

WARRIORS DON'T CRY

MELBA PATILLO BEALS

PART ONE: DEFINING SEGREGATION

CHAPTER ONE

1. Describe 1-2 main characters so far. Who are they?
2. Who is narrating (telling) the story?
3. How did Melba get better from her childhood illnesses?
4. Describe where Melba grew up in 2-3 sentences.
5. Melba says in Chapter 1, "it's a white world" in Arkansas during the 1950s. List 2-4 events so far that might show exactly what she means.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Describe the setting (neighborhood, house, etc.) so far in the memoir.
2. What do you think is Melba's point of view? What motivates her to do things? Explain.
3. What is Melba's grade and what is her age in May 1954?
4. What does Grandma do that shocks Melba because Grandma always tries to save things?
5. Why doesn't Melba's family or the community call "the law" (the police) when Melba or others are targeted?
6. What big secret does Melba NOT tell her family?

CHAPTER THREE

1. Who goes with Melba to her new school? What do you think will happen next?
2. Who does Melba write to for comfort and guidance? Why do you think she writes to him?
3. What is Melba afraid will happen at her new school?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Should we confront racism?
2. What can individuals and groups do to confront racism?
3. What are the obstacles that get in the way of trying to change racism?

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PART TWO: BECOMING A "WARRIOR"

CHAPTER FOUR

1. How do Melba's neighbors respond to her going to her new school?
2. Was the first day at Central High a success? Explain. What might Melba say?
3. What are the pros if Melba goes back to Central High after day one? What are the cons?
4. Who calls Melba on the phone, if it wasn't the young man she likes (Vince)?

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Why, in this chapter, does Melba's grandmother allow her to wear makeup and dress nicely?
2. President Eisenhower wants the local Little Rock courts to do something about the federal troops at the school. What is that, and why does he want this to happen?

CHAPTER SIX

1. Why does the US federal government go to court in Arkansas anyway?
2. Why are Melba and the other eight African American students asked to go to court?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What types of media are included in Melba's story? Why does she include these types of media and information in the book?
2. What role do the media seem to play in the crisis? How important is that role?
3. What do you predict Melba's first day at school will be like?

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PART THREE: INSIDE CENTRAL HIGH

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. How does the group of people outside of Central High respond to the nine students arriving to school? What about when they try to leave school?
2. Who threatens to lynch, or hang, the African American students? Does anyone get lynched?
3. Was the second day at school a success? Why or why not? Explain.
4. What do the angry mobs do and say to the students and others?

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Who comes to assist the nine students? How do they try to help them?
2. Was deciding to go back to Central High an easy or difficult decision for Melba? Did she go in this chapter?
3. Do any adults from the school target the nine students? What do they do?
4. Do any adults from the school act as an ally? How so?
5. Do any adults from the school act as bystanders? Who? Does this hurt or help the integration?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are 2-3 ways different white students respond to integration at Central High?
2. What role does peer pressure play in how white students respond to African American students?
3. Melba says she feels both proud and sad when she is escorted into school by federal troops. What do these feelings say about who she thinks she is – as a citizen and as an individual?

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PART FOUR: RESPONSES TO DESEGREGATION

CHAPTER NINE

1. What decisions does Melba make about how to act so that she will be a stronger warrior?
2. What happens to Melba that the female clerk at school refuses to believe?
3. Danny suggests that Melba learn a very important skill. What is the skill? Do you agree she should learn the skill? Why or why not?

CHAPTER TEN

1. List 2-4 events that show how Melba is not feeling "normal" or how she wants to feel "normal."
2. Who was the first young man Melba dated?
3. How did her first date go?
4. Briefly describe one big way Melba is targeted at school in this chapter. Then describe one way others act as her ally.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

1. What does Melba do or tell herself so that she can become a warrior in this chapter?
2. Minnijean really wants white students to like her at Central High. What one thing does she feel she must do to gain their acceptance?
3. How do the other eight students feel about her plan?
4. What holiday does Melba experience twice in this chapter? Which version of the holiday does she enjoy more and why?

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. Who attends Melba's birthday, and how does it go?
2. How old is Melba turning?
3. What does Minnijean do in the cafeteria that gets her in trouble at school? Was her punishment fair? Why or why not?

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PART FIVE: RESPONSES TO HARASSMENT

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. List 1-2 examples of community support for Melba or the other eight African American students during this holiday vacation.
2. What was at least one of Melba's New Year's resolutions?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1. Describe 1-2 ways that the "segregationists" at Central High carefully plan, in a systematic way, how they will target Melba and the others. What do they plan to do? What do they do?
2. What are Melba's ideas about suicide in this chapter?
3. What advice does Grandma India give Melba about how to respond to her harassers?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1. Briefly describe TWO ways Link helps warn Melba about possible attacks and acts of hatred and discrimination.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why are other African American groups and individuals so negative and critical about the nine students' efforts to integrate Central High? How does this affect Melba?
2. Why do you think Link secretly helps Melba avoid or trick those who target her? What risks is Link taking by offering his friendship? What risks does Melba take in accepting and trusting his friendship?
3. Why are Melba's mother and grandmother suspicious of Link?

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PART SIX: LEGACIES

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

1. Does Melba trust Link or not? Explain.
2. Why does Link call Melba all upset? What does he complain about?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

1. Who is Mrs. Healy? How does Link feel about her? How does she feel about Link?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

1. Who is able to graduate in this final chapter?
2. What has to happen to make sure he can graduate without being targeted?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Link feel responsible for Mrs. Healy? Why do you think his parents do not feel as responsible for her welfare?
2. To what extent does Link take a stand against racism? Is he effective or not? Are his actions understandable if you think about racism in Little Rock during the 1950s? Do you agree with his actions?
3. The people at graduation clap for other graduates, but not for Ernest. Why do you think they are silent? How does that make you feel?
4. What have Melba and the other African American students achieved after all? How have they made a difference in Little Rock? In cities across the nation? To people around the world?
5. Why is Melba so committed to returning to Central in September? Would you go back?