

NYSBA/LYC Brown v. Board of Education

M.S. Lesson Activity no. 7

Reading of Excerpt from *Warriors Don't Cry*

Application

Students — Grades 7 and 8

Lesson Time

Approx. 30 minutes

Objective

At the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

1. Understand the impact of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on one individual.
2. Understand the cultural environment in many Southern states at the time of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

Materials

[Handout A: Excerpt from *Warriors Don't Cry*](#) (Source: Joy Hakim, *All the People*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 84).

Activity

1. Distribute [Handout A](#). Allow students to read the excerpt and answer the questions.
2. Discuss student answers to the questions and their reactions to the content contained in the excerpt.

New York State Standards

Students will understand that central to civics and citizenship is an understanding of the roles of the citizen within American constitutional democracy and the scope of a citizen's rights and responsibilities.

Students will understand that the American legal and political systems guarantee and protect the rights of citizens and assume that citizens will hold and exercise certain civic values and fulfill certain civic responsibilities.

Format

This lesson is in **constructed response question** format which is used in New York State Assessments.

Base your answers to questions 1 through 6 on the passage below and on your knowledge of social studies.

Warriors Don't Cry

Many of the quotations in this chapter are by then teenager Melba Pattillo. But long after she graduated from Central High, after she had a graduate degree from Columbia University and had worked as a reporter for NBC, Melba Pattillo (who was now Melba Pattillo Beats) wrote a book called *Warriors Don't Cry*. It is a detailed telling of her extraordinary, and harrowing, experiences.

I arrived at school Tuesday morning, fully expecting that I would be greeted by the 101st soldiers and escorted to the top of the stairs. Instead, we were left at the curb to fend for ourselves

“Where are your pretty little soldier boys today?” someone cried out.

“You niggers ready to die just to be in this school?” asked another

I wanted to turn and run away, but I thought about what Danny [a soldier in the 101st Airborne] had said: “Warriors survive.” I tried to remember his stance, his attitude, and the courage of the 101st on the battlefield Early that morning a boy began to taunt me as though he had been assigned that task.

First he greeted me in the hall outside my shorthand class and began pelting me with bottlecap openers, the kind with the sharp claw at the end. He was also a master at walking on my heels. He hurt me until I wanted to scream for help.

By lunchtime, I was nearly hysterical and ready to call it quits, until I thought of having to face Grandma when I arrived home. During the afternoon, when I went to the principal's office several times to report being sprayed with ink, kicked in the shin, and heel-walked until the backs of my feet bled ... the clerk asked me why I was reporting petty stuff

I thought a lot about how to appear as strong as I could as I walked the halls: how not to wince or frown when somebody hit me or kicked me in the shin. I practiced quieting fear as quickly as I could. When a passerby called me nigger, or lashed out at me using nasty words, I worked at not letting my heart feel sad because they didn't like me. I began to see that to allow their words to pierce my soul was to do exactly what they wanted.

Source: Excerpts from *Warriors Don't Cry* by Melba Pattillo; Joy Hakim, *All the People*, Oxford University Press (adapted)

1 Why did Melba expect soldiers to be there when she arrived at school that morning?

2 List **two** ways one of her fellow students tried to annoy Melba.

(1) _____

(2) _____

3 What would you do if a student did this to you?

4 Would the same reaction you would have be a wise one for Melba to have taken? _____

Why? _____

5 Why did Melba decide *not* to go home at noontime?

6 Was getting a good education important to Melba? _____

How does the document support your opinion?
