

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Part 1: 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.

BOUNDARIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS. Addie explains to Verna that most of the Black residents of Greenwood live on one side of the train tracks. In your town or city, what separates different neighborhoods? (Draw a map if helpful.) What does it mean to be from different neighborhoods in your town or city? Do you make assumptions about the people from any particular neighborhood? Do others make assumptions about people from your neighborhood?

SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS. What instructions and advice do Uncle Curtis and Addie give to Verna about how to stay safe in Greenwood? How does Verna respond? What advice have you received from family and friends about how to stay safe? What does it feel like to receive that kind of advice?

RESPONDING TO UNFAIRNESS. While shopping, Verna encounters multiple situations in which white people treat her unfairly and she must decide how to act. For instance, a white customer cuts in front of Verna at the Nichols' Department store and buys the fabric that Verna wanted to buy. What choices did Verna have about how to respond to situations like these, and what might the consequences be for each choice? Describe a time that you were treated unfairly. How did you choose to respond? What were the consequences of your choice?

DISCOVERING ONE'S VOICE. When they meet, Miss Annette, the choir director, tells Verna "Maybe the choir will help you discover your voice." What does it mean to discover your voice? How might the choir help Verna discover hers? Have you discovered your voice? If so, describe how you did so? What helped you? If not, what kinds of things might you try to help you find your voice?

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS. What members of the community does Verna meet in Greenwood? What jobs do they have in the community? Which of the people Verna connects with do you think might be most helpful to her while she lives in Greenwood, and why? What kinds of connections have you made with the members of communities to which you belong? How do you and the other community members benefit from the connections you have made?