

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

by Christopher Paul Curtis
Official Book Review Contest
Enrollment Form

BOOK REVIEWS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY MIDNIGHT, Feb. 28, 2007

Although the Civil War ended in 1865, the post-war amendments to the United States Constitution and the equality they professed were not honored as Negroes had hoped. Racism remained a major issue in several parts of the country for many more decades. “Jim Crow” laws, that denied equal privileges to African-Americans, existed from the 1880s to the 1960s.

In 1946, Robert H. Jackson stated that personal rights existed as matters of law. While serving as a Supreme Court Justice, Jackson recognized the significance of civil rights issues, particularly in the unanimous 1954 decision whereby the Supreme Court held that segregated schools were unconstitutional. (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*)

Book Review Contest Theme

From your reading of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis, you learned that members of the Watson family were shocked to encounter racism en route to and during their stay in Alabama in 1963. Using the book as well as historic and present-day examples, explain how prejudice and discrimination deny individuals their basic civil rights.

Book Review Format...please follow these directions:

1. Your book review must be between 300 and 500 words in length.
2. Use complete sentences.
3. In your introduction, address the theme: How do prejudice and discrimination deny individuals their basic civil rights? Use examples from the book, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*, as well as historic and present-day examples to support your answer to this question. Your essay will be judged on how well you answer the question with specific examples, and on literary style, grammar and spelling.
4. Write two or three paragraphs that support your viewpoint. Be sure to include topic sentences and cite specific examples and/or quotes from *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963*.
5. In your conclusion, use a topic sentence to rephrase your belief. Also, explain the importance of Mr. Curtis’s book to you personally.

Winners

The six winners, selected from throughout New York State, will be notified by mail.

- Each of the six winners will be awarded a \$500 U.S. Savings Bond
- Each of the winners will be invited to meet author Christopher Paul Curtis at a banquet to be held at the Robert H. Jackson Center in Jamestown, New York on April 17th and during a presentation on April 18, 2007.
- Acceptance of the prize constitutes permission to use winner’s name, likeness and essay for public relations purposes without additional compensation or consent.
- Winning book reviews will be printed and distributed by the Robert H. Jackson Center and the New York Bar Association; neither organization is responsible for any liability associated with the acceptance of the prize package.

Sponsored by the Robert H. Jackson Center and the Law, Youth and Citizenship Program of the New York State Bar Association



Requirements

- You must be a 7th or 8th grade student in New York State.
- You must complete the “Book Review Contest Enrollment Form” below and staple it to your review.
- You must follow the “Book Review Format” (see above).
- Your review must be typewritten, double-spaced and be an original work of scholarship.
- All sources must be listed.
- Deadline will be strictly observed.

Book Review Submissions

Entries are to be submitted to your classroom teacher. Each participating *school* should select and send only the top three reviews. Please mail student entries and enrollment forms in one packet to:

Law, Youth & Citizenship Program
New York State Bar Association
One Elk Street
Albany, NY 12207

The envelope should indicate: *The Watsons Go to Birmingham-1963* Book Review Contest.

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Book Review Contest Enrollment Form

Student's Name: _____
Street Address: _____
City: _____ Zip code: _____
County: _____
Region (See Below): _____
Home phone: _____
School you attend: _____
School phone: _____
Current grade _____
Teacher's Name: _____

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Deadline

BOOK REVIEWS MUST BE POSTMARKED BY MIDNIGHT, Feb. 28, 2007

WINNERS WILL BE SELECTED BY MARCH 15, 2007.

Judging Criteria

The book reviews will be judged for content, organization, clarity and style. Be sure to develop the theme and carefully follow the contest directions. The judging panel will be comprised of teachers and educators selected by the Law, Youth & Citizenship Program of the New York State Bar Association. The decisions of the judges are final, and all entries become the property of the NYSBA Law, Youth and Citizenship Program and of the Robert H. Jackson Center. Immediate family members of the Jackson Center or its employees are ineligible.

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Regions

Region 1 Chautauqua County Niagara County	Erie County Cattaraugus County Orleans County	Genesee County Wyoming County Allegany County	Livingston County Monroe County
Region 2 Wayne County Ontario County Yates County Steuben County Seneca County	Schuyler County Tioga County Broome County Cayuga County Cortland County Onondaga County	Oswego County Jefferson County Lewis County Oneida County Madison County Chenango County	Herkimer County Otsego County Delaware County
Region 3 St. Lawrence County Franklin County Clinton County Hamilton County	Essex County Warren County Fulton County Montgomery County	Saratoga County Washington County Schenectady County Schoharie County	Albany County Rensselaer County Green County Columbia County
Region 4 Sullivan County	Ulster County Dutchess County	Orange County Putnam County	Rockland County Westchester County
Region 5	NYC		
Region 6	Nassau County	Suffolk County	

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