

# KIDS IN BIRMINGHAM 1963

[www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org](http://www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org)

## Teaching Civil Rights with Direct Access to Eye Witnesses

*In September 2013, help your students commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama, with [www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org](http://www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org).*

Four little girls were killed in Birmingham when Ku Klux Klan members dynamited the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on a Sunday morning as the children prepared for Youth Sunday services. This terrorist bombing, less than three weeks after the March on Washington, riveted the country's attention—and led to passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

In a single class period, students study primary sources, create a found poem, and learn how Birmingham's kids, black and white, experienced that church bombing.

**Grades:** 4<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> Grades

**Topic:** Civil Rights Movement

**Rationale:** To commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, which occurred on September 15, 1963

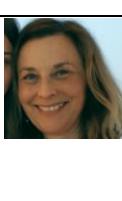
**Class Time:** 60- to 90-minute lesson

**Objectives:** Students will be able to:

- Find meaningful and relevant phrases from a primary source about the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing
- Work in a small group to create a found poem and perform it
- Identify a variety of perspectives on the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing from the kids who lived in Birmingham in 1963 through discussion with their classmates

- Materials:**
- PowerPoint slides that provide background on the church bombing and on the kids' stories at [www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org](http://www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org) – be sure to read speaking point suggestions in the Notes Pages of the PPT file.
  - Primary source first-person accounts from 6 people who were kids in Birmingham during 1963, through:
    - Access to the Kids in Birmingham 1963 Web site (See hyperlinks, below)
    - or
    - Printouts of the selected primary source stories on the church bombing (Access copies of these stories, below)
  - Poster board or butcher paper for each group, strips of paper (colored if you can) 4"x11", markers, tape or glue

*Note that the stories are of different lengths. Select for your students' ages.*

<b>Storyteller</b>	<b>Link to story online</b>	
	<b>1. Barbara Cross</b> <b>Age 13</b>	<a href="http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=291">http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=291</a>
	<b>2. Freeman Hrabowski</b> <b>Age 13</b>	<a href="http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=411">http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=411</a>
	<b>3. Harold Jackson</b> <b>Age 10</b>	<a href="http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=341">http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=341</a>
	<b>4. Sam Rumore</b> <b>Age 14</b>	<a href="http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=311">http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=311</a>
	<b>5. L.A. Simmons</b> <b>Age 10</b>	<a href="http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=216">http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=216</a>
	<b>6. Anne Whitehouse</b> <b>Age 9</b>	<a href="http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=322">http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/?p=322</a>

## **Activities:**

### Warm-up, Option 1 (5 minutes):

- Ask students to think about what they remember about the Boston Bombing of 2013.
- Then have students turn to a classmate close by to share what they remember.
- Next ask several students to share what they remember about the terrorist attack.
- Finish by explaining that today students will be reading stories about 6 people and their memories of another terrorist attack in the U.S.: the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama during the Civil Rights Movement.

### Warm-up, Option 2 (5 minutes):

- Ask students to think about what they know about the Civil Rights Movement.
- Tell them to think about the who, what, where, when, and how of the Civil Rights Movement.
- Then have students turn to a classmate close by to share what they remember.
- Next ask several students to share what they remember about the Civil Rights Movement.
- You can also create a web on the board to write down student responses.
- Finish by explaining that today students will be reading stories about 6 people and their memories of an event in the Civil Rights Movement: the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

### Introduce the historical event and the primary sources: 1963's Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing, Birmingham, Alabama (5 minutes):

- Click [here](http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Intro-on-Birmingham-Church-Bombing_KIB1963.org_2013.pptx) to use the PowerPoint slides ([http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Intro-on-Birmingham-Church-Bombing\\_KIB1963.org\\_2013.pptx](http://kidsinbirmingham1963.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Intro-on-Birmingham-Church-Bombing_KIB1963.org_2013.pptx)) to inform students about the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and its impact on the Civil Rights Movement. You will need to prepare a brief age-appropriate introduction, using the background information in the speaker's notes in the PowerPoint file (see below).
- Use the remaining slides to let students know the steps they will follow during today's lesson and the questions (rubric) they will use to assess their participation.

### Read Primary Source Stories (20 minutes):

- Have students read the sources online or from copies. Depending on grade level, each student will read 1 to 3 of the stories. You can also have each student in the group read a different story and then have them share the different perspectives after answering the questions on Slide #4:
  - Who wrote it (give 3 details about the storyteller)?
  - What was the storyteller's age in the story?
  - What connection did the person have to the bombing?
  - How did this event impact him or her?

- Go over the questions for the primary sources from the PowerPoint. Tell students to answer the questions as they read.
- Tell students to read the stories. Have them focus on the section about the bombing.
- Tell students to highlight or underline a phrase or short sentence from each story that they think is the most important or meaningful to them, and to be prepared to say why they chose the phrase they did. If they are reading the stories online, students can write the phrase or short sentence down.
- Next have each student write his or her phrases/short sentences on a strip of paper. They should use a separate strip for each phrase/short sentence, writing it with a marker, as large as they can while fitting it onto the strip.

\*Note: If you have students who would struggle with locating an appropriate phrase or short sentence or who have not worked with primary sources before, you can model this process with one of the primary sources before your students try this on their own.

#### Create Poems (10 minutes/20 minutes):

- Form groups of 2 to 4 students each.
- Have students read their phrases/short sentences to their group members and explain why they chose the phrases that they did – that is, why did the selected phrase strike him or her as most important or personally meaningful?
- Have students arrange the phrases/short sentences into a poem. They can arrange them in any way that is most meaningful to them.
- After deciding on the order, have students tape or glue down the strips of paper onto the poster board or butcher paper.
- Students can be as creative as they want in how they arrange their strips into a poem. Create a shape, change the directions of the strips of paper or use the different colored paper to help display their poem.

#### Perform Poems (15 minutes/25 Minutes):

- Have students come up with a creative way to perform the poem. They can have motions, use chanting or sounds during the poem or emphasize important parts of the poem.
- All students should participate in the performance.
- At this point you can have all groups perform the poem, choose some of the groups to perform the poem, or, if you are short on time, wait until the next day to finish the performances.
- Students can write their group's poem down in a notebook or on a piece of paper so they can keep a copy.
- Following each group's performance, ask the other students to characterize the "personal" perspective of the poem, by asking: "What is the point of view in this poem?" or "What is the main feeling of this poem, and how does it compare or contrast with the storyteller whose story you read?"

**Wrap-up (5 minutes/10 minutes):**

- Have students clean up all the materials used in the lesson and turn in their finished products.
- Display the final slide again, with the 3 questions in the rubric. Give students an opportunity to assess themselves and their group members, using the 3 questions in the simple rubric, below.
- Have them turn in their assessments as an exit slip.

**Assessment:** Students assess their participation using these questions:

To what extent did you:

- Create a poem that was thoughtful, meaningful and relevant?
- Work successfully in a group to create a poem that conveys meaning and feeling?
- Identify the different points of view presented in the stories about the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing?

Each of these can be awarded points and a grade or as informal assessments or checks by the individual students.

\*Once the activity is completed and the posters are graded, they can easily become a display in the hall to inform other teachers and students about the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing.

## **Speaker points for PowerPoint introduction to the lesson (Click [here](#) for PPT slides)**

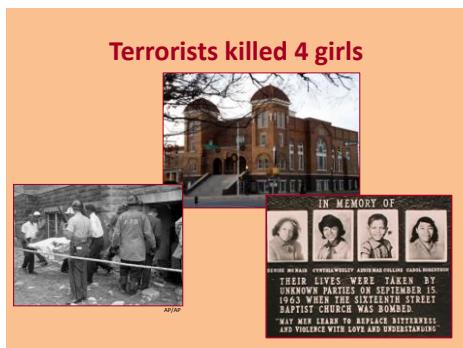
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This lesson commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

**[Find more teaching ideas at [www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org](http://www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org), [Class Room tab](#). Students may interview the site's storytellers by sending an e-mail query to [KidsInBirmingham1963@gmail.com](mailto:KidsInBirmingham1963@gmail.com).]**

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Adjusting for students' age, you may want to introduce the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church using any of the following points:

- On Sunday, September 15, 1963 – 50 years ago – White terrorists, members of the Ku Klux Klan, planted a dynamite bomb at the church, set to explode as people gathered for Sunday worship. Dozens were seriously injured, and four girls were killed:
  - Denise McNair, age 11
  - Cynthia Wesley, age 14
  - Addie Mae Collins, age 14
  - Carole Robertson, age 14
- Sixteenth Street Baptist Church had been a gathering place for African American adults and children in May 1963, as they prepared to march to demand changes in the harsh laws that prohibited whites and blacks from being together. These desegregation laws were known as "Jim Crow" laws.
- For about 2 decades, so many Black homes and churches had been bombed that Birmingham was referred to as "Bombingham." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, called Birmingham "probably the most segregated city in America."
- Timing of the bombing: September 15, 1963, the day of the blast, was just a few days after the first African American students enrolled in formerly all-white (segregated) schools in Birmingham, under order of the Federal government. The girls

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were killed just 4 months after the Children's March in Birmingham (May 1963) and barely 3 weeks after the March on Washington (August 28, 1963) when Dr. King delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech. Whites were fearful of the change that was coming.

- Finally in the 1970, 2001, and 2002, 3 men were convicted of this bombing.
  - Across the country in 1963, people were outraged by the loss of these young lives. Today, many historians contend that the church bombing – along with other events in Birmingham in 1963 – was pivotal in helping the nation to focus on the need to protect the rights of all its citizens, leading to passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964.
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**The Kids in Birmingham 1963 tell what the bombing was like for them**



Freeman Hrabowski was 13  
Barbara Cross was 13  
Anne Whitehouse was 9  
Sam Rumore was 14  
L.A. Simmons was 13  
Harold Jackson was 10

All stories available at [www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org](http://www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org)

As people are commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the events that took place in Birmingham in 1963 – and changed forever the way we protect civil rights in the U.S., the people who lived through that year look back on how their own lives were affected by the violence and by the dramatic, positive changes.

The storytellers at the new Web site [www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org](http://www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org), are now in their 50s or 60s. You will have a chance to read what they recall now about their childhood experiences. All of them grew up in a repressive atmosphere and all attended segregated schools, where children of different races were not allowed to study in the same school. Some were closely affected by the church bombing and others were barely aware of what was happening just a few miles from their homes, schools, and places of worship.

Today, as we remember the four girls who lost their lives – at ages 11 and 14 – you will have a chance to hear from 6 other people who lived through that time and grew up to consider how it affected them. As you read their stories, imagine how you may have reacted to a bombing in your town.

All stories available at  
[www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org](http://www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org)

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## Steps, Part 1

*On your own*, read stories

- Answer the following questions:
  - Who wrote it (give 3 details about the storyteller)?
  - What was the storyteller's age in the story?
  - What connection did the person have to the bombing?
  - How did this event impact him or her?
- Choose a relevant phrase that captures what you think is:
  - **Most important** – or
  - **Meaningful to you**
- Write the phrase on a strip

[Use this slide and the following to describe to students the steps they will take.

Make sure students understand that they need to choose a phrase about the bombing.]

## Steps, Part 2

*In your group*

- Share your answers to the questions
- Share your phrases and explain why they are important or meaningful to you
- Together, compose a poem with the phrases
- Perform your group's poem
- Assess your participation

## To assess your participation

*Did you...*

- Create a poem that was thoughtful, meaningful and relevant?
- Work successfully in a group to create a poem that conveys meaning and feeling?
- Identify the different points of view presented in the stories about the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing?

Here is the rubric by which you will assess your participation. Please keep these points in mind as you read the stories and plan your poem.

## 1. “A Love That Forgives”



**Barbara Cross**

Age 13 in 1963

*The daughter of the pastor of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Barbara Cross was in the church the day it was bombed.*

In June 1962, my family moved to Birmingham, Alabama. My father was called to pastor the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. As a 12-year-old, I felt excited from moving from my birthplace, Richmond, Virginia. to a new city and the opportunity to meet new friends and experience life in a new city. Little did I know that the move to Birmingham would literally change our lives forever.

My father got involved immediately upon our move with the Alabama Christian Human Rights Movement and was asked by their leadership if Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., could use the church as a place for civil rights meetings, which I did not realize until many years later.

My recollections of Sunday, September 15, 1963, were that it started off as a beautiful Sunday morning. This was the first Sunday that my father had initiated Youth Sunday under his ministry. However, this day would soon be marred by tragedy. After studying the Sunday School lesson in the basement of the church about 10:20 a.m. there was a horrific noise and the building seemed to be shaken off the foundation. I remembered something hit me in my head and I realized it was the light fixture. I began to smell fumes and everything got real dark. I remembered hearing a lot of screams from the children, and church members were running to get out of the building to a place of safety. Frantically, I tried to search for my younger sister Lynn, age 4, only to learn later that she was among the many injured taken to the hospital. Little did I realize that we were victims of a racist terrorist attack and that my four friends were just several feet away from my Sunday School class, dead in the bathroom.

Our family received bomb threats at our home, because of my father’s involvement with the movement. After all these years, I still cry, and I will never forget the horrors of that day. I will always remember that four innocent girls lost their lives in a place of worship. Continuously, I will keep the memory of the four girls alive and share the Sunday School Lesson that we studied on that day about “A Love That Forgives!!!”

*Barbara Cross has previously written of her Birmingham experiences in a story “My Soul is a Witness,” appearing in the book [Sisters on the Journey](#), edited by Rev. Dr. Regina Anderson and published by Sisters on the Journey, Inc., Atlanta, GA, in 2009. Ms. Cross wrote this story expressly for Kids in Birmingham 1963, in May 2013.*

## 2. I had nightmares about the three coffins



**Freeman Hrabowski**

Age 13 in 1963

*On losing a good friend and classmate, Cynthia Wesley, when her church was bombed in September 1963 – and on the power young people have to change their own lives and make a positive impact on the lives of others.*

In the fall of 1963, we were shocked by the vicious and cowardly bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, one of Birmingham's most prominent African American churches. We soon learned that four innocent young African American girls had been killed; I was devastated to hear that one of them was a good friend and classmate, Cynthia. I'll never forget that Sunday morning in church at Sixth Avenue Baptist, when our minister, Reverend Porter, announced that our sister church had been bombed. Congregation members immediately left their seats, in a state of shock, because our relatives and friends belonged to that church.

For years following the funeral, I had nightmares about the three coffins (one family had a separate funeral) in the front of the church, with the smallest one, placed in the middle, containing the remains of the youngest girl, Denise McNair. As Dr. King delivered the eulogy, I realized that as much as our parents and elders cared for us, they could not protect us from the horrors of racism, which raged like a fire. We grew up witnessing the bombing not only of churches but of homes belonging to people like Reverend A.D. King, Dr. King's brother, and the most prominent Black attorney in town, Arthur Shores.

Despite the terror, it was encouraging to know that people throughout the country were deeply troubled by the events in Birmingham, and that the nation's President, John Kennedy, was on our side. We learned from the experience that faith in God and ourselves, coupled with individual acts of courage and service, meant far more than we could ever realize.



A significant lesson from studying the role of youth during the 1960s is how important it is for young people both to evaluate their life circumstances and to know that they are not simply victims of those circumstances. They can change their own lives, and, equally important, can have a positive impact on the lives of others. It is true that African

Americans have made much progress over the past three decades; nevertheless, lunch counters, restaurants, and schools still are often closed to millions of Black children and their families simply because they lack the resources or the skills to go there. Most important, like the children of the Civil Rights Movement, today's young African Americans must believe that they can determine their own destinies and that education is as critical to their success today as it was in the 1960s.

*This story is excerpted from "The role of youth in the civil rights movement: Reflections on Birmingham," by Freeman A. Hrabowski, III, President, University of Maryland Baltimore County (1996), with the express permission of the author.*

### 3. Their venom surprised me



**Harold Jackson**

Age 10 in 1963

*Part 2 of Harold Jackson's story: On expecting a race war and on the need to remember the past, so as not to repeat it*

For the most part, I was oblivious to the summer of violence that ensued. But one thing I will never forget about those days is one of my rare interactions with white people. I was just about to cross a well-traveled street on my way to the store when a pickup truck whizzed by with two or three white kids in the back who yelled something about "nigger" at me.

Their venom surprised me because it was so unexpected. I remember wondering how they could hate me when they didn't even know me. Did whoever was driving the truck really intend to hit me? But just how far hatred can take a person toward depravity became more apparent within a matter of days when Sixteenth Street Baptist Church was bombed on Sept. 15, 1963, killing four little girls.

One of the children, Denise McNair, 11, went to my elementary school. Her mother taught there, and her father was a milkman for the dairy that delivered to our house. Also killed in the bombing were Cynthia Wesley, Addie Mae Collins, and Carole Robertson, all 14. But two other black youths were also killed that day. Johnny Robinson, 16, was shot in the back by police, and Virgil Ware, 13, was shot by two white kids as he rode his bicycle.

That night, my father and other black men in neighborhoods across Birmingham got out their guns and stood guard under porch lights. They fully expected to be engaged in a race war. Now 10, I was more curious than afraid. I had heard the church blast from my home. I still couldn't understand a level of hatred that led strangers to kill strangers because they looked different.

Fifty years later, the hatred has subsided, but it's not gone. Many of the visceral reactions to President Obama's election had nothing to do with his politics. Still, these are better times. Segregation is dead. Racists can't get away with what used to be sanctioned by law. Racism birthed the educational and health disparities that continue among blacks, but the right economic policies, even if applied in a color-blind fashion, could be their cure.

In the weeks ahead, there will be many commemorations of 1963 – in Birmingham, in particular, which for decades tried to forget those bad, old days before realizing the best

way to overcome that history is by confronting it. Today, the city's [Civil Rights Institute](#) is both a tribute to the past and the physical embodiment of a town's collective sigh of relief that that was then and this is now.

We all must remember the past, so as not to repeat it.

*This story is excerpted from an article, "[The memories of a black child in Birmingham](#)," by Harold Jackson, first published in the Philadelphia Inquirer on February 24, 2013, and used here with the express permission of the author.*

## 4. A hot month



Sam Rumore

Age 14 in 1963

*"My Memories of 1963," in which Sam Rumore recalls his forbidden glimpse of the action.*

In May 1963, I was 14 years old and preparing to graduate from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at St. Paul's School in downtown Birmingham. Most of our class would go on to attend John Carroll Catholic High School in the fall of 1963.

The first memory that comes back to me is that May 1963, was one of the warmest months for attending school in Birmingham that I can remember. The temperature reached 90 degrees for most of that month. St. Paul's had an old school building dating from the 1920s and it was not air conditioned. So the warmth and discomfort in our classroom reflected the heated emotion of the demonstrations downtown.

The next thing I recall is that we were physically close to the demonstration activities but did not actually see them. St. Paul's was located at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street North. That was only 5 or 6 blocks from Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Kelly Ingram Park, the site of many marches and demonstrations. The teachers at our school, mostly Catholic nuns, told us to avoid the center of downtown after school. One afternoon, though, I decided to walk to my uncle's record shop, Rumore's Record Rack, at 18<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North, passing Newberry's department store at 19<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North. I saw a young woman clapping and singing as she was arrested for trying to obtain service at the store's lunch counter. She was put into a police "paddy wagon" that had bars on the side. I did not see police dogs or water hoses, but I did see this arrest as I walked past to reach the Record Rack.

The third thing I remember is a writing assignment that our teacher gave us the year before, when we were in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The Birmingham City Commission had closed all of the city parks instead of integrating them. Our assignment was to write a letter to the Mayor on what we thought about closing the parks. The letters were not mailed but the assignment was to make us think about and reflect on what was going on in our city. It would be fascinating to see what we wrote back then.

The next memory I have of 1963 is of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing on Sunday, September 15. I remember attending early Mass at St. Paul's that morning. I do not remember hearing the explosion. Three of the young girls killed that day were my age – 14 – so they, like me, had probably just started their freshman year of high school. Time

stopped for them that day and they will always be 14. They were deprived of the experiences of life over the next 50 years.

Finally, I remember our Bishop, Thomas J. Toolen of Mobile, who announced that the Catholic schools of his diocese would be integrated in 1964. Black students were enrolled over the years. One classmate came to John Carroll in 1966 and graduated with us in 1967. His name was William Bell. William is a friend. He is also the present Mayor of Birmingham.

*Sam Rumore wrote this piece for Kids in Birmingham 1963 and gave permission for its posting, 2013.*

## 5. Growing up on Dynamite Hill



**L.A. Simmons**

Age 10 in 1963

*On growing up amid frequent bombings that his parents never discussed with him*

I grew up in the College Hills neighborhood (commonly known as “Dynamite Hill” for the rash of bombings in the 1950s and 60s). Attorney Arthur Shores lived three blocks from me on Center Street. Our home would shake every time a bomb exploded in the neighborhood. One night a window broke in our home. My friends and I would walk through the neighborhood the next day to see whose home was hit. My parents never discussed the bombings. I remember one Sunday a bomb was found outside the church on Center Street (Queen of the Universe). Two of my childhood friends were in Sixteenth Street Baptist Church when it was bombed (Dale & Ken). I remember my father, brother and I driving by the church a couple of weeks later and seeing the destruction, still vivid to me.

*Mr. Simmons submitted this original story through KidsInBirmingham1963.org in April 2013.*

## 6. Reflections on the Civil Rights Movement in “the most segregated city”



### Anne Whitehouse

Age 9 in 1963

*Anne Whitehouse wrote this story in 1993, following her first visit to the [Birmingham Civil Rights Institute](#) shortly after its opening.*

Birmingham, Alabama was once known as “the most segregated city in America.” It can be argued that the 1963 demonstrations in Birmingham and the fierce resistance they provoked changed white attitudes towards civil rights and ultimately led to the most comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in American history.

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, which opened in 1992, was built to serve as a monument to—and a resource about—the thousands of people who were dedicated to the philosophy of non-violence and risked their lives in struggles and confrontations all over the South.

It was with a mixture of emotions that I first visited the Institute on Dr. King’s birthday, January 15, 1993. I was born in Birmingham and grew up there during the civil rights era, a white child in Mountain Brook, a nearby all-white suburb. I left many years ago and moved north. But back in 1963, I was a nine-year-old elementary school student, and even though I did not participate in the demonstrations, they have indelibly marked my life.

My first conscious awareness of segregation came when I was about six. My father, a lawyer, had some work to do on a Saturday morning and had asked his secretary to come in to the office. After I promised I wouldn’t bother him, he agreed to let me accompany him. We drove downtown to the Brown Marx Building on 20th Street, downtown Birmingham’s main thoroughfare, and took the elevator up to the fourth floor. In my father’s office, I amused myself for a while drawing pictures and then asked his secretary where the bathroom was. She handed me a key, directed me down the hall, and asked if she should accompany me. “No,” I assured her, not wanting to be thought a burden.

Following her instructions, I found myself standing before two identical doors with frosted glass panels. On one panel the letters said “White Ladies” and on the other “Colored Women.” The iron skeleton key weighed heavily in my palm as I stood there, puzzling over the signs. I know the difference between White and Colored, I thought, but what is the difference between Ladies and Women? Aren’t they the same? I couldn’t figure it out.

I opened the door that said "White Ladies." To the left were two stalls and to the right a sink with a mirror over it that was so high that I could just barely glimpse the top of my head. I used one of the stalls, wondering what was behind the other door, the one marked "Colored Women." Was the bathroom the same, or was it dirtier, or not as well equipped? Would my key open that door, too? I was curious to try, but afraid that someone might see me breaking the rules and get angry at me. Slowly I retraced my steps back to my father's office. I wanted to ask my father or his secretary about the difference between Ladies and Women, but I couldn't. I sensed that if I asked the question, I might be accused of stirring up trouble, and I probably wouldn't be given the answer.

At the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, a dynamite bomb exploded on September 15, 1963, killing four young girls attending Sunday school classes—Denise McNair, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, and Carole Robertson—and injuring 19 others. As with the news of President Kennedy's assassination two months later, I will never forget how I heard of these young girls' deaths.

I was in Sunday school at Temple Emanu-el, Birmingham's Reform Jewish temple, and, as my fourth-grade class stood in line in the stairwell on our way to our classroom on the second floor of the Educational Building, a teacher came from the office with the terrible story. I think all of us thought then, If we were Negro children, it could have been us. And it did seem that this virulent hatred of blacks could inspire other latent prejudices—against Jews, for example. Previously, an unexploded bomb had been found in Temple Beth-el, the Conservative temple just up the street on Highland Avenue, and the two temples had hired guards around the clock.

With the bombing, the forces of hatred and evil seemed out of control, and even ardent segregationists said that things had gone too far.

Dr. King and the other leaders of the movement believed that their cause would eventually triumph even if they did not live to see that day. Birmingham's Civil Rights District is indeed a shrine, and my visit there gave me a sense of personal solace. For years I—and many others of my generation—felt pained by our city's shameful past. In laying claim to the civil rights movement and in celebrating it, Birmingham has sought to replace hatred with a vision of brotherhood.

*This piece is excerpted from a feature article Anne Whitehouse wrote for the Los Angeles Times, published on April 11, 1993, "Memorial to an Uncivil Era: A Personal Journey to Alabama's new Birmingham Civil Rights Institute."*

## Found Poem Rubric

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Excellent 4</b>	<b>Proficient 3</b>	<b>Emerging 2</b>	<b>Beginning 1</b>
Students chose meaningful and relevant words/phrases and/or short sentences for their poem.	All chosen words/phrases/ and/or short sentences are <b>very</b> thoughtful, meaningful and relevant to the topic of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing.	All chosen words/phrases/ and/or short sentences are meaningful and relevant to the topic of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing.	Most chosen words/phrases/ and/or short sentences are meaningful and relevant to the topic of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing.	Few words/phrases/ and/or short sentences are meaningful and relevant to the topic of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church Bombing.
Students created a poster that was organized and neat	The poem poster has <b>all</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct Spelling</li> <li>• Neatly Written</li> <li>• In ink or marker</li> <li>• Organized appropriately</li> <li>• Glued neatly</li> <li>• A title</li> </ul>	The poem poster has <b>5</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct Spelling</li> <li>• Neatly Written</li> <li>• In ink or marker</li> <li>• Organized appropriately</li> <li>• Glued neatly</li> <li>• A title</li> </ul>	The poem poster has <b>4</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct Spelling</li> <li>• Neatly Written</li> <li>• In ink or marker</li> <li>• Organized appropriately</li> <li>• Glued neatly</li> <li>• A title</li> </ul>	The poem poster has <b>3</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct Spelling</li> <li>• Neatly Written</li> <li>• In ink or marker</li> <li>• Organized appropriately</li> <li>• Glued neatly</li> <li>• A title</li> </ul>
Students performed their poem in a way that was meaningful and understandable to the audience.	All group members participated in a meaningful way in the performance <b>AND</b> The performance was <b>very</b> clear, creative and thoughtful.	All group members participated in the performance <b>AND</b> The performance was clear, creative and thoughtful.	Most group members participated in the performance <b>AND</b> The performance was clear and thoughtful.	All group members participated in the performance <b>OR</b> The performance was clear.
Students worked in their group successfully	All group members were respectful and respected while working together to complete the project successfully the entire class period.	All group members were respectful and respected while working together to complete the project successfully most of the class period.	Most group members were respectful and respected while working together to complete the project successfully most of the class period.	Few members were respectful and respected while working together to complete the project successfully some of the class period.

Lesson plan developed for [www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org](http://www.KidsInBirmingham1963.org) by Beth Jimerson and Casey Kelly, 2013