From Little Rock to Philadelphia: A Look at School Desegregation

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Abstract

*Warriors Don’t Cry* by Melba Patillo Beals is a historical account of the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Beals was a member of the Little Rock Nine, a group of African American teenagers who volunteered to attend the all-white Central High School. The book tells the story of Beals’ experiences with prejudice and discrimination from whites, and also the lack of sympathy and understanding from her family and friends. This book also documents an important step towards equal education for all races; however, more than 50 years later we are left to wonder how much school integration really worked. Students will better understand the history of education and educational equality throughout United States history.

Students will begin reading *Warriors Don’t Cry* while examining racial inequalities in society and education, beginning with *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board of Education*. This historical background will enrich students’ understanding and appreciation for the Little Rock Nine and the reading of *Warriors Don’t Cry*. Students will also be able to connect characters and events in the book to real life. After finishing the novel, students will examine how successful school integration truly was by examining their own educational experiences and those of family and friends. Students will research racial and economical equality in education during the last half of the 20th century and today in Philadelphia.