The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist

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Illustration: Mary Watson
Literature: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1

WORD WALL: CIVIL RIGHTS
Activist, freedom, integration, justice, movement, protest, segregation.

SYNOPSIS
Audrey Faye Hendricks wanted to help end segregation in Birmingham. Although she was young, she participated in the first youth march in the summer of 1963. Audrey was imprisoned for seven days. Audrey and the other children who marched that summer inspired youth protests all over the country.

DISCUSSION
Provide a historical summary: In 1963, hundreds of college students and students in the elementary, middle, and high school grades marched in the Birmingham Children's Crusade. They planned to peacefully walk downtown to talk to the mayor about the integration of schools for white and black children. The local police used fire hoses and police dogs to stop the march. Ask: Why do you think Audrey and other children marched despite the risks? Say: Some children were encouraged by community members, who told them that their generation would make a difference. Others wanted to gain a better education and the same school facilities and educational opportunities as white children.

GROUP ACTIVITY
Say: Let's pretend that we were in 1963 and we want to support the African American human rights movement. In groups, make picket signs like the ones Audrey and the other marchers used. The signs will protest against school segregation. Before we begin, we should review some rules that apply to protests today. The First Amendment protects the right to conduct a peaceful public assembly. But the government and your school can require students to follow the rules of the time, place, and manner of peaceful assembly. For example, in some cities, you may not use sticks to hold picket signs, for safety reasons. Your school has the right to prohibit offensive, threatening, and indecent words. You should consider all those who may see your signs, including younger children and students who may be hurt by the use of certain words or images.

AT-HOME ACTIVITY
Say: At home or your local library, you can research other civil rights activists like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Rosa Parks. Make sure to research their biographical information like when and where they were born. Try to find information about their family and the organizations they belong to. Lastly, find information about how they helped the civil rights movement. Compile all of this information into a profile about them and include drawings if you'd like. Encourage the students to bring their profiles back to class and display them in the classroom as a reminder of what good leadership looks like.

LEADERSHIP REQUIRES ENGAGEMENT
Leaders develop and dedicate their talents to promote the common good. This is where they choose to spend their time and effort. Leadership requires positive civic engagement. It is making sure that the communities I am part of are better because I am in them. And that I am better because of the communities I choose to be part of.

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