

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

# Document-Based Activity: Excerpt from Anne Moody's Memoir About a Sit-In

## Part 2: A Little Light

### MISSION US: "No Turning Back"

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#### **A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:**

*In this activity students read Anne Moody's account of the 1963 sit-in at the Jackson, Mississippi, Woolworth's lunch counter shown in the photograph in the previous document-based activity. Whether used on its own or in conjunction with the photograph in the previous activity, this passage from Moody's memoir provides students with important context about the sit-ins across the South that the people in "No Turning Back" are talking about. Students will also reflect on the value and limitations of a memoir as a historical document.*

*You might consider using this document-based activity and the previous one simultaneously with half the class analyzing the passage from Moody's memoir while the other half examines the photograph of the sit-in (in which Moody appears). Students can then meet in [jigsaw](#) fashion to share their documents.*

#### **Steps to Complete**

##### **1. Read and Wraparound**

*Consider reading this passage aloud to the class (or having students read it aloud) while each student underlines phrases or sentences that stand out to them in some way. After reading, each student can choose one phrase or sentence that they underlined and share them rapidly in a [Wraparound](#) activity. Remind students that it is okay if they repeat words or phrases that others have already shared before them. After the Wraparound is complete, ask students to comment on any patterns they noticed in what their classmates' chose to share.*

##### **2. Respond to and Analyze the Memoir**

*After reading the testimony, have students answer the following questions in writing or a class discussion (also included at the end of excerpt):*

- 1. Re-read the passage, and then describe three specific images that stand out to you from the text. Why did you choose each image? What do they show about the scene Moody describes? (Students can draw upon their Wraparound responses for this question.)*
- 2. What does Anne tell the people that they want? Why would this matter so much to Anne and her classmates?*
- 3. What do you think is the goal of a sit-in? What would make a sit-in successful? What other ideas do you think Anne and her classmates might have discussed?*

*Finally, discuss the value of a memoir in helping us understand the past:*

- 1. How does the excerpt from Anne Moody's memoir help you better understand some of the risks and opportunities Civil Rights activists took?*
- 2. What is a memoir? How is it different from other types of sources? How might a person's later life experience and memories shape what is included in a memoir?*

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**Directions:** Read the text below. As you read, underline any phrases or sentences that strike you as particularly powerful or important. (Be prepared to share one of the phrases or sentences you underlined with the class.) Then, respond to the analysis questions after the passage.

*Anne Moody grew up in rural Mississippi as the daughter of two sharecroppers. She received a scholarship to go to a junior college and then went on to attend Tougaloo College outside of Jackson, Mississippi. While at Tougaloo she joined students who were engaged in the civil rights movement. Anne Moody wrote a memoir of her experiences, Coming of Age in Mississippi, that was published in 1968. This excerpt describes a May 28, 1963, protest she took part in.*

"I told them that we were all students at Tougaloo College, that we were represented by no particular organization, and that we planned to stay there even after the store closed. "All we want is service," was my reply to one of them. After they had finished probing for about twenty minutes, they were almost ready to leave.

At noon, students from a nearby white high school started pouring in to Woolworth's. When they first saw us they were sort of surprised. They didn't know how to react. A few started to heckle and the newsmen became interested again. Then the white students started chanting all kinds of anti-Negro slogans. We were called a little bit of everything. The rest of the seats except the three we were occupying had been roped off to prevent others from sitting down. A couple of the boys took one end of the rope and made it into a hangman's noose. Several attempts were made to put it around our necks. The crowds grew as more students and adults came in for lunch.

We kept our eyes straight forward and did not look at the crowd except for occasional glances to see what was going on. All of a sudden I saw a face I remembered—the drunkard from the bus station sit-in. My eyes lingered on him just long enough for us to recognize each other. Today he was drunk too, so I don't think he remembered where he had seen me before. He took out a knife, opened it, put it in his pocket, and then began to pace the floor. At this point, I told Memphis and Pearlina what was going on. Memphis suggested that we pray. We bowed our heads, and all hell broke loose."

#### Analysis Questions

1. Re-read the passage, and then describe three specific images that stand out to you from the text. Why did you choose each image? What do they show about the scene Moody describes?
  2. What does Anne tell the people that they want? Why would this matter so much to Anne and her classmates?
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3. What do you think is the goal of a sit-in? What would make a sit-in successful? What other ideas do you think Anne and her classmates might have discussed?
4. How does the excerpt from Anne Moody's memoir help you better understand some of the risks and opportunities Civil Rights activists took?
5. What is a memoir? How is it different from other types of sources? How might a person's later life experience and memories shape what is included in a memoir?