

Advanced Placement Language and Composition Summer Assignment

Welcome to the class. Please complete the reading and writing assignment BEFORE the first day of school. You must be prepared for that first day – bring the book and Reading Journal with you.

Read the book *Warriors Don't Cry*, a memoir of the battle to integrate Central High, a high school in Little Rock, Arkansas, by Melba Pattillo Beals.

The book is available from a number of sources. You may find copies at Half Price Books, Barnes and Noble, or Amazon. There are more options, but the bottom line is you need to find a copy of the book as soon as possible.

Story Summary

In May of 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka et al* that racial segregation in the nation's public schools is unconstitutional. *Warriors Don't Cry* is a first-person account of one attempt to turn that ruling into a social reality. Melba Pattillo Beals was one of nine African American students chosen to desegregate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in the fall of 1957. Her memoir chronicles the terror and fear that marked her experiences and those of the other eight African American students who attended the high school that year. The book also documents their courage and determination.

Critical Responses to the Book

Warriors Don't Cry has received much critical acclaim. In 1995, the American Library Association chose the book for its annual Notable Book award. The New York Times described the book as "vivid and moving, a reminder, as [the author] writes, that 'the task that remains is to cope with our interdependence—to see ourselves reflected in every other human being and to respect and honor our differences.'" David Holmstrom, a critic for *The Christian Science Monitor* called it "a powerful, chilling account of what it was like to endure howling, redneck mobs, to be attacked physically and verbally, to be shot at, and to be continually hated and threatened." Donna L. Cole, a reviewer for the *Library Journal*, was particularly impressed with the way Melba Pattillo Beals "re-creates a time of fear and tenaciously held hopes. The horrors the nine black students faced are told in a teenager's voice, simply and sadly." Cole recommends the work as a "highly readable tale of courage that deserves to be read, especially by young people." Marvin Hoffman, a teacher and a reviewer for the *Houston Chronicle*, was struck by not only Beals's courage but also the choices she and others made at Central High School. He notes, "The teachers, who could have modeled the ultimate civics lesson by checking the violence, turned a blind eye to it instead. One white student risked himself by feeding her information about imminent attacks in nightly phone calls. A handful of soldiers and police officers protected her; their human faces provided momentary relief from the angry sneers of the mob. Otherwise, she endured alone."

Reading Journal Assignment

During her year at Central Rock, Melba Pattillo Beals kept a detailed diary of her experiences and feelings, and her mother kept a detailed record of news articles and events. As you read through her memoir, you will be keeping a reading journal. It will consist of specific entries based on sections of the reading. Each of your entries must contain specific references to details in the book and must focus on the assigned topics for that section. I must be able to tell that you have read and absorbed the material discussed in each section. Each journal entry should be 275-375 words (Focus on QUALITY thinking and writing).

Section 1: The Introduction

Choose one of the following roles and explain what it might be like to return to Central High so many years later: white student, black student, former teacher or administrator.

Section 2: pages 1-32

Discuss major influences (people or experiences) in Melba's life **and** their impact on her.

Section 3: pages 33-75

Explain how Melba becomes a "Warrior". Focus on the theme of family and commitment.

Section 4: pages 76-154

Choose one of the following topics- obedience and conformity, courage and commitment, or resilience and fortitude. Discuss the book's position on it using specific examples from the chapter (cite page number for each example you include).

Section 5: pages 155-end

"Integration is a bigger word than I thought."

What does this mean? Does the book offer any signs of change (if so what are they)?

What is the lasting impact of what went on in Little Rock on Melba?

What is the lasting impact on the Little Rock Nine?

What is the lasting impact on education in the United States?

Once you return for the school year, the class will discuss issues presented in the book so have the book with you on the first day of class. We will relate these experiences to the American dream as we delve into an analysis of what that dream truly looks like to each of you. The journal entries will be turned in on the first day of class.

Finally, bring back the **AP Contract**, signed by you and a parent/guardian, on the first day in order to show your commitment to the challenge that an AP course presents. Enjoy your summer.

Ben Baldus and Carol Swanson

Instructors

