

THE FREEDOM RIDERS



1 Get ready

- What immediately strikes you when you look at this picture?
- Before reading it, say in two or three sentences what the following text may deal with.

2 A diary page

Read the extracts A to F from the *The Freedom Writers Diary* (1999). The paragraphs have been mixed up. Reorder them in chronological order. What clues helped you?

A Hundreds of them surrounded the bus, some carried bats or metal poles, and others held vicious German shepherds¹, growling and ready to attack these unarmed people. The mob² was just waiting to get their hands on the riders. The Freedom Riders were barricaded on the bus. The mob, armed and hungry to attack, was just waiting for their first victim to step off that bus.

1. *bergers allemands* 2. *foule (hostile)*

B There were seven Whites and six Blacks on the bus, most of them college students. They were called the Freedom Riders, and their goal was to change segregated interstate travel, along with everyone's life forever. The Freedom Riders had faith that what they were doing was right, and they wanted the world to know that change was necessary and that being tolerant of each other is good.

C Dear Diary,
I feel like I finally have a purpose in this class and in life. That purpose is to make a difference and stand up for a cause. Ms. G¹ showed us a video during Black History Month, about a group of Civil Rights activists, in the 1960s, who were inspired by Rosa Parks. They decided to challenge segregation in the South. Rather than boycott buses, they took their challenge a step farther. They integrated their bus and traveled from Washington, D.C., through the Deep South.

1. /mɪz/ or /mɔːz/ Gruwell is the teacher

D I can picture myself on the road with that bus. I can visualize pulling into the bus station in Montgomery, Alabama, to discover the unsettling quietness. Even though¹ they didn't expect a warm welcome, no one was to be seen at the station, not even the attendants. All of a sudden, Ku Klux Klan² members were everywhere.

1. *même si* 2. *organisation clandestine convaincue de la supériorité de la « race blanche »*

F He felt this was his chance to fight back, nonviolently, and show his feelings to others. These strong feelings put his life at risk. Jim took that first step off the bus, and the mob pulled him into their grasp. It was as if he had been swallowed up and disappeared, like bees on honey¹. Jim was almost beaten to death.

1. *miel*

E By choice, the seating arrangement on the bus was integrated: Blacks sat by Whites, and vice versa. They were breaking a law that had been established in the South. This was unheard of! Jim Zwerg, a white man, stood up from the back of the bus. He wanted to be the first person to step off, even though he knew at the other side of the door was a mob of bigots drooling for¹ a victim. What was he thinking?

1. *(ici) fanatiques à l'affût de*

3 Find the key information WB

Turn to your Workbook for help.

PREPARE YOUR TASK →

4 Storytelling

Group 1

- Who were the Freedom Riders?
- What were they fighting for? What was their final goal?
- What did they decide to do? What problem did they have to face?

Group 2

- Who is the narrator?
- Who does he side with? What clues in the text show who he sides with?
- What is the impact of the Freedom Riders' story on him? In what way has the story changed him?

5 Testimony

You are Jim Zwerg. A school has asked you to come over and speak about your experience. Explain the reasons why you got involved in the project and the problems you were confronted with.