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# CHILDREN'S MARCH

TEACHER GUIDE

PRESENTED BY



PARK & MUSEUM

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## **Alabama Course of Study**

6.9 ) Critique major social and cultural changes in the United States since World War II.

11.14 ) Trace events of the modern Civil Rights Movement from post-World War II to 1970 that resulted in social and economic changes, including the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School, the March on Washington, Freedom Rides, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing, and the Selma-to-Montgomery March. (Alabama) [A.1.c., A.1.d., A.1.f., A.1.i., A.1.j., A.1.k.]

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# Introduction

This unit explores how the Children's March of 1963 in Birmingham came to be, and how it helped change the culture of segregation in the South. Students will learn how local civil rights leaders helped organize the march and about the long lasting effects of this event.

This lesson plan was created by Dr. Jeremiah Clabough. Dr. Jeremiah Clabough is an associate professor of Curriculum and Instruction at UAB.

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# Resource List

Paper

Pencil

*When the Children Marched: The Birmingham Civil Rights Movement*

Robert H. Mayer

ISBN 10: 0766029301

*We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March*

Cynthia Levinson

ISBN 10: 1561458449

Oral History Interview

<http://bcariohp.org/items/show/28>

Alabama History Department of Archives

<http://digital.archives.alabama.gov/cdm/search/searchterm/%22Children's%20Crusade%22/order/date>

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# Day One

- **Focus:** Use two trade books to discuss the high levels of violence and racial discrimination in Birmingham that led to the children's march. The teacher should set up why the children's march occurred based on nature of Jim Crow segregation laws present in Birmingham.
- Two trade books to use for examining the reasons that led to the children's march are *When the Children Marched* [[click link](#)] and *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March* [[click link](#)].
- End day one with a brief perspective-writing activity. The prompt for this perspective-writing activity is provided below.
- **Prompt:** Assume the role of Fred Shuttlesworth and write a memo to summarize the high levels of violence and racial segregation in Birmingham to Dr. King. The memo should be a paragraph in length.

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# Day Two

- **Focus**

- To summarize what happened in the children's march. The teacher can use excerpts from *When the Children Marched* (Mayer, 2008) and *We've Got a Job* (Levinson, 2015). These trade books give students first-hand accounts of what motivated children in the Birmingham area to take part in the children's march. The teacher may also use the oral history interview found at <http://bcariohp.org/items/show/28> and primary sources from the [Alabama Department of Archives and History](#).
- For students to gain an overview of what happened during the children's march.

- End day two with a brief perspective-writing activity. The prompt for this perspective-writing activity is provided below.
- **Prompt:** Assume the role of Fred Shuttlesworth and write a memo to President Kennedy summarizing the events of the children's march and why public policies are needed to address racial discrimination in Birmingham and the United States. The memo should be a paragraph in length.
- Focus on the idea that ordinary citizens (in this case children that participated in this protest) took civic action to address public issues to get at the power of being a democratic citizen. Democratic citizens can impact and lead to change in their society through their civic actions.

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# Day Three

- **Focus:** Why children in Birmingham participated in the children's march. Use *We've Got a Job* (Levinson, 2015) to highlight the reasons that children participated in this march. This trade book has accounts and quotes from children that participated in this march. Students in groups can read excerpts from this trade book and answer analysis prompts to get at the children's motivations for participating in this protest. One analysis prompt that might be used is provided below.
- From the selected excerpts of this trade book, what reasons does a child give for why he or she participated in the children's march? Use evidence from the excerpts of the trade book to support your arguments.
- End day three with a brief perspective-writing activity. The prompt for this perspective writing activity is provided below.
- **Prompt:** Assume the role of a child that participated in the children's march and write a diary or journal entry explaining why you will participate in this march the next day. The diary or journal entry should be a paragraph in length.
- The teacher will end the class period highlighting the outcomes of the children's march. The children's march leads to the desegregation of businesses in Birmingham and gets the ball rolling for national legislation connected to civil rights issues. This highlights the impact that ordinary democratic citizens can have through taking civic action.

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# Day Four

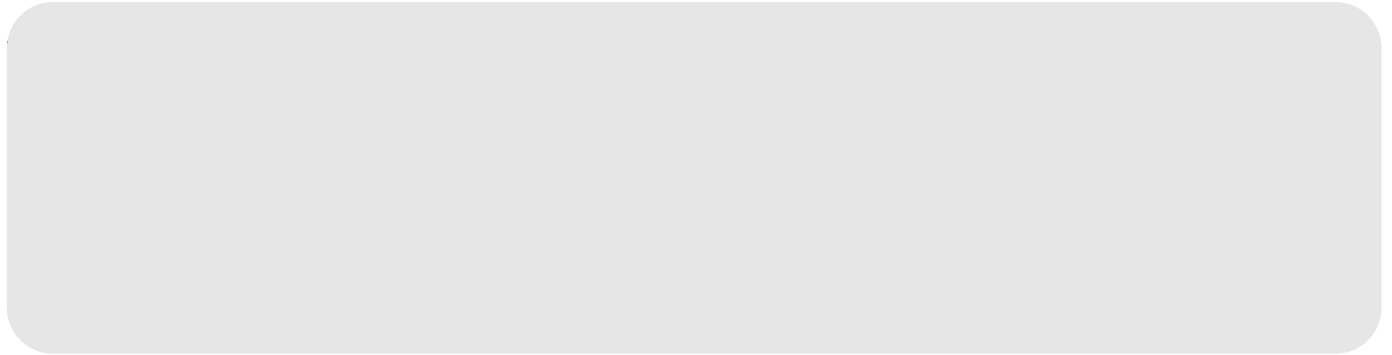
- **Focus:** Students to outline their writing project and work on their perspective-writing piece.
- Students select from one of the three writing prompts for this assignment. The length of their writing prompt should be about a page in length.
- Before students start their writing prompt, they need to complete the outline below in a separate document. The purpose of the outline is to help students organize their thoughts and to ensure that their narrative contains the reasons that children participated in the march along with how their actions helped to improve the overall quality of life for African Americans in Birmingham.



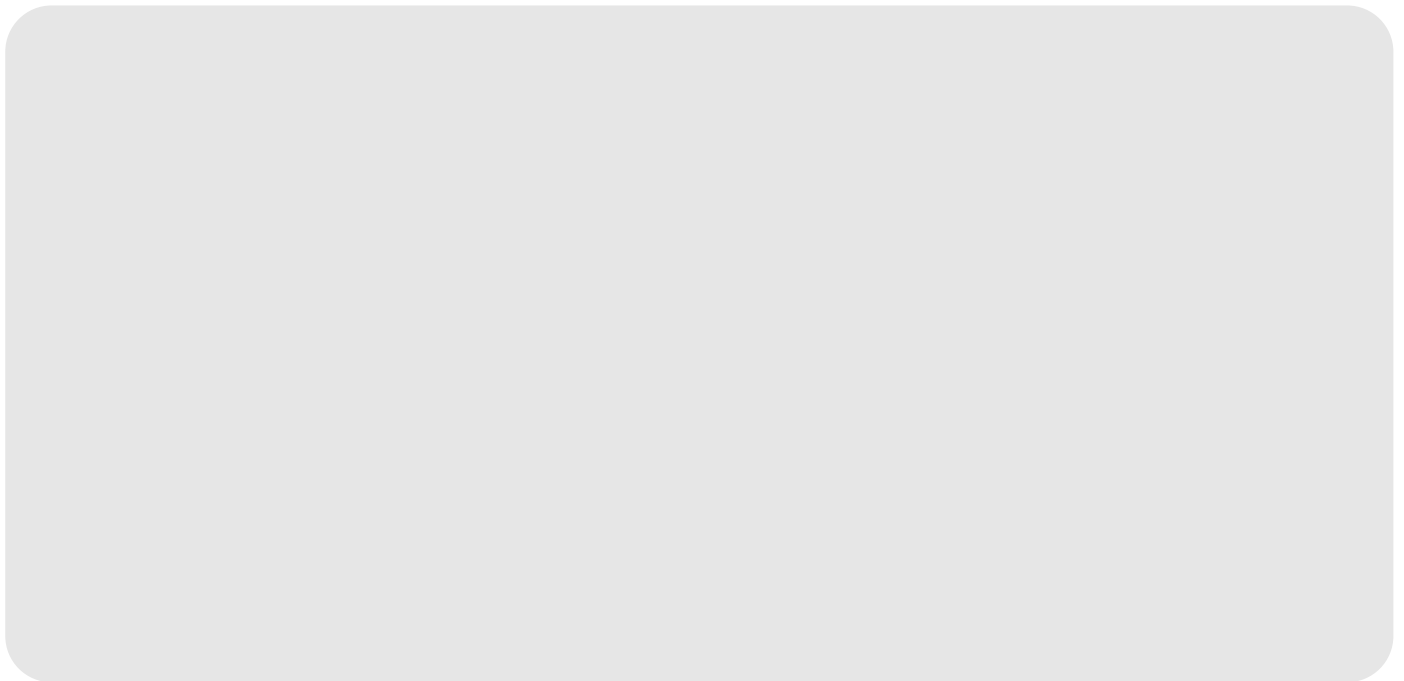
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## Outline for Writing Prompt

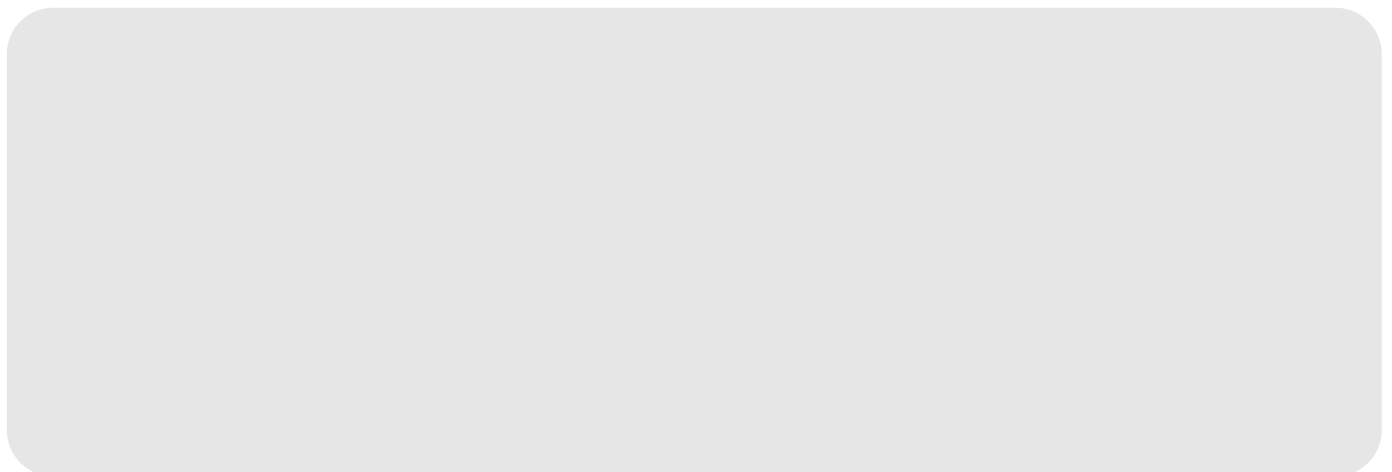
Whose perspective are you writing from in your paper?



What were the reasons that the Children's March occurred from your person's perspective?



How was Birmingham a better city from the results of the Children's March?



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- Students select one of the following three writing prompts for the summative assessment for this project. Their writing prompt should be about a page in length.

## Writing Prompts

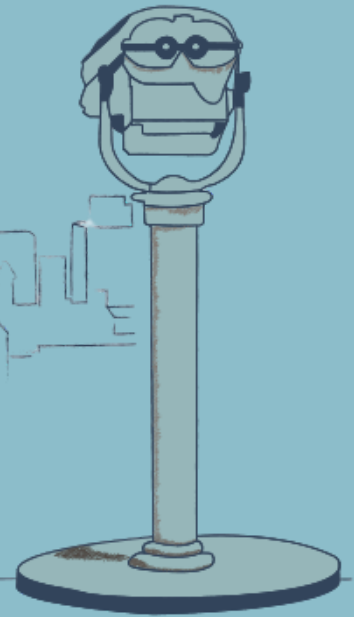
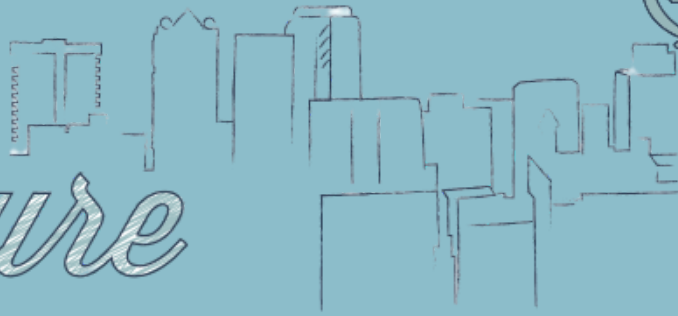
1. Assume the role of a child that participated in the children's march. Write a letter to your parents on why you participated in this event and how your participation will help to improve African Americans' daily lives in Birmingham.
2. Assume the role of a child that participated in the children's march. Write a newspaper story to the editor of the Birmingham newspaper The Press Register explaining the need for the children's march along with how this protest will improve African Americans' daily lives in Birmingham.
3. Assume the role of Dr. King just hearing about the Children's March. Write an opinion piece to The New York Times discussing the importance of the children's march along with why this protest was needed for Birmingham and the United States.

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# Day Five

- **Focus:** Students need to finish and edit their writing prompt. The teacher may have students swap their writing prompt with a peer for editing or let the students edit their own papers. Below are possible editing prompts that can be used.
- Does your paper capture a person's perspective about the children's march? How can the paper be changed to better capture a person's perspective about the children's march? Provide concrete examples of how to better capture a person's perspective about the children's march.
- Students share their writing prompts to end the class period.

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