

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Prologue: Writing Prompts

MISSION US: "No Turning Back"

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

You will need to decide how best to share these writing prompts with your students. You might share them all and ask students to choose one for response. You might assign one or more to the entire group. You might make one or more of the topics the basis for in-class discussions. Make your decisions according to the needs of your group.

Since students vary in their degree of comfort and skill in writing, you should decide when students write and how much students should write. We do suggest, though, that since students need to share their writing with each other to make personal and historical connections, you encourage them to focus on content rather than on mechanical skills. Pieces can be revised and edited later if you decide they should be shared more formally (such as on a bulletin board or newsletter).

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Read through all the topics. Then choose one of them to write about. Write the title of the piece at the top of your page. Write in complete sentences. After you are finished, proofread your work for correctness.

MEANINGFUL PLACE. We learn in the Prologue that Verna's grandfather always said that he loved the Mississippi Delta "even if the Delta didn't always love him back." What do you think he meant? What places in your life do you most identify with? Do you love them even when they don't love you back? Why or why not?

KEEPSAKES. Verna's grandmother offers her one of three items that belonged to her grandfather to keep in his memory: a pin from the Universal Negro Improvement Agency, a book of poems by James Weldon Johnson, or a photo of her grandfather driving the community school bus. Which item did you choose for Verna to keep? What do you think that item suggests about her grandfather and his importance to Verna? Do loved ones in your life have any particular belongings that, to you, embody core parts of their identities? Describe one and what it represents about the person.

DISCRIMINATION NORTH AND SOUTH. Verna and Robert live in very different parts of the country, but they both experience racial discrimination. How are their experiences similar and how are they different?

FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES. Who was Emmett Till? How did his murder impact the actions, words, and feelings of the people we have met so far? Are there any events that have occurred during your lifetime that have changed how you act, think, or feel in your daily life?

STANDING UP TO JIM CROW. Verna, Robert, and Addie talk about several examples of Black Americans standing up to Jim Crow laws in other parts of the country. What are some of the examples they discuss? According to their conversation, how do they and others in their community feel about news of civil rights demonstrations? To what extent do they feel empowered? Inspired? Excited? Worried? Endangered? How do you explain the range of responses?