



BOOK RESUME: TURNING 15 ON THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

BOOK SYNOPSIS

A memoir of the Civil Rights Movement from one of its youngest heroes--now in paperback will an all-new discussion guide.

As the youngest marcher in the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, Lynda Blackmon Lowery proved that young adults can be heroes. Jailed eleven times before her fifteenth birthday, Lowery fought alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. for the rights of African-Americans. In this memoir, she shows today's young readers what it means to fight nonviolently (even when the police are using violence, as in the Bloody Sunday protest) and how it felt to be part of changing American history.

Straightforward and inspiring, this beautifully illustrated memoir brings readers into the middle of the Civil Rights Movement, complementing Common Core classroom learning and bringing history alive for young readers.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

★ "In 1965, Lynda Blackmon Lowery turned 15 during the three-day voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery. In this vibrant memoir, Lowery's conversational voice effectively relates her experiences in the civil rights movement on and before that march. The youngest person on the march, she'd already been jailed nine times as a protester, once for six days and once in a hot, windowless "sweatbox" where all the girls passed out. At a protest on "Bloody Sunday," earlier in 1965, a state trooper beat her so badly she needed 35 stitches in her head. The terror of that beating haunted her on the march to Montgomery, but she gained confidence from facing her fear and joining forces with so many, including whites whose concern amazed her after a childhood of segregation. Lowery's simple, chronological narrative opens and closes with lyrics of freedom songs. Appendices discuss voting rights and briefly profile people who died on or around "Bloody Sunday." Double-page spread color illustrations between chapters, smaller retro-style color pictures and black-and-white photographs set in generous white space will appeal even to reluctant readers. Vivid details and the immediacy of Lowery's voice make this a valuable primary document as well as a pleasure to read."—*Kirkus*, starred review

★ "By the time I was fifteen years old, I had been in jail nine times. So opens Lowery's account of growing up in Selma, Alabama, during the troubled 1960s, as the African American community struggled for voting rights. At 13, Lynda and other students began slipping out of school to participate in marches. At 14, she was first arrested. After many peaceful protests, Lynda and others marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge into a violent attack by state troopers and sheriffs' deputies on what became known as Bloody Sunday. Though beaten on

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Title: Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom

Author: Lynda Blackmon Lowery with Elspeth Leacock and Susan Buckley; illustrated by PJ Loughran

Imprint: Dial Books

Publisher: Penguin Young Readers

On sale date: January 8, 2015

ISBN: 9780803741232 and 9780147512161

Format: Hardcover and Paperback

Age Range*: 12 Up

Grade Range: Gr 5 Up

(Recommended by *School Library Journal*)

*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

the head, she returned two weeks later for the march from Selma to Montgomery and the Voting Rights Act was passed later that year. The plain-spoken language of this memoir makes it all the more moving, while Lowery's detail-rich memories of her community, their shared purpose, and her own experiences make it particularly accessible to young readers. Illustrations include archival photos and original artwork that uses line and color expressively. A concluding page comments that the Supreme Court recently struck down part of the Voting Rights Act, and notes that who has the right to vote is still being decided today. This inspiring personal story illuminates pivotal events in America's history."—*Booklist*, starred review

★ "One of those rare books that is genuinely accessible to a broad audience."
—*BCCB*, starred review

"Lynda Blackmon Lowery's conversational tone is engaging and compelling as she shares her experiences as a young teen in the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama. Beaten badly on Bloody Sunday in Selma in early March of 1965, she went on to be the youngest person on the march from Selma to Montgomery for voting rights later that month. Lowery includes memories of her activism leading up to those events—she was jailed nine times—providing context and deeper understanding of her passion and commitment. Her courage did not preclude her from being fearful, and this is part of what she honestly details. A beautifully designed book also includes striking full-color graphic illustrations by PJ Loughran and archival black-and-white photographs. The volume concludes with an accounting of and tributes to those who died in the struggle in Alabama in early 1965 and more information about fight for voting rights, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and ongoing challenges to it."—*CCBC*

"Lowery offers a revealing look at a childhood spent in the midst of the civil rights movement. As a teenager, the Selma, Alabama, native was there to hear Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak out for black voting rights; she was tear-gassed and beaten on "Bloody Sunday" (as Lowery writes, in perhaps the understatement of the century, "It was not a good day to be around white people"); and she was among the three hundred people who marched from Selma to the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery in 1965. Lowery's voice is consistently engaging ("After that first time [in jail], I wasn't so afraid, because I was with my buddies and we knew we had each other's back. What we could do with each other's backs, I don't know. Those white policemen had billy clubs and guns") and casual even as she parcels out often-harrowing memories (such as her time spent in the jail's "sweatbox": "There was no air...There was no toilet...There was nothing but heat in an iron box"). Period photos are incorporated seamlessly into the book design, and Loughran captures the emotions of the times with boldly colored illustrations. An epilogue of sorts —"Why Voting Rights?"—gives an excellent explanation of the significance of the right to vote for African Americans while making mention of the Supreme Court's controversial 2013 changes to the Voting Rights Act. A strong addition to the canon of civil rights books for young people."—*The Horn Book*

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“One of the youngest participants in the 1965 voting rights march in Alabama, Lowery provides a moving first-person account of her experience. Through this thought-provoking volume, the picture of an incredibly courageous young woman emerges. Lowery effectively conveys the enormity of the injustices in her world and the danger that those she knew encountered daily. Lowery shows what people, including children, are capable of when they stand together. Readers will appreciate what the author endured, including being jailed nine times before she turned 15. Lowery includes many intricate details, such as what the marchers ate and where they slept. The illustrations are a mix of photographs and cartoonish drawings, which bring a graphic novel-like feel to this memoir. A concluding chapter explains the fight for voting rights and contains short biographies of those who died for the cause. This is an honest, powerful historical work, straight from the source.”—*School Library Journal*

“Lowery's dogged participation as a teen in the fight for equal civil rights"as told to Leacock and Buckley (collaborators on *Journeys for Freedom* and other titles)"offers a gripping story told in conversational language. "We learned the drill real quick: We went to jail, we came back out, and then we went to jail again.... Pretty soon we knew to take our own little bologna sandwiches... because jail food just wasn't good." The matter-of-fact tone often belies the danger Lowery and other protesting teenagers faced. Enhancing the narrative's appeal are Loughran's dramatic comics"style illustrations, which accompany archival photos. As the 1965 march to Montgomery drew closer, Lowery found herself in increasingly dangerous situations (e.g., the sweatbox in jail or being tear-gassed). Undeterred by fear, she joined the historic march, offering her description of what it was like as the youngest participant on the wet, four-day journey. In time to mark the march's 50th anniversary, this recounting informs and inspires. An afterword briefly explains U.S. segregation history and profiles people who lost their lives in connection with the march.”—*Publishers Weekly*

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- A Sibert Informational Book Medal Honor Book
- A Jane Addams Children’s Book Awards, Books for Older Children Winner
- A Junior Library Guild Selections, Biography Selection
- An NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People; History, Life, Culture in the Americas Selection
- A *Kirkus* Best Books of 2015
- A *Booklist* Editors' Choice 2015
- A BCCB Blue Ribbon 2015
- An ALSC Notable Children’s Books, Commended
- A CCBC Choices Selection
- Alabama Camellia Award, Grades 6-8 (Alabama)
- Delaware Diamonds Award, Grades 6-8 (Delaware)
- Delaware Diamonds Award, Grades 6-8 (Delaware)
- Georgia Children's Book Award, for Grades 4-8 (Georgia)
- Helen Ruffin Reading Bowl, for Grades 6-8 (Georgia)
- Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award, for Grades 4-8 (Illinois)

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- AISLE Read Alouds-Too-Good-to-Miss, High School List (Indiana)
- Previous Read Aloud Indiana (Indiana)
- Read Aloud Indiana Book Award (Indiana)
- Flicker Tale Children's Book Award-- Non-Fiction Books (North Dakota)
- Rhode Island Middle School Book Award, for Grades 6-8 (Rhode Island)
- Beehive Award, Informational, Grades 3-9 (Utah)
- Battle of the Books-- Elementary Division for Grades 4-6 (Wisconsin)

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Penguin Classroom Educator Guide](#)
- [TeachingBooks Meet-the-Author Recording](#)
- [ABC News Author Interview with Lynda Blackmon Lowery](#)
- [SouthFlorida.com Author Interview with Lynda Blackmon Lowery](#)
- [Library of Congress Interview with Susan Buckley](#)
- [Library of Congress Interview with Elspeth Leacock](#)
- [Library of Congress Interview with Lynda Blackmon Lowery](#)
- [NPR Author Interview with Lynda Blackmon Lowery](#)
- [SLJ Author Interview with Lynda Blackmon Lowery](#)
- [The Village Green Author Interview with Susan Buckley](#)
- [Utah Women's History Discussion Questions](#)
- [New Jersey Performing Arts Center Performance Teacher Resource Guide](#)

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