



#10104 WHITEWASH

WESTON WOODS STUDIOS, 1994
Grade Level: 5-10
25 mins.

DESCRIPTION

A street gang attacks Helene and her brother and spray-paints her face white. Helene is so traumatized, she stays home from school despite her grandmother's encouragement and love. Her shocked classmates voice their concerns and fears. Deciding to show their support, they go to her house and walk Helene to school. Animated version of a true event. Narrated by Ruby Dee and Linda Lavin. NOTE: Racial slurs.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Civics—What are the Basic Values and Principles of American Democracy?

- Standard: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society
 - ♦ Benchmark: Knows conflicts that are caused by diversity (e.g., unfair discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and gender; alienation of one group from another; efforts to impose beliefs and customs on others) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 1 and 2.)

Subject Area: Health

- Standard: Knows environmental and external factors that affect individual and community health
 - ♦ Benchmark: Understands how peer relationships affect health (e.g., name calling, prejudice, exclusiveness, discrimination, risk-taking behaviors) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 3.)

Subject Area: Language Arts—Reading

- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
 - ♦ Benchmark: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of familiar literary passages and texts (e.g., fairy tales, folktales, fiction, nonfiction, legends, fables, myths, poems, nursery rhymes, picture books, predictable books) (See INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS 4.)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To explore serious social issues, such as racism and hate crimes.
2. To illustrate a hate crime perpetrated against a young girl in the Bronx.
3. To show how hate crimes devastate the victim and the victim's family and friends.
4. To promote the reading of children's literature.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This program was inspired by actual incidents. Characters and certain events have been fictionalized.

VOCABULARY

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. actual | 6. incident | 11. thugs |
| 2. cruel | 7. injuries | 12. violence |
| 3. fictionalized | 8. niggers | 13. whitewash |
| 4. gang | 9. shoe polish | |
| 5. hate crimes | 10. terrified | |

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Discuss racism. Consider a variety of prejudices and stereotypes.
2. Define *hate crime*. Give examples of hate crimes. Explain that this video will show one hate crime and the devastating effects it had on the victim and her family.

DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Pause on the opening frame explaining that the video is based on actual incidents. Read and clarify the statement to be sure everyone understands.
3. Pause during the dream sequence. Identify this as Helene Angel's dream. Explain the auditory effect of the echoing voices.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Describe the opening scene in the classroom. Include your perceptions of Helene Angel and her classmates.
2. Who is Helene Angel waiting for by the fence after school? Why?
3. Describe what happens when the white gang stops Helene Angel and her brother on their way home. Discuss why hate crimes like this exist.
4. How do Helene Angel, her brother, and her grandmother feel after the hate crime? What does Helene Angel do?
5. Why are the newspaper and television people such a problem?
6. Discuss why Helene Angel's brother gets defensive with the policeman. Why does he get so upset when the policeman says, "All right, son"?

C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

7. How do Helene Angel's classmates respond to the hate crime? What are their suggestions and concerns? Why do they write letters to her?
8. Discuss why Helene Angel's brother is more interested in whether or not he is on TV than how the crime affected his sister?
9. How is Helene's grandmother able to cheer her up and put the crime in perspective?
10. What surprise does Helene Angel have the next morning? How does this make her feel?

Applications and Activities

1. Read the book *Whitewash* by Ntozake Shange. Compare the book to the video.
2. Research the real-life story which took place in the Bronx, New York, in 1992. Compare and contrast the real story to the version portrayed in the video.
3. Investigate other hate crimes to find out how common they are. Do they represent society at large or do a few incidents given intense media coverage make society seem worse than it is?
4. Write a journal entry about your feelings in response to the incident portrayed in the video.
5. Survey other students, family members, and people in the community about racism. Share and discuss the results. Consider the following questions:
 - a. Do you think racism or other prejudices are present in our school or community? Why?
 - b. Have you had a personal experience with racism in the last year? If so, what happened?
 - c. Do you think racial and ethnic relations will improve in the future or get worse? Why?
6. Research local hate crime laws and the specific penalties for various offenses. Discuss the findings. How you would feel if you were arrested or jailed for a hate crime?
7. Create a mural about the possible effects of racism and hate. Work cooperatively, share ideas, and discuss the meanings behind the images.
8. Research and report on famous people who worked hard to help others open their minds and accept new ideas. Consider:
 - a. Harriet Beecher Stowe.
 - b. Susan B. Anthony.
 - c. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - d. Caesar Chavez.
 - e. Jackie Robinson.
 - f. Robert F. Kennedy.
 - g. Mohandas Gandhi.
9. Role-play or write responses to situations involving racism or prejudice. Try to use respectful language to take a stand against racism. Possible situations include:
 - a. At lunch, one of your friends tells a joke insulting Jewish people. No one knows you are Jewish. Everyone laughs except you, so a friend asks what is wrong.

C a p t i o n e d M e d i a P r o g r a m

- b. You become friends with a new girl in class who is racially mixed. Your other friends don't like her. They make jokes and say hurtful things. One day she cries.
- c. Your cousin goes to a school that has conflicts between racial groups. He visits you and tells a racial joke his friends told him. You know his friends.

SUMMARY

One day, when Helene Angel walked home from school with her older brother, she was attacked by a racist gang and spray painted white. The effect on her and the rest of her family was devastating. The normally boisterous and happy young girl suddenly locked herself in her room and refused to return to school. Her brother blamed himself for not having successfully defended his sister. Media coverage was overwhelming, completely disrupting the small family. Finally their grandmother was able to put the terrible crime in perspective, and when Helene's entire class showed up at her door one morning so they could all walk to school together, she finally gathered the courage to resume her life. A magnificently animated story, based on a true 1992 incident, with the voices of Ruby Dee and Linda Lavin.

CMP RELATED RESOURCES

- *And You Can't Come: Prejudice Hurts* #3433
- *Last Breeze of Summer* #2669
- *The Jackie Robinson Story* #2191

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

• NTOZAKE SHANGE

<http://aalbc.com/authors/ntozake.htm>

Meet the author of this children's book. Sponsored by the African American Literature Book Club, this Web site lists all of this author's books and has links to several of her works, as well as black history and literature and more authors.



- **TEACHING TOLERANCE PROJECT**

<http://www.splcenter.org/center/tt/teach.jsp>

The Teaching Tolerance program produces teaching kits containing a video, a text, and a teacher's guide for grades K-12. The kits are shipped free to any school on request. Read more about this project on this Web site homepage and order a kit for your school.

- **ANTI-RACISM BOOKS FOR CHILDREN**

<http://www.newton.mec.edu/Franklin/Yes/RaceBooks.html>

Antibias literature kits created at Franklin Elementary school. Categorized by grade levels K-5, this is a Web site listing grade level appropriate material to promote the abolition of racism and prejudice. Each story has full-length lesson plans.

- **AFRICAN-AMERICAN BOOKS**

<http://www.embracingthechild.org/africanamerican.htm>

This is a lengthy but excellent resource of books written by and about Black Americans and their history. Many books listed have age levels for reader suitability. All links connect to amazon.com for purchase or further information.

- **WORLD CONFERENCE ON RACISM**

<http://www.un.org/WCAR/>

Homepage for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa in Sept. 2001. Contains basic information, documents, participants, conference coverage, a calendar of meetings, and an e-press kit.

