

*Sit-in: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Brian Pinkney

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**Grade Levels:** Grade 4 to Grade 7

**Synopsis:** Four young men take a stand against segregation by sitting down at a “whites-only” lunch counter at a Woolworth’s department store in the United States. They light a spark for civil rights and are soon joined by many other people of all races in their protest against racism and segregation, not only at the Woolworth’s lunch counter but on buses and communities throughout the south.

**Pre-reading activities:**

- a) Setup the room with tables put together. Give each student a sticker or name tag to put on. The name tags should be two different colors, and the colors should be divided fairly equally among the students. Tell the students that they will be improvising eating lunch at a restaurant. You will be taking the part of the server. Have students enter the space gradually, as if they were entering the restaurant. Act out your part as the server. When students with the wrong color try to sit at the table, turn the sign up so they can see it. Politely but firmly refuse to serve them, and direct them to the standing table. Continue with the improvisation until all students have had a chance to enter and interact with each other. After ending the improvisation, have the students return to their regular seats, and pass out sticky notes. While they are doing that, put up two pieces of chart paper (or poster board). Title them with the different coloured nametags used. Have students write the thoughts and emotions they had during the improvisation on the sticky notes, and post them on the appropriate paper. After the students have placed their ideas on the wall, lead the class in a discussion about what happened to them during the improvisation and what connections they can make to history and to society today.
- b) Play Charles Tindley’s *We Shall Overcome* to students, and give them the lyrics. Have students write a journal response about what they think the song means, what it means to them, and how they think it will relate to the book they are about to hear.
- c) Show students images of the Greensboro Sit-Ins (can be found online). Ask them to make a two-column chart. On one side, they should brainstorm what they think the book will be about, and they should use the other side to place a checkmark if they got close.

**Post-reading questions:**

- a) Understanding the story
  - Do you think David Joseph, Franklin, and Ezell expected to get a doughnut and coffee when they went to Woolworth’s that day? Why or why not?
  - What did the laws of segregation expect people to do (and not do)? Do you think this was fair? Why/why not?

- Why do you think more students showed up the next day at Woolworth's? Why do you think they wore their best clothes?

b) Transforming your thinking

- Dr. King's words inspired these boys to take a stand. Whose words would inspire you to take a stand for an important issue in which you believe? Students could research inspirational stories about individuals standing up for important issues (ie. Iqbal Masih, Ryan Hreljac, Bilaal Rajan, Craig Kielburger, etc.) and then present them to the class.
- Besides lunch counters, where else was segregation part of each day? Students can research segregation or teacher can give examples. Do you think this was fair? What were the effects of segregation?
- As part of a larger unit on peace, or as part of a Social Studies unit on the civil rights movement, have students create a bulletin board display entitled "Portraits of Peace." Each student can paint, draw, photograph, or collage to show important leaders in history who promoted equality in a peaceful manner. Have each student choose someone different and include a write-up of why their leader is included in the display. Teachers can have the class fill out a teacher-created sheet about each leader, do a gallery walk, etc.

c) Deepening your thinking

- Explain what you think "We are all leaders" means. What are some ways in which you can be a leader in your own community or school?
- Why were the boys so patient and silent? The teacher can ask the students to sit in silence for one minute to illustrate the difficulty of being silent. Is it more difficult to address injustice through being patient and silent? Have students think of a time when they had to stand up for something. How did they handle it? How could they have handled it differently?
- Do you ever see segregation today? Teachers can talk about why people of similar cultures congregate together in certain neighbourhoods and create ethnic enclaves (social, economic, cultural, linguistic, etc.).