

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a person's eye, looking directly at the viewer. The eye is light-colored, possibly blue or grey, with dark, well-defined eyelashes. The skin around the eye is a warm, brownish-tan color. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin and the intensity of the gaze.

A STORY OF THE SOUTH

English Language
Development

NON-FICTION

INTRODUCTION

Imagine moving to another state and suddenly being ordered to leave a train station or sit at the back of a bus—simply because of the color of your skin. How would you feel? How would you respond? These are the experiences and challenges faced by thirteen-year-old James Roberson, an African-American boy growing up in the 1950s, whose family is forced to move from Ohio to Alabama at a time when the South was deeply segregated.

“The board said, ‘Colored, do not sit beyond this board.’”



FIRST READ

NOTES

- 1 James Roberson's mother wanted to leave the South. She could not bear the racial hostility of the 1950s. She moved to Ohio where James was judged by his southern accent rather than his skin color. The kids nicknamed him "Alabama" because of his accent. They respected him because he was a good student. But James and his family had to return to the South. James' dad could not find a job.
- 2 On the return trip, the train stopped in Decatur, Alabama. James got off the train to get a snack. He innocently went into the train station. Suddenly, a woman shouted, "Get out of here!" James was stunned by this **treatment**. The woman judged him on the color of his skin. Because he was black, he was not allowed to get a snack. James quickly dashed back to the train. He told his mother what had happened. She explained that black people were segregated in the South. They were not allowed to be in "all white" areas like the train station.
- 3 James quickly learned about discrimination. Birmingham city buses were segregated based on city laws and the **whim** of the bus driver. Each bus had a green, wooden board that fit on the back of bus seats. The board said, "Colored, do not sit beyond this board." If the bus was full of black passengers and white people got on at the next stop, the driver could move the board to the back of the bus. The blacks sitting in front of the board had to give up their seats to the white people. An elderly black person might have to **surrender** his seat to a healthy white child.
- 4 When James was a teenager, he and his friends would move the board. They did this in **rebellion** against segregation. Often they threw it away. Sometimes, they sat right behind the bus driver. That was dangerous because the driver's actions were not predictable. Because the teens were breaking the law, anything might happen. The bus driver would tell the teens to move. When they wouldn't, he would get off the bus and call people whose job it was to check the buses. When the driver got off the bus, James and his friends would sneak off and disappear.



- 5 James was a member of Bethel Baptist Church, which was led by Reverend Shuttlesworth. The church parsonage was bombed in December, 1956. James lived nearby. The **terrifying** explosion broke windows in his house. It destroyed his mother's collection of ceramic objects. The Reverend surprisingly escaped injury. Angry blacks, armed with shotguns and pistols, gathered at the scene. James listened as the Reverend urged people not to be violent.



USING LANGUAGE

CA-CCSS: ELD.P.1.6.2.a.Ex

Read each sentence. Choose the correct referring word to replace the word or phrase in bold.

1. **James** was judged by his southern accent.

☐ He ☐ She ☐ It

2. **The bus** was segregated.

☐ She ☐ It ☐ He

3. James quickly learned about **discrimination**.

☐ he ☐ it ☐ she

4. **James and his friends** rebelled against segregation.

☐ They ☐ We ☐ Them

5. **A woman** shouted, "Get out of here!"

☐ She ☐ He ☐ It





MEANINGFUL INTERACTIONS

CA-CCSS: ELD.PI.6.1.Ex

Work with your partner or group to identify details and evidence about what life was like for black people in the South in the 1950s. Use the self-assessment rubric to evaluate your participation in the activity.

1. James's family moved to Ohio, where James was _____ by his southern accent rather than his _____.
2. Suddenly, a woman yelled, "Get _____!"
3. Because he was _____, he was not _____ to get a snack.
4. She explained that _____ were segregated in the _____.
5. They were not allowed to be in " _____ " areas like the train station.
6. The blacks _____ in front of the board on the bus had to give up their _____ to _____.
7. An elderly _____ person might have to surrender his _____ to a healthy _____.
8. The _____ parsonage was _____ in December, 1956.
9. The terrifying _____ broke windows in James's _____.
10. Angry blacks, _____ with shotguns and pistols, gathered at the scene.



SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

CA-CCSS: ELD.PI.6.1.Ex

	4 I did this well.	3 I did this pretty well.	2 I did this a little bit.	1 I did not do this.
I took an active part with others in doing the assigned task.				
I contributed effectively to the group's decisions.				
I understood what it was like in the South in the 1950s.				
I helped others understand what it was like in the South in the 1950s.				
I completed the sentences carefully and accurately.				

Please note that excerpts and passages in the StudySync® library and this workbook are intended as touchstones to generate interest in an author's work. The excerpts and passages do not substitute for the reading of entire texts, and StudySync® strongly recommends that students seek out and purchase the whole literary or informational work in order to experience it as the author intended. Links to online resellers are available in our digital library. In addition, complete works may be ordered through an authorized reseller by filling out and returning to StudySync® the order form enclosed in this workbook.

