



English I: Reading: Module 2: Lesson 2: Section 3

Synthesizing Ideas and Details from Several Texts

Supporting Your Connections

Instructions: Read the following selections. When you are finished, do the exercise that follows.

A Racial Divide Closes as Students Step Up

By Robbie Brown

ABBEVILLE, Ga.—Mareshia Rucker watched in frustration last weekend as several dozen classmates in tuxedos and gowns walked into an Art Deco theater for her high school’s “white prom.”

Like all black students at Wilcox County High School, she was not invited. The rural county in central Georgia is one of the last pockets in the country with racially segregated proms.

“These are people I see in class every day,” said Ms. Rucker, a senior, who hid in a parked car outside the prom. “What’s wrong with dancing with me, just because I have more pigment?”

But this weekend, after decades of separate proms for white students and black students, Wilcox County will have its first integrated prom.

Organized by students, it is open to all, at a ballroom in nearby Cordele. Nearly half of the school’s 380 students have registered, with roughly equal numbers of black students and white students.

A group of four female students—two black and two white—came up with the idea, and they have received an outpouring of support from across the country. Their Facebook group has 24,000 fans, and it has raised enough in donations to rent a ballroom and buy food and gift bags for every couple.

Disc jockeys from Texas and Atlanta volunteered to play music, a motivational speaker from Florida is delivering a speech, and photographers from New York and Savannah are taking pictures, all without cost. In response, the Wilcox County school board plans to vote this spring on making future proms official school events, which would prohibit racial segregation.

Although events sponsored by the public schools cannot issue invitations on the basis of race, the proms had been organized since 1971, when the schools were desegregated, as private, invitation-only events, sponsored by parents, not the school.

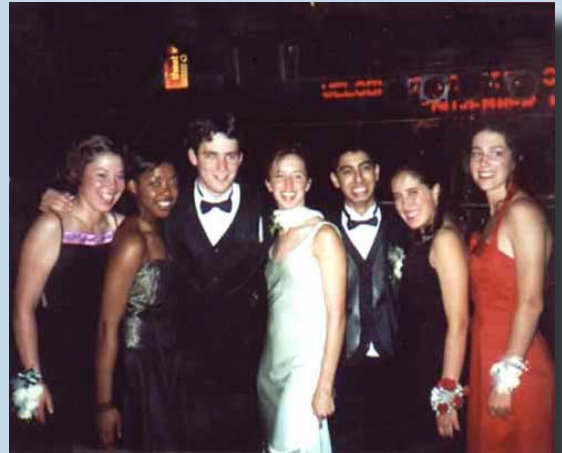
“Let’s face it: It’s 2013. Why are we even having this conversation?” asked Steven Smith, the school’s superintendent. “It became an embarrassment long ago.”

Leaders of the Georgia N.A.A.C.P. have called for the state to ban segregated proms. And the all-white prom has been ridiculed on social media.

But locally, the separate proms have defenders. White residents said members of the two races had different tastes in music and dancing, and different traditions: the junior class plans the white prom, and the senior class plans the black prom.

Wayne McGuinty, a furniture store owner and City Council member, who is white, said he had donated to fund-raising events for both proms in past years and saw no problem with separate proms. They do not reflect racism, he said, but simply different traditions and tastes. When he was a senior in high school, in the 1970s, he said, there were separate proms for those who liked rock music and country music.

“This whole issue has been blown out of proportion,” he said. “Nobody had a problem with having two proms until it got all this publicity.”



Source: BC2000, Knile, Flickr



Parents who organized the white prom declined to comment, as did students who attended.

Across the South, segregated proms have gradually faded away. In 2008, Charleston, Miss., held its first mixed-race prom after the actor Morgan Freeman, who grew up there, offered to pay for the event. In 2010, Montgomery County, Ga., stopped its segregated proms after they were featured in an article in the *New York Times Magazine*. Paul Saltzman, who directed a film about Charleston's desegregation, "Prom Night in Mississippi," said he did not know of any other proms that were still segregated. He praised Wilcox County students for breaking with tradition. "Young people see that the rest of the world doesn't do things this way," he said. "It's hard to stick your neck out when you're up against extreme belief."

In Wilcox County, where 62 percent of the people are white and 35 percent are black, the effort to integrate the prom has grown far beyond the four students: Ms. Rucker, Stephanie Sinnott, Keela Bloodworth and Quanesha Wallace. Many others have volunteered, selling barbecue chicken to raise money and stuffing gift bags.

"The adults should have done this many, many moons ago, but it had to be the kids," said Ms. Rucker's mother, Toni.

Mr. Smith, the superintendent, wrote a statement of support for the integrated prom, saying he considered it "an embarrassment to our schools and community that these events have portrayed us as bigoted in any way."

After the prom, the school will conduct a survey of students, and then a group of teachers and administrators will recommend a solution. Mr. Smith said he expected that the school would run the prom next year and open it to all students.

"I don't even like to say 'integrated' prom," he said. "I hope we'll be announcing soon that there's just one prom. The prom."

Here's a little background you might need for the second article. In 1971, the *Swann vs. Charlotte-Mecklinburg Board of Education* decision by the United States Supreme Court said that school districts could force students to be bused to schools outside of their neighborhoods to achieve a more diverse student body. That decision was eventually reversed and busing became voluntary, rather than mandatory, and many districts discontinued busing. The author of the article below was bused from her home in a predominantly white area of Charlotte, NC, to a predominantly white school.

What I Learned Was Worth the Commute By Page Leggett



Source: US School Bus, digitalsean, Flickr

I thought life would be like West Charlotte High School.

It hasn't been, which makes me exceedingly grateful for the three years—1980 to 1983—I spent at a fully integrated high school in an all-black neighborhood in Charlotte, N.C. I could have walked to Myers Park High, located in my own upscale neighborhood, but instead the bus came before sunrise to take me on an hour-long ride to the other side of town—in every sense of the phrase.

My parents' belief in public education was tested when I was in elementary school and the Supreme Court (*Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 1971) upheld a lower court decision to use busing to achieve school desegregation.



West Charlotte was a shock to my sensibilities. These kids who lived across town were like me in every way except for skin color. We became friends. And not just school friends. We went to each other's houses on weekends. We talked openly about race without fear of offending each other. We were learning how to be citizens of the world.

The teachers and staff at West Charlotte went to extraordinary lengths to ensure equality. We had a black and white homecoming queen. When "The King and I" was performed, there was a black Yul Brynner and a white Deborah Kerr one night, and the reverse the following night.

Many of us who were bused to West Charlotte feel like it was one of the luckiest experiences of our lives. That was before the 1999 decision that reversed the historic *Swann* case and led to a resegregated West Charlotte, plummeting graduation rates and soaring free lunch and drop-out rates.

Until life is like West Charlotte was in its heyday, children from different backgrounds need to be brought together to learn—and to learn about life. Even if it takes a cross-town bus to get them there.

School Dilemma



Source: Dorothy Counts, Toekneesan, Flickr

In 1957, fifteen-year-old Dorothy Geraldine Counts and three other students became the first African-American students to attend the previously all white Harding High School in Charlotte, North Carolina. They were greeted by angry white mobs who screamed obscenities and racial slurs at the African-American students. Counts's picture appeared in many newspapers as did others of black students attempting to attend white schools for the first time. Counts's family feared for her safety and withdrew her from Harding and sent her out of state to complete high school.

Now go to page 4 to complete an exercise that focuses on making connections among the texts that that you have just read.



Instructions: Use this section of the graphic organizer to make connections between the texts “A Racial Divide Closes as Students Step Up” (Text 1), “What I Learned Was Worth the Commute” (Text 2), and a “Racial Dilemma” (Text 3).

Determine the idea that the texts have in common and record it in the section labeled “Common idea.” Then, in the columns below, record the evidence from each text that supports the common idea.

To see sample responses to the items in the chart click on the “Suggested Responses” button.



Source: Diversity, kenfagerdotcom, Flickr

Common idea:

Text 1 Evidence	Text 2 Evidence	Text 3 Evidence

Suggested Responses



Common idea: Though racial integration began many years ago in the United States, it is still a work in progress.

Text 1 Evidence	Text 2 Evidence	Text 3 Evidence
A town in Georgia still has racially segregated proms.	West Charlotte, NC, schools are becoming more segregated, not less.	Racial slurs were shouted as the girl attempted to go to school.
The students who spend time in class together are friends.	The author realized that her black classmates were just like her.	Count's family feared for her safety and sent her out of state to complete high school.
Students worked together to finance an integrated prom so they could all celebrate together.	Spending time with people of other backgrounds helps people become "citizens of the world."	Angry white mobs gathered outside the school.
The school administration wants prom to be a school event so that it will have to be integrated in the future.	The teachers worked together to ensure equality in school activities.	