so incredibly thrilled to teach this unit in my school!

I teach 9th grade English at a high school in Cornelius, North Carolina. My students are primarily white students who, for the most part, very much care about their grades and their learning. Their parents are also very much invested in their learning. I do not feel that teaching about Civil Rights is any less important than if I were at a school that consisted of mostly black students. Because this literature is every American's literature, I want my students to read this literature and to understand what was happening during this time period. Students seem so far removed from this because they weren't alive when this happened, but it wasn't as if this happened a hundred years ago. They all have family members who were alive during this time. This unit will be used in my Honors and Standard classes, which are a semester long, and taught with block scheduling or 90 minutes per class period. Having a class for just a semester makes it seem like we are always in a time crunch to teach everything we need or want. In North Carolina, the ninth grade teachers are required to teach many different genres including fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. This is in addition to grammar and writing. We aren't told how to teach these texts or even which texts we must teach (thank goodness!); just that it needs to be done. I am lucky to have this freedom, and my ninth grade team works diligently to take advantage of this whenever possible. We believe we are making our students well-rounded individuals because of this.

When I think about what I want my students to have learned from me in their ninth grade English class, several things come to mind. Of course, I want my students to

become stronger readers and writers. This not only helps them in English class but will help them in all classes and really for anything that they do with the rest of their lives. In addition to becoming better readers and writers, I would love for my students to want to read and write on their own time, whether it is reading for fun or reading or writing about something that interests them. While teaching this unit on Civil Rights, I hope my students are interested in some of the many topics and do research on their own. Perhaps the most important thing I can teach my students, however, is to have compassion, sympathy, and understanding for all people in this world. This will make them better citizens who are aware of the topics that are affecting people. It is easy to have compassion and understanding for family and friends who are similar to them, but I hope when they leave my class that they have this for everyone they come in contact with. Thinking one group of people is better or more normal than another group is not something I want my students to believe. One way I hope to accomplish this is through the activities and discussions we will have throughout the unit. Another wonderful way to learn this is through the eyes of characters in the texts we read. Our novel *The Help* has characters who may not be similar to my students, but they can find ways to connect to these people and to have compassion for them, especially because they are reading through the characters' eyes. If I can teach my students all of these things, I will feel better about sending my students into tenth grade and into the real world.

Last year, my ninth grade team was lucky enough to write and win a grant to teach the novel, *The Help* and the play, *Raisin in the Sun*. We won several hundred copies of these texts. We wanted to do a comparative study on the events and themes in both of these texts. In the past, one of the ninth grade texts was *To Kill a Mockingbird*. This was a helpful text to teach about the cultural and historical significance of a text, but many eighth grade teachers in our school district started teaching the novel, and we didn't want to teach it again. We were wondering what texts could take the place of this unit, and we decided that *The Help* and *Raisin in the Sun* would be perfect. *The Help* is set in the South, and *Raisin in the Sun* is set in the North. We will focus on themes and ideas that run through both texts. I think it is important for students to see that there was racism in all parts of the country at this time.

Because the novel *The Help* is fairly long, over 500 pages, we will begin with this text and students will read most of it at home. *The Help* is a fictional novel but is based on events that happened during the 1960s. It is about several black maids who worked for white people. The main character, a white woman named Skeeter, just graduated college and wants to become a writer. This is not common for a white woman in the South at this time, and it is difficult for her to do. She decides to write a book of interviews from black maids. Some of these maids work for some of her best friends. They have to keep everything anonymous and secret because it was illegal for them to do this at the time. Some of the maids have positive things to say about the people who hired them, and some of them have very negative things to say. Some maids have a separate bathroom and are not allowed to use the same bathroom as the white family. One common event that occurs is that the maids get very attached to the white children. They care for them as if they are their own, but then the white children grow up to act just like

their parents. This novel will give students an accurate display of the time period and racism that occurred in this city even though it is fictional. Students have very positive ratings of this novel. Almost all students have said that they enjoy the book and have learned so much about the Civil Rights. Most of them are shocked about how the white people treated the black people at the time. They really didn't know how difficult it was for black people during this time period. Most of the students love the fact that this novel is told from three different points of view: Skeeter, Minny, and Aibileen's. The last two characters are two of the black maids.

However, because *The Help* is a fictional text, we want to read various genres and texts from this time period to give students more background information and historical information that was going on at this time. If students don't understand the cultural and historical context, the novel won't make much sense to them. It will provide a context through which they can understand why the characters behave and think as they do. We will incorporate plenty of nonfiction pieces; not only does this satisfy the Common Core part of our curriculum, but students will get an accurate idea of what actually happened during this time period.

What I don't think my students comprehend is that the Civil Rights Movement happened when their parents and/or grandparents were alive. It is shocking that this actually occurred in our country's history, but it wasn't too long ago! I am fascinated, appalled, disappointed, and inspired by the Civil Rights Movement, but I don't think students are experiencing these same emotions because they do not know enough about it. In the past, I have shown a few movies from this time period while reading some of our poetry, and they really had no idea that these events happened.

Right now my class is set up in units. We read fiction for a few weeks, then nonfiction for a few weeks, then poetry, and then drama. Because I want my students to be fully immersed in the topic of Civil Rights rather than just a genre study, I want to create a unit using all of these genres and comparing and contrasting all of these genres. I want them to look at the validity of the genres (particularly the fiction pieces) and how they are all similar. Overall, I want my students to understand the courage and dedication of black and white Americans to change the way America was. They will do this through the study of all of these genres.

By the end of the unit, I want my students to have a full understanding of what happened during this time, but ultimately I want them to develop empathy, and to know that it can be challenging to summon the courage and inspiration to stand up for what is right. It took way too long for many white Americans during the years of struggle for Civil Rights to have empathy, and to help fight. Even though students aren't living during the Civil Rights, there is still injustice, prejudice, and intimidation that happen each and every day. Like the children who fought for Civil Rights, I'd like for my students to realize they have a voice, and they can make changes in our world. I want them to find and relate current situations where people need more empathy. Students could focus on bullying, racism, and gay rights issues going on in other countries, or prejudice against people's appearance, weight, gender, or any other instance where people need to stand up for the right thing, even when it's difficult. There will be some

type of project with this, but I'm not exactly sure yet. By the end, I want my students to have analyzed several different texts and genres and to have an understanding of the time period of the Civil Rights.

Common Core Reading Standards Addressed in the Unit

In North Carolina and many other states in the United States, we are starting to focus on incorporating the Common Core Standards in all of our classes. This focuses on literacy skills in all courses. My unit covers many of these standards, but these are the main ones that we will focus on daily. Standard One for Reading Literature is that students will cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. The study guide I made for *The Help* focuses on this skill, but everything we do in class is based on using evidence from the text to support students' answers. This makes students accountable for their answers because they can't pull ideas out of thin air. They must go back into the text for each answer, so they know what they say is true. Standard Two for Reading Literature is that students will determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text. Not only will we do this for our novel and play, but students will need to do this for every text we read such as poetry, art, or nonfiction pieces. Not only will they analyze the theme in that particular piece, but they will connect the themes throughout the unit. Standard Three for Reading Literature is that students will analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme. The novel *The Help* is a wonderful avenue to work with this standard. Because each chapter is told from three different points of view, we are able to learn how certain characters think and how other characters think about them. Standard Four for Reading Literature is that students will determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone). We will focus on how the language in the texts support the time and setting of the pieces. Standard Six for Reading Literature is that students will analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature. One lesson we wanted to do with the themes of the Civil Rights is to connect them to events that are currently happening in our world. This allows students to see that these injustices are still occurring today, and it also makes them knowledgeable of different cultures and the world around them. Standard Seven for Reading Literature is that students will analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment. We will do this constantly throughout the unit. We will frequently bring in different texts and compare what is being said in all of them. Standard Ten for Reading Literature is that by

the end of grade 9, students will read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. Overall, this summarizes everything we will do throughout the unit. Therefore, this unit actually covers everything we need to teach students while reading literature.

There are also many standards that we will address for reading informational texts. Standard One for Reading Informational Texts is students will cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. Again, we do this constantly when we read, and students must always use evidence from the text to answer analysis questions and make inferences. Standard Four for Reading Informational Texts is that students will determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone. We will analyze how the word choices in a newspaper are different from that of a speech. Standard Five for Reading Informational Texts is students will analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text. This will be a big part of our focus when we start focusing on persuasive and argumentative texts. Standard Seven is that students will analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account. For example, we will read about Rosa Parks in a biography, a poem, and a movie, and compare and contrast the similarities, differences, and emphasis in each text. Standard Eight is when students will delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning. This is a focus when we start studying and writing arguments is the supporting details used and making sure those details are not only valid but useful in the argument. In Standard Nine students will analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance including how they address related themes and concepts. We will do this when we read the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream Speech." As you can see, we will be addressing many of the Common Core Standards in this unit!

Activities and Outline of Unit

To begin most of my units, my students and I love to do anticipation guides. These guides have ideas and themes that will arise while reading the novel. Students will fill out the anticipation guides, and then we discuss as a class. How the structure of the discussion is set up depends on how big the class is. For bigger classes of forty, it is nearly impossible for students to move around the room. Therefore, we have a ball that we throw around and whoever has the ball gets to speak. With smaller classes, we are able to divide the room into sections one through five, and students will go to the part of the room depending on the number they circled. This allows students to see where everyone stands on the issue, and it also allows students to move to different areas during the discussion if they change their mind because of what someone said. One of the

reasons I love doing anticipation guides is because it is a wonderful way to encourage class discussion. I love hearing from my students, and I think they will easily learn more from each other than they will from me throughout the year. These guides also get students thinking and writing about issues before they read the texts; that way when they do start reading they can connect some of these discussions to that part of the novel. My students usually beg me to do these. When the unit is over, we will go back to the anticipation guide and students will reevaluate their answers based on what they have learned throughout the unit. It is a wonderful way to come full circle in a unit. Students may not change their mind on every issue, but most usually adapt their thinking a little bit. They can also figure out why I wrote the statements and how they relate to the unit. I attached the guide at the end of the unit and cannot say enough positive comments on anticipation guides if you have never used them before.

After the anticipation guide, I made notes from a book I received at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African Americans Arts and Culture. The exhibit I attended with my CTI peers was called “America I Am: The African American Imprint.” The book is called *Black Facts*. The exhibit was about the achievements of African Americans throughout the century. These notes gave my students important dates and events that took place during this time. Some of the events were new to my students, and some they remembered from history class. This gave students an idea of when certain events happened and how long it took for changes to occur. I think it is important for students to have these notes before they begin reading so they have a context of not only when the events occurred but also some background information on what occurred. It was actually quite shocking to hear some of the comments and questions while students were filling in the notes. I had one student ask me who Malcolm X was. When he asked this, I was completely blown away and even thought he was joking. However, I asked the class who Malcolm X was, and half of the class had never heard his name. The other half could not even tell me anything about him. Many students asked what lynching meant. When these questions occurred, I knew just how important it was that we were going to do this unit and incorporating this history into their lives.

When creating the unit for *The Help*, I went through and read the book several times. I noted where the allusions were to real events or people from the Civil Rights Movement. When students read that section of the book, we will do various activities such as read a nonfiction piece about it, bring in a poem or song that fits in, or do an activity that works.

One nonfiction piece in our textbook is “From Rosa Parks Biography” by Douglas Brinkley. I want to start with some background on Rosa Parks because she is mentioned in Chapter One, and students are familiar with most of her story. The biography piece gives some background on Rosa Parks and the impact she had on the Civil Rights movement. Rosa Parks is mentioned in the first couple chapters, so this will be one of the first nonfiction pieces we will analyze as a class. When reading this text, I want to emphasize that refusing to give up her seat is just one thing that Rosa Parks did. She played a huge role in the Civil Rights movement, was one of the first women to join the NAACP, and was its secretary for years. In *Rethinking Popular Culture and Media I*

want students to read page 70 and 71. It explains the myth that some students hear about Rosa Parks being just a tired, seamstress who didn't want to get out of her seat. In our textbook, there is also a poem about Rosa Parks called "Rosa" by Rita Dove. Therefore, students will read several different genres about Rosa Parks. We will discuss how the language in each of the texts influences our impression of her. Then, students will write about another person in the Civil Rights movement, writing a nonfiction piece and a poem. This gives students practice in not only reading about a person in two different forms but applying that knowledge to their own writing as well.

In Chapter Three, students can begin to see how the white women made the black maids feel inferior to them. One thing we will discuss is the ways in which they do this. Some of these are making the maids say "yes mam" and "no mam", not letting maids speak what is on their mind, making them constantly feel afraid of losing their job, and making them go in a separate bathroom. There is an activity called "Designing a Better Human." It is about a child named Morty who is very different from what is considered normal. He has bowlegs, he is very short, his skin is messed up, he has severe allergies, and has other visible differences. Despite all of this, it mentions that he is well liked by his peers and teachers because of his personality. Students find out that they are able to change Morty to make him normal because of new science that was recently invented. Students write a letter to the scientists asking them to change whichever aspects of Morty they think he needs to change. In addition, students are able to create their own changes. Shockingly, most of my students wanted to change several features of Morty. Then, I have students write a letter to the scientists as if they were the character Hilly in *The Help*. She is the most outward racist and students do not like her. Finally, we will discuss why we think some people are better or more normal than others. Hopefully, by the end of the activity, students will see that Morty was fine as he was and we need to be more accepting of those who are different than us.

In Chapter six, students learn about James Meredith, the first African American to attend Ole Miss. We will read an article from a newspaper at that time about James Meredith attending. In addition, we will watch a few clips from Discovery Education so they can see what was happening at the time. One thing that shocks the students the most is that the governor of Mississippi was the one blocking him from attending the school. It is difficult to see people in power using it in negative ways.

In Chapter Seven, Robert Brown, the son of Louvenia Brown, who is a maid and friend of the main characters, is beaten by black men because he accidentally used the wrong bathroom. We thought this would be a good time to teach students about Emmitt Till. I feel compelled to also teach my students about Emmitt Till because he was a fourteen year old male, and most of my students are fourteen. I would like my students to watch the documentary *The Untold Story of Emmitt Till*. While there are a few parts that are shocking, I think it's important that students see it to understand the brutality that was occurring. Students need to understand the violence and cruelty done by some of the white Americans at this time. After watching the documentary, students will listen to and analyze "The Death of Emmett Till" by Bob Dylan. It tells the story of Emmett Till, but when we analyze we will focus on theme, mood, and tone.

In Chapter Eight (and many other chapters), the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is mentioned. In our textbooks is the “I Have a Dream” speech. This is a wonderfully written speech and not only goes well with our The Help unit but also with our persuasive writing unit. We will focus on the persuasive techniques that Martin Luther King, Jr. used in his speech.

In Chapter Thirteen, Skeeter discovers the Jim Crow laws in the library. She found these shocking and found it interesting that everyone lives by them but no one talks about them. She also felt that Hilly’s bathroom initiative was no different than the Jim Crow laws. We will discuss the reasons for these. In addition, we will analyze the poem “Merry-go-round” by Langston Hughes. This poem is told from a black child’s point of view. He is asking where the black people are supposed to sit on the merry-go-round because there’s technically no back to it, and he wanted to follow the Jim Crow laws. In the poem, we are never given answers to the boy’s questions, but he makes us think about the Jim Crow laws and how they don’t make sense. I think it ties in well when students are thinking about Jim Crow laws.

In Chapter Fourteen, Medgar Evers is shot and killed. He lived in the maids’ neighborhood. Medgar Evers was a very important part of the Civil Rights Movement, so students will read a biography on him to get some background on him when they read this section. Also in this chapter, the Life Magazine Covers are mentioned. Throughout the novel Skeeter mentions some of the people and events that are on the cover of these during this time period. This is a good time to analyze some of these pictures, which fits in well with our study of persuasive and advertising techniques that we study.

In Chapter Twenty-Three, the Birmingham Church bombing is mentioned in the novel. To study this event more we will do several things. The first is to analyze the “Ballad of Birmingham” by Dudley Randall. We will study the structure of ballads such as repetition, four line stanzas, rhyme, and dialogue. Then students will write a ballad of their own about a different event from the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, we will watch some clips of Four Little Girls and watch the film from Teaching Tolerance called *Mighty Times: The Children’s March*. Students are shocked by the impact and the courage that these children had. Students will watch this movie to gain a better understanding of these events. We will discuss the influence that children had during the Civil Rights Movement. Children as young as four were impacting the Movement. Hopefully, my students will feel empowered that they can create change if they want.

In Chapter Twenty-Seven we will analyze the Bob Dylan song “The Times They are A-Changin’” because Skeeter is listening to it in her car. In the song Bob Dylan calls people to start taking place in the movement. It talks about how the children in the sixties believe differently than what their parents might believe. It is fitting that Skeeter is listening to the song because she struggles with her mom about some of these issues. She is lucky though because in the novel she finds out that her father does want to help the black people during this time.

In Chapter Thirty-Three one of the themes from the book is mentioned. “There is so much you don’t know about a person.” What the maids and Skeeter realized by making their book is that no one ever really understands what someone else is going

through. Everyone has different struggles and often times people don't know that they are experiencing these issues. I want to spend a good amount of time on this quote because I want students to walk away knowing this. If everyone was more cognizant of this, imagine the difference it could make in our lives. When someone at the drugstore is crabby or rude, maybe we shouldn't overreact or complain because we don't know what's happening in that person's life. When someone doesn't have the latest attire, perhaps it is because her family doesn't have any money because her dad just lost her job. Instead of judging her or making fun of her, we could be supportive and kind.

As a culminating activity, I like to have a seminar. Students love being able to talk and listen to each other. For our seminars, we put our desks into a big circle so everyone can see each other. Students will have a list of questions in front of them and can take notes whenever they feel the need. I will base the writing portion on the test on some of the seminar questions. I will use many of the discussion questions at the end of the novel as discussion prompts. In discussions, I try my hardest to not state my opinion or even talk much at all. The main objective for me is to move on to the next question when we need to, but I allow my students to talk and respond to each other and not to me. This is so they aren't just saying what I want them to say or so they just agree with me because they think that will give them more points.

As a project to sum up everything we did in this unit, students will create a newspaper synthesizing all of the information.

Lastly, students will read the play *Raisin in the Sun*. This is set in the 1950s in Chicago. I think it will be interesting for students to see the similarities and differences between the North and the South during this time period.

Like the children who fought during the Civil Rights, I'd like for my students to realize they have a voice, and they can make changes in our world. I want them to find and relate current situations now where people need more empathy. Students could focus on bullying, racism, gay rights, issues going on in other countries, or prejudice against people's appearance, weight, gender, or any other instance where people need to stand up for the right thing, even when it's difficult. There will be some type of project with this, but I'm not exactly sure yet.

"Marigolds" by Eugenia W. Collier. Students will analyze this story and think about why the characters behave as they do. One reason is because of fear and jealousy.

THE HELP ANTICIPATION GUIDE

Circle the **NUMBER** that best represents your opinion or viewpoint. If you strongly agree, circle one. If you agree, circle 2. If you are unsure, circle three. If you disagree, circle 4. If you strongly disagree, circle 5. **Then, pick THREE of these topics and on the back of this sheet, explain your reasoning in 3-5 sentences.**

1. People care what others think about them.

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|-------------------|
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 2. | There are still race prejudices in the United States. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 3. | Men have certain roles and expectations, and women have different roles and expectations. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 4. | Fitting into a group is important for people. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 5. | Taking a stand against something is easy. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 6. | Taking small stands on topics or issues can impact something greatly. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 7. | There is so much you don't know about a person. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 8. | It is acceptable to sometimes not like a group of people. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 9. | It is easy to know who are your friends are. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 10. | What our parents think about us matters. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 11. | Gossip is a normal part of life, so it is ok to listen to gossip or to repeat gossip. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 12. | I would stand up for what I believe in, even if I might lose my friends and/or could be assaulted or hurt. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 13. | Fighting the government is acceptable. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |
| 14. | Everyone judges people by their appearance. | | | | | | |
| | Strongly Agree | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Strongly Disagree |

15. It is easy to recognize the injustices around us.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly
Disagree
16. Our parents are the biggest influences in what we think.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly
Disagree
17. Our friends should have the same morals and beliefs that we have.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly
Disagree
18. Under our justice system, all citizens are treated fairly in our courts of law.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly
Disagree
19. Girls should act like girls.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly
Disagree
20. You should always respect others, even if they treat you badly.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly
Disagree

THE HELP STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

Make sure to answer the questions thoroughly and in complete sentences. Always label your work with your name, date, class period, and which chapters you are doing.

******ALWAYS USE EVIDENCE FROM THE CHAPTER TO SUPPORT YOUR ANSWER.******

Chapter One

1. What type of person is Aibileen? Describe using direct and indirect characterization. Make sure to label each type.
2. “But it weren’t too long before I seen something in me had changed. A bitter seed was planted inside a me. And I just didn’t feel so accepting anymore.” Explain what this quote means and what it might foreshadow.
3. Using evidence from just Chapter one, what would it be like to live in Jackson, Mississippi in 1962?

Chapter Two

1. What type of person is Miss Leefolt? Describe using direct and indirect characterization. Make sure to label each type.
2. Why does Miss Leefolt want a separate bathroom for the maid?
3. Find the simile on page 29, and then explain what it means.
4. Based on what you have read so far, what are the roles and expectations for white women during this time?

Chapter Three

1. What type of person is Celia? Describe using direct and indirect characterization. Make sure to label each type.

2. Using this chapter, why do you think Celia doesn't want to tell her husband that she wants to get a maid?
3. Which rule from Minny's mom does Minny break all the time? Based on what you know about her so far, why is this so?
4. Why do you think Celia is so kind to Minny? Use evidence from the text.

Chapter Four

1. Using evidence from the text, what do you think is wrong with Celia?

Chapter Five

1. On page 64, Skeeter asks, "who is the different person, her or me?" Evaluate who you think is the different person from their college days.
2. What type of pressure is Skeeter under from her mother? Why is this so? Is it the same for women nowadays? Explain.
3. What types of jobs are available for males? What types of jobs are available for females? Why is this so?
4. Evaluate Skeeter's relationship with Constantine.

Chapter Six

1. On page 82, Skeeter's mom says, "You cannot leave a Negro and a Nigra together unchaperoned." Write three things Skeeter's mom is implying about black people based on this comment.
2. Describe what the Jackson Journal offices look like. Think about who is working as well.
3. Explain what is ironic on page 87, and what type of irony it is.
4. Who is James Meredith, and why is he so significant in the Civil Rights movement?
5. Evaluate why you believe Skeeter's mom gets so uncomfortable when Skeeter and Pascagoula watch this news coverage together?
6. At the end of this chapter, Skeeter finally has an idea for her novel. Predict and make an inference as to what this idea is, and give evidence for how you know this.

Chapter Seven

1. Aibileen says on page 112, "I want to stop that moment from coming-and it come in ever white child's life-when they start to think that colored folks ain't as good as whites." When does this moment usually happen and how does this happen?
2. What happened to Robert Brown and why?

Chapter Eight

1. On page 123, explain the irony and what type of irony it is.
2. In this chapter, there are several things mentioned that were going on during the Civil Rights movement. List three.
3. In this chapter we learned the severity of Robert's beating. What happened to him? What happened to the people who hurt him?

Chapter Nine

1. Summarize Skeeter's date.

Chapter Ten

1. Why does Hilly not like Celia?
2. On page 151, Minny says, "Truth. It feels cool, like water washing over my sticky hot body." Explain what this simile means.
3. What happens when Mister Johnny meets Minny for the first time?
4. Use direct and indirect characterization from this chapter to describe Mister Johnny. Make sure to label each kind.

Chapter Eleven

1. Describe what the first interview with Aibileen is like. How do the characters act and why?
2. What is the first rule that Skeeter makes in order to make Aibileen more comfortable? Why do you think she made this rule?
3. Explain what Aibileen describes shame like. What does it mean/why does she describe it that way?

Chapter Twelve

1. What is Skeeter going to do for Aibileen? Why is this a big deal for both of them?
2. Based on the Home Help Sanitation Initiative, why does Hilly believe there needs to be white bathrooms and black bathrooms?
3. Describe how Minny acts during her first interview. Use details from the story to support your answer and explain why she acts this way.

Chapter Thirteen

1. What surprised Stuart about Skeeter? What did he like about her?
2. What are some of the Jim Crow laws mentioned in this chapter?
3. Do you believe there is a difference between the Jim Crow laws and Hilly's bathroom initiative? Explain why or why not.
4. Reread what Hilly says about giving tribal people money instead of canned food. Based on her response, what does Hilly really believe about these people?

Chapter Fourteen

1. Based on the discussion outside when the kids are swimming, what are the main reasons that Hilly believes and supports in separate but equal.
2. Explain in detail what Aibileen thinks the differences between white women and white men are.
3. Who is Medgar Evers and what happened to him?
4. Based on the end of this chapter, what type of person is Mayor Thompson?

Chapter Fifteen

1. What was the story that Aibileen told Mae Mobley? Why did she do so?
2. Summarize what happens at the Country Club.

Chapter Sixteen

1. What does the Deacon plan on doing about Medgar Evers death? Why do you think he doesn't want to do more?

Chapter Seventeen

1. Why does Minny like telling her stories?
2. What does Leroy read about in the *Jackson Journal*?
3. Why does this upset Minny's children so much?

4. Why does Minny get so angry with Celia? Why is this so?

Chapter Eighteen

1. We realize in this chapter why Celia has been acting so strangely. Why is this so?
2. How can you tell that Minny does care about Celia? Explain a few reasons.

Chapter Nineteen

1. What happened to Carl Roberts and why?
2. On page 288, Skeeter says, "I realize this is the first time I've ever thanked her sincerely. She looks uncomfortable." What does this tell you about Skeeter and about Pascagoula?
3. What happened in Vietnam in this chapter?
4. Why does Yule May write to Skeeter?
5. Why do the other maids decide to help Skeeter write her book?
6. To you, what was the most surprising story told by a maid about their white bosses? Explain why this surprised you or stuck out to you.

Chapter Twenty

1. Choose either Mr. or Mrs. Whitworth. Explain what type of person s/he is and use direct and indirect characterization to support your answer.
2. What does Skeeter's dad say at dinner that shocks Skeeter? Why do you think she was shocked?
3. Stuart says on page 322, "you know that's not the way it works. It doesn't matter what he believes. It's what Mississippi believes." Why does Mississippi play such a big factor in what people do and say, even if they don't necessarily believe it?

Chapter Twenty One

1. What is ironic about the fact that Hilly is willing to money to black people overseas?

Chapter Twenty Two

1. What is Mae Mobley and Aibileen's relationship like?
2. Skeeter decided to put Hilly's initiative in the newsletter, but she did something else too. What did she do and why did she do it?
3. What are the Skeeter's consequences of doing this to Hilly?

Chapter Twenty Three

1. On the first page of this chapter, we read about two important events during the Civil Rights movement. What are they and why are they so important?
2. What is the new story that Aibileen tells to Mae Mobley?

Chapter Twenty Four

1. What is Minny's home life like?
2. How does Minny know that Celia does care for her, and she doesn't care that she is black?
3. On page 367, Minny says, "She just don't see em. The lines. Not between her and me, not between her and Hilly." A lot of the book is about the lines between different groups of people. Describe what the lines are like for the white women in this book. Think about why they don't want to spend time with Hilly.

4. Why doesn't Celia want to get to know Skeeter?

Chapter Twenty Five

1. Summarize the significant events at the benefit.

Chapter Twenty Six

1. What was the Terrible Awful that Minny did?
2. Why do you think Celia finally cuts down the tree?
3. What does Celia write to poke fun at Hilly?

Chapter Twenty Seven

1. JFK is shot at the beginning of the chapter. How does Skeeter describe what the world is like now?
2. Skeeter is having a difficult time because she lost all of her friends. Do you think they were good friends? Explain why or why not using evidence from the chapter.
3. Skeeter is trying to change the roles that people have. She's a woman writer, and she's trying to change how black maids are seen. Her mom has been pressuring her to get married because that is what women her age are supposed to do. Based on her interactions with Stuart, does Skeeter want Stuart because of society or does she want it for herself? Use evidence to support your answer.
4. In this chapter, Skeeter's mom talks to Skeeter in a surprising way. What does she tell her and why do you think she does so?
5. Summarize why Constantine was fired.
6. Why do they feel they need insurance for their book? What is the insurance they decide to use?

Chapter Twenty Eight

1. How do we know that Skeeter's mom did care for Constantine?
2. Describe what happens with Stuart's proposal.

Chapter Twenty Nine

1. How does Skeeter look different to Aibileen when she drops off the books? What can you tell about Skeeter based on her descriptions?
2. What motivated Elizabeth and many other people to buy the book?

Chapter Thirty

1. Why does Minny not have to worry about a job anymore?

Chapter Thirty One

1. Why did Mae Mobley get in trouble at school?

Chapter Thirty Two

1. Minny gives many reasons for not leaving her husband for beating her. What are three of the reasons?

Chapter Thirty Three

1. Lou Ann is the only person to give Skeeter positive comments about the book (even though she's not positive Skeeter even wrote it.) Why does Lou Ann feel the need to tell Skeeter how she feels?
2. On page 492, Skeeter thinks, "there is so much you don't know about a person... We are just two people. Not that much separates us. Not nearly as much

- as I'd thought." This is a key part of the book. Explain why. Do you believe this statement? Why or why not?
3. What are some of the ways Skeeter mentions about how her life would be different if she didn't write the book?
 4. How does Hilly want to get back at Skeeter for writing the book?

Chapter Thirty Four

1. How does Aibileen know that the book is changing people or at least making them think?
2. What are the surprises that Skeeter tells Aibileen?
3. In what ways does Hilly get back at Minny and at Aibileen?
4. How do you feel at the end of the book? Do you like how it ends? Is it fitting?

The Help

Final project: Create a Newspaper

This will count as a test grade. Due date: _____

For your final project for *The Help*, you will create a newspaper! You will report on real events from the time period of the Civil Rights but also report events from the novel, *The Help*. Therefore, your articles in your newspaper will combine fictional stories from the novel but also nonfiction events that actually happened during the Civil Rights movement. This will involve synthesizing all of the material we have learned throughout the first quarter and putting it together in a creative way.

Directions: (Put a check in the box after you have completed each part)

1. _____ Give your newspaper a name, such as *The Charlotte Observer* or *The Atlanta Constitution*.
2. _____ Title your articles.
3. _____ Create a table of contents (complete when you finish your newspaper)
4. _____ Use color and pictures throughout the newspaper
5. _____ Stay focused on events from the Civil Rights movement and events from the novel
6. _____ Be descriptive and detailed in each article
7. _____ Be neat and organized; you should write rough drafts before you make the final product
8. _____ It must follow a genuine newspaper layout and design.
9. _____ Include eight different types of articles. About half of your articles will be on events from the novel and half will be on true events from the Civil Rights Movement. **Each of these sections should have at least a paragraph's worth of writing (7-12 sentences)** Choose your eight sections from the list below:

Your newspaper should include at least EIGHT of the following kinds of articles.

- a. Editorial about an issue or problem
- b. Advice Column with an entry and reply
- c. Society News

- d. Obituary
- e. Travel
- f. Book Review
- g. Gossip Column
- h. Want Ads
- i. National News
- j. Local News
- k. Births/weddings
- l. Sports page
- m. A comic strip depicting one of the events
- n. Two advertisements, one to entice someone to purchase and read the book, and one related to some aspect of the book
- o. A horoscope for each of the book's main characters, giving them appropriate zodiac signs.
- p. A weather section including a description of the setting for the book.
- q. Police log

REMEMBER THAT EACH OF THESE ARTICLES REQUIRES ACCURATE INFORMATION FROM THE NOVEL OR FROM A PERSON OR EVENT FROM THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT. Each section should take time to do and should not be thrown together in minutes. **EACH SECTION SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST A PARAGRAPH WORTH OF WRITING.**

IF YOU USE OUTSIDE SOURCES TO HELP YOU, ESPECIALLY WITH EVENTS FROM THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, MAKE SURE TO CITE YOUR SOURCES SO YOU AREN'T PLAGIARIZING!

RUBRIC FOR *The Help* PROJECT

| | Met or exceeded standards (100-93%) | Adequate/Satisfactory (92-70%) | Below Standard 69-0% |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Creativity/Neatness/ Color /Design | (20-18 pts) | (17-14 pts) | (13-0 pts) |
| Accurate knowledge/ application of the Civil Rights Movement | (20-18 pts) | (17-14 pts) | (13-0 pts) |
| Accurate knowledge/ application of The Help | (20-18 pts) | (17-14 pts) | (13-0 pts) |
| Grammar- Spelling, | (20-17 pts) | (16-14 pts) | (13-0 pts) |

| | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------|
| complete sentences, etc. | | | |
| Followed directions- Title, index, 8 sections | (20-18 pts) | (17-14 pts) | (13-0 pts) |

GRADE _____
100

Common Core Reading Standards Addressed in the Unit

Reading Standards for Literature

Standard One: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Standard Two: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text

Standard Three: Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme

Standard Four: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

Standard Six: Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Standard Seven: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*).

Standard Ten: By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9–10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Reading Standards for Informational Text:

Standard One: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Standard Two: Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course

of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Standard Four: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

Standard Five: Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

Standard Seven: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

Standard Eight: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

Standard Nine: Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g.,

Washington's Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"), including how they address related themes and concepts.