



Yale-New Haven
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2011 Volume I: Writing with Words and Images

Encountering Injustice: Analyzing Words and Images in the Civil Rights Movement

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.01.09
by Tara Stevens

The assigned text in the second quarter of New Haven's eighth-grade Language Arts curriculum is an important and engaging book called *Getting Away With Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* by Chris Crowe. This book tells the story of Emmett, a fourteen-year-old Chicago boy who was murdered in Money, Mississippi while visiting relatives in 1955. He was killed for allegedly whistling at a white woman. The book also explores the societal context that allowed Emmett's killers to be exonerated in a court of law. This gross miscarriage of justice is often presented as the catalyst that sparked the Civil Rights movement. This unit creates cohesion across the many areas upon which this text touches. Students discover the climate and history of the Civil Rights era, while establishing a foundation upon which to connect the ideas of injustice and civil rights struggles to eras and locales beyond the South of the 1950s and '60s. Students also have the opportunity to engage at least briefly with a variety of texts: primary and secondary, visual and written, prose and poetry. While they cannot possibly tackle all of these genres exhaustively, students will encounter the idea that different kinds of texts may require different reading strategies.

(Recommended for English Language Arts and U.S. History, grade 8)

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