

## PART 5: Legacies



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### Central Question

- What are the legacies of the choices citizens make, individually and collectively?

### Student Outcomes

- Analyzes the legacies of the crisis in Little Rock
- Analyzes primary sources to identify point of view, attitude, and intent
- Creates a monument or memorial that highlights the lessons learned from the crisis in Little Rock

### Teaching Focus

Part 5 explores the legacies of the *Brown* decision in Little Rock and elsewhere by focusing on the consequences of the decisions people made over 50 years ago. Unlike earlier parts of this unit, Part 5 contains a variety of articles and speeches that reflect on this period in history. Each offers a unique perspective. The central activity in the unit is the creation of a special project that showcases what lessons students learned from the crisis and what work remains to be done.

### Lesson 1: Legacies

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**Materials:** Reproducibles 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, and 5.7

**Activity:** Remembering the Past

## Lesson 1: Legacies

**Central Question:** What are the legacies of the choices citizens make, individually and collectively?

### Getting Started

Ask students what lessons they learned from their study of the choices people made in Little Rock as a result of the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. What lessons do they think the people of Little Rock learned from the crisis over desegregation? What did the nation learn? Have students record their ideas in their notebooks or journals.

### Background Information

Historian Taylor Branch has called the Little Rock crisis “the most severe test of the Constitution since the Civil War.” In the more than 50 years since the *Brown* decision, much has changed in Little Rock and the nation. For example, although Central is still one of the nation's leading high schools, today it is an integrated school with an African American principal. While other cities in the country — both in the North and the South — have had more explosive racial problems over the years, Little Rock has continued to work toward uniting its people. It is also true, however, that much in Little Rock and the nation has not changed. Legal scholar Jamin Raskin notes that “in many parts of America, there are 100 percent white suburban schools and 100 percent black or minority schools, and they are all perfectly lawful because the segregation is not commanded by the state.”<sup>13</sup> In 1980, 63 percent of African American students attended mainly minority schools; by 1998, the figure was 70 percent.

### Activity: Remembering the Past

As a culminating activity, ask students to create a project that reflects what they learned from this unit about the way the government reacted and the role of ordinary citizens in that government. Their project could be a series of lessons that teach children, like the ones in Jane Elliot's classroom, about what it means to live in a diverse nation. Or students might design a monument or memorial. Remind them that a memorial does not have to be a building. It can be a website, mural, documentary, poem, story, or even a special service. These projects can be done alone, with a partner, or in small groups. In planning their project, students should begin by answering the following questions:

- What is the subject of your project?
- What do you want people to know or feel or explore?
- Whose story will be told and why?
- Who is your audience?
- What will visitors, viewers, or readers learn from the experience?

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<sup>13</sup> Diana E. Hess, “Deconstructing the Brown Myth”. *Rethinking Schools*, Spring 2004, p. 9.

Explain that Maya Lin considered these questions in creating a memorial to those who participated in the Civil Rights Movement. Encourage students to visit her memorial virtually by going to <http://www.splcenter.org/crm/memorial.jsp> and discuss how she answered each question. You may wish to point out that a Civil Rights Memorial Center is being constructed near the memorial. It will house exhibits on the Civil Rights Movement, a theater, and classrooms for educational activities. Ask students why they think the new building was needed. What will it offer visitors that they cannot learn from the memorial? You may also wish to have students visit [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org) for examples of other memorials and/or to view monuments created by other Facing History students. Both sets of examples can be found in the Campus section of the website in the online module entitled “Memory, History & Memorials.”

As students think about their project, you may wish to assign all or some of the reproducibles in this part of the unit (5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6) to help think about the way various individuals and groups have thought about this history. One way to do so is by creating a jigsaw activity in which students read one reproducible and then share it with students who have read one of the other four.

Have students use the reproducibles and what they learned from this unit to design a project that reflects what they have learned from this unit about the role of government in a society or about civil rights and civic responsibilities. Each project should be accompanied by an explanatory paragraph. The paragraph should answer the following questions:

- What is the subject of the project?
- Whose story does it tell and why?
- Who is the expected audience?
- What will that audience learn from the experience?

You may wish to use **Reproducible 5.7** to guide the process.

**Reproducible 5.1****Page 1 of 2****What Has Changed? What Has Not Changed?**

Joan I. Duffy, a reporter for the Little Rock Bureau of the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, wrote in 1997:

The Little Rock School Board voted to close the city's four high schools for the 1958–1959 school year, sending thousands of families scrambling to find alternative education for their children....

No one knows how many students, unable to find an alternative school after the closure, dropped out and never came back. Newspaper accounts of the time described a rash of moving vans taking families out of Little Rock in search of schools.

"Some 3,700 children of high school age have been affected by closings, 700 of them Negroes," a United Press International dispatch reported....

Several churches cobbled together classes and a private, all-white school enrolled 917.

Closing the schools and the "purge" of 44 teachers by the school board for perceived support of integration ignited the outrage of Little Rock's moderates. They were led by 76-year-old Adolphine Fletcher Terry, a civicly active society matron who had organized the city's public library system. She organized an army of 2,000 women — all of them white. By spring of 1959, a recall movement ousted three segregationists from the school board and replaced them with moderates. The schools re-opened in the fall of 1959.\*

Rett Tucker, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, told Duffy, "Historians say that was the end of it, but you and I know we've been dealing with it ever since." *U.S. News & World Report* revealed some of what the school, the city, and the nation have been "dealing with" ever since.

In some ways, Central High stands as a model of desegregation's success. The once all-white student body is now 58 percent black and 39 percent white. The school produces many of the state's brightest students, black and white, and sends them on to the nation's best universities. Over the past decade, of Arkansas's 32 black National Merit semifinalists, 15 have come from Central High....

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\* Joan I. Duffy, "A Reunion with History: Central High Will Observe 1957's Rite of Passage" *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, September 21, 1997. Excerpt used with permission.

**Reproducible 5.1****Page 2 of 2**

At Central High School, the honors classes are mainly white. The regular classes are primarily African American. No one seems sure why this is so. Some think it is due to racism. Others attribute it to the poor academic preparation of incoming black students. The article goes on to note:

The racial makeup of classrooms reinforces self-segregation in other parts of school life. Many black students walk or take the bus to school and enter through the school's front doors. Most white students drive cars and come in a side door near the parking lot. Most black students eat lunch inside, near the hot lunch line, while white students eat outside, near the concession stand. And even though most Central High students generally say they have friends of different races, they acknowledge that for the most part they hang out with friends from their neighborhood, their junior high, or their classes.\*

1. How has Central High School changed since 1957? How has your school and others in your community changed since 1957?
2. In what respects has Central High School stayed the same?
3. What is self-segregation? How is it like the segregation of the past? How is it different?
4. What part does race play in segregation? In self-segregation? How do both shape identity?

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**Reproducible 5.2****Little Rock Nine Recognized for Heroism**

In 1999, each of the Little Rock Nine received the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress's highest civilian honor for their "selfless heroism" during the crisis atmosphere of 1957. At a White House ceremony to mark the occasion, various individuals commented on the award. As you read their comments, decide whose views are closest to your own. If you had been at the ceremony, what questions would you have asked? What would you have wanted guests to know?

**Ernest Green**

"The last 42 years represent a commitment that none of us had any idea would result in this. We were really ordinary people.... It has been a long journey, but I think each of us would consider it worthwhile. While the sacrifices have been great, we recognized in 1957 that it was not an easy journey."

**Former Arkansas Senator Dale Bumpers**

"A lot of people do laudable things, and some people do sort of brave things, but very few people do truly historic things — and heroic. These nine children were asked to be both brave and heroic, and they were. Their place in history is finally etched and will never be erased."

**President Bill Clinton**

"[These nine teenagers] taught us that you can turn your cheek from violence without averting your eyes to injustice. And they taught us that they could pay their price and go on."

**Arkansas Senator Tim Hutchinson**

"The nine gave meaning to the Constitution. They quietly but resolutely persevered, and their courage forced this nation to come to terms with the incongruity [absurdity] of revering the Declaration of Independence while simultaneously denying the fundamental truth that all men are created equal."

**Arkansas Senator Blanche Lincoln**

"There is no question in my mind that my life is more productive because of what you did.... Thank you for having the personal fortitude to endure so people like me could come behind you."\*

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\* *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, November 10, 1999.

**Reproducible 5.3****Page 1 of 2****Remembering the Past**

In 1997, a Central High School Visitor Center opened across the street from Central High School in an old gas station. A reporter described the center:

It features exhibits about the confrontation between Faubus and Eisenhower and about the campaign of abuse waged against the black students once they entered the school. Students were regularly spat upon and body-slammed into lockers. Broken glass was left on shower floors.

The exhibit also includes a black-and-white photograph of Ernest Green, the only senior among the Nine, in his cap and gown at his graduation ceremony, where the announcement of his name was greeted with silence. It concludes with a color photograph of smiling students at last year's highly integrated commencement.

The nine former students are now spread across the world. They are writers and accountants and professors and real estate agents....

Daisy Bates, the NAACP leader who served as a mentor to the students, still lives in the house where the students gathered in the weeks they were prevented from going to school. Though a stroke has slurred her speech and limited her hearing, she remembers the events of 40 years ago with clarity.

"I knew by going through this that it would help the children of that time and the children of this time too," said Mrs. Bates, now in her 80s.

Because the history is still so raw, and because many of the participants are still alive, the commemoration makes many here uneasy. Some black residents fear that it may close a chapter prematurely. Some whites dread the rehashing of memories that they would like to see buried.

Craig Rains, a member of Central's Class of 1958 and now a prominent public relations consultant, left town for three days this month after *The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* reprinted a page from 1957 that quoted him declaring his support for segregation.

Rains underwent something of an epiphany [a sudden realization or understanding] after watching his classmates verbally abuse Ms. Eckford during the first week of the integration crisis. He now lives in a racially mixed neighborhood and serves on the commission planning the commemoration.

Joan Adcock, another white member of the class and now a member of the Little Rock City Board, worries about the classmates whose children and grandchildren may see them in unflattering photographs at the visitor center.

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**Reproducible 5.3****Page 2 of 2**

“We shouldn’t have to be responsible in our 50s for things we did as teen-agers,” Ms. Adcock said. “We grow up. Some of those people have come forward publicly and said how ashamed they are.”

[Melba Pattillo] Beals, one of the Little Rock Nine, does not buy that rationale. “Their grandchildren might see who they were back then and then celebrate their growth,” she said. “What would they have us do, deny that it happened?”

Today’s Central High students are acutely aware of the history of their school, and many attribute its academic achievements to an intense motivation to overcome the past.

“We take the torch we got from the Little Rock Nine and we pass it from class to class,” said Ms. McKindra, the student body president.

She and other students said that race relations were congenial at the school but that blacks and whites divided up in social settings. White students, for the most part, eat lunch at picnic tables outside. Black students, for the most part, eat in the cafeteria.

“There was a pep rally last week and I looked up at the seniors, and all the whites were sitting together and all the blacks were sitting together,” said Derrick Floyd, a black senior and star basketball player. “I said to myself, ‘Why aren’t we all sitting together?’”\*

1. Who or what do the exhibits at the Visitor’s Center commemorate and why?
2. What is the purpose of the exhibits?
3. Whose story is told and why?
4. Who will visit the center?
5. What do visitors learn from the exhibits?
6. What would you add to their learning? What lessons would you stress?
7. How would you answer the question Derrick Floyd raises at the end of the article?

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**Reproducible 5.4****Page 1 of 3****President Bill Clinton's Remarks**

On September 25, 1997, President Bill Clinton spoke at Central High School to mark the 40th anniversary of the integration of the school. As you read, underline the way he answers the following questions:

- Who is he honoring and why?
- Whose story is he telling?
- What has he learned from his story?
- What does he want his audience to learn from the story?

Forty years ago, a single image first seared the heart and stirred the conscience of our nation. So powerful, most of us who saw it then recall it still. A 15-year-old girl, wearing a crisp black and white dress, carrying only a notebook, surrounded by large crowds of boys and girls, men and women, soldiers and police officers. Her head held high, her eyes fixed straight ahead. And she is utterly alone.

On September 4, 1957, Elizabeth Eckford walked through this door for her first day of school, utterly alone. She was turned away by people who were afraid of change, instructed by ignorance, hating what they simply could not understand... Elizabeth Eckford, along with her eight schoolmates, were turned away on September 4th, but the Little Rock Nine did not turn back. Forty years ago today, they climbed these steps, passed through this door and moved our nation. And for that, we must all thank them.

Today, we honor those who made it possible, their parents first. As Eleanor Roosevelt said of them, to give your child for a cause is even harder than to give yourself. To honor my friend Daisy Bates and Wiley Branton and Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP and all who guided these children.

To honor President Eisenhower, Attorney General Brownell and the men of the 101st Airborne who enforced the Constitution; to honor every student, every teacher, every minister, every Little Rock resident, black or white, who offered a word of kindness, a glance of respect or a hand of friendship; to honor those who gave us the opportunity to be part of this day, a celebration and rededication.

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**Reproducible 5.4****Page 2 of 3**

But most of all, we come to honor the Little Rock Nine. Most of those who just watched these events unfold can never understand fully the sacrifice they made. Imagine, all of you, what it would be like to come to school one day and be shoved against lockers, tripped down stairways, taunted day after day by your classmates, to go all through school with no hope of going to a school play or being on a basketball team, or learning in simple peace....

But let me tell you something else that was true about that time. Before Little Rock, for me and other white children, the struggles of black people, whether we were sympathetic or hostile to them, were mostly background music in our normal, self-absorbed lives. We were all, like you, more concerned about our friends and our lives day in and day out. But then we saw what was happening in our own backyard, and we all had to deal with it. Where did we stand? What did we believe? How did we want to live? It was Little Rock that made racial equality a driving obsession in my life....

Well, 40 years later we know that we all benefit, all of us, when we learn together, work together and come together. That is, after all, what it means to be an American. Forty years later, we know, notwithstanding some cynics, that all our children can learn, and this school proves it.

Forty years later, we know when the Constitutional rights of our citizens are threatened, the national government must guarantee them. Talk is fine, but when they are threatened, you need strong laws, faithfully enforced, and upheld by independent courts.

Forty years later we know there are still more doors to be opened, doors to be opened wider, doors we have to keep from being shut again now.

Forty years later we know freedom and equality cannot be realized without responsibility for self, family and the duties of citizenship, or without a commitment to building a community of shared destiny, and a genuine sense of belonging.

Forty years later, we know the question of race is more complex and more important than ever, embracing no longer just blacks and whites, or blacks and whites and Hispanics and Native Americans, but now people from all parts of the Earth coming here to redeem the promise of America.

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**Reproducible 5.4****Page 3 of 3**

Forty years later, frankly, we know we are bound to come back where we started. After all the weary years and silent tears, after all the stony roads and bitter roads, the question of race is, in the end, still an affair of the heart.

But ... if these are lessons, what do we have to do? First, we must all reconcile [settle our differences]. Then, we must all face the facts of today; and finally, we must act....

And what are the facts?

It is a fact, my fellow Americans, that there are still too many places where opportunity for education and work are not equal, where disintegration of family and neighborhood make it more difficult....

There is still discrimination in America.

There are still people who can't get over it, who can't let it go, who can't go through the day unless they have somebody else to look down on. And it manifests itself in our streets and in our neighborhoods, and in the workplace, and in the schools. And it is wrong. And we have to keep working on it, not just with our voices, but with our laws. And we have to engage each other in it....

We have to decide ... all you young people have to decide, will we stand as a shining example or a stunning rebuke to the world of tomorrow? For the alternative to integration is not isolation or a new Separate but Equal, it is disintegration.

Only the American idea is strong enough to hold us together. We believe — whether our ancestors came here in slave ships or on the *Mayflower*, whether they came through the portals [gates] of Ellis Island or on a plane to San Francisco, whether they have been here for thousands of years, we believe that every individual possesses a spark of possibility....

... We must be one America. The Little Rock Nine taught us that....

We have to act. All of us have to act, each of us has to do something, especially our young people must seek out people who are different from themselves and speak freely and frankly to discover they share the same dreams.

**Reproducible 5.5****Governor Mike Huckabee's Remarks**

On September 25, 1997, Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee also spoke at Central High School to mark the 40th anniversary of the integration of the school. What idea does he emphasize in his speech?

Some have asked: how long are we going to deal with this Central crisis situation? Are we going to have to relive it every few years? ...

Well, let me tell you how long we will deal with it — until justice is the same for every human being whether he or she is black or white, we will deal with it. Until the same rules apply to get a bank loan for every person regardless of who he or she is, we will deal with it. As long as there are whites who turn around and see a black person coming and bring fear to their hearts, we will deal with it. And as long as there are blacks who look and see and have resentment toward a white person, we will deal with it. We will deal with it until the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King lives in all of our hearts, and that is that we will judge people by the character of their hearts and not by the color of their skin....

Today, as we dedicate the Little Rock Central Visitor Center, I will tell you that last Friday my daughter and I went there. We walked through that exhibit and it brought memories to me of the time when Sarah was 11 and we went through Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to visit that incredible place that is dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust — another one of our history's horrors. And as we went through Yad Vashem, she saw the pictures of the horrible treatment and of the extraordinary injustices of the evil that was marked by that time. I never will forget when we came to the end of that exhibit and there at the guest book ... was a space for comments.

As long as I live I will remember as my daughter paused and then wrote words that will forever be in my mind. She wrote simple words. I wondered as we went through it, did she understand the message of it, did she get it? If there was any doubt, it was erased as I looked at those words. Because those words simply said, "Why didn't somebody do something? Why didn't somebody do something?"

In silence, we left and I knew she got it. Today, as the world once again revisits Little Rock and the great state of Arkansas and its great people, I hope that never, ever, ever does someone have to ask why didn't someone do something. As for those who go through that visitor center and may ask why didn't someone do something, I hope they will take a good, long look and realize that today we celebrate nine people who did do something.

**Reproducible 5.6****Page 1 of 3****Did the *Brown* Decision Make a Difference?**

In 2004, Americans marked the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. the Board of Education*. *Teaching Tolerance* interviewed a number of prominent people about the legacies of *Brown*. One of the questions was: **Are students better off today than before *Brown v. Board*?** As you read a few responses, think about how they apply to you, your school, and your community.

**Cheryl Brown Henderson**, a daughter of the late Reverend Oliver Brown, the namesake of *Brown v. Board of Education*

Yes, all people have in some ways benefited from this decision. Although issues of achievement persist, they are born largely from poverty and schools within certain areas that lack basic resources to accommodate students whose backgrounds have left them behind in terms of preparation for formal education.

It requires a greater investment of teacher talent, fiscal resources, access to technology, mentors and individualized attention to close the gap for students in this situation.

Ultimately the *Brown* decision afforded all citizens more choice and freedom in their daily lives. *Brown* set legal precedent for other cases heard by the Supreme Court as well as civil rights legislation (that) focuses on race and gender equity.

**Reg Weaver** is a former middle school science teacher and president of the National Education Association.

The opportunities to learn are certainly broader today than in 1954. We have made progress in boosting the academic achievement of African American students.

Between the mid-1970s and the end of the past century, black high school students raised their graduation rates to 80 percent and increased their college enrollment rate by more than 40 percent, and they had the single largest improvement of any ethnic group in reading scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the nation's report card.

Educational possibilities have opened up not just for African American students, but also for all students regardless of color, gender, income, geography, special needs, native language, or immigration status.

School integration has enriched the educational experience of all of our children by teaching them to understand and appreciate diversity.

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**Reproducible 5.6****Page 2 of 3**

Even though [segregation] in our schools is dead, the reality is that millions of African American, Hispanic, and other minority children still go to segregated schools and receive an education inferior to that received by most white children. Many schools in urban and rural areas are in critical condition — buildings are crumbling and overcrowded, too many teachers are uncertified, class sizes are too large, and student achievement is dismally low.

Several years ago, I did an exchange between my students in Harvey, Ill. and students in a public school in a wealthier Chicago suburb called Naperville. My students were shocked to learn what the Naperville school had: air conditioning, no water pipes breaking, clean bathrooms that work, security, a gym, a nice cafeteria. And when these children finished visiting this terrific school and community, they asked me, “Do we have to go back where we live? Why can’t our school and neighborhood be like this?”

At suburban schools across the country, children of every race and ethnicity walk through the same front door. But, too often, they walk down different corridors — and sit in separate classrooms. Too often, minority children find themselves in special education and non-college-bound classes. Many minority students are still not graduating with diplomas and are dropping out of high school in disproportionate numbers. For many children, the reality is still separate and unequal....

Are students better off today? In many ways, yes, but we still have not fulfilled the promise of *Brown* by providing every child the opportunity to attend a great public school.

**Juan Williams**, journalist and author of *Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Years, 1954–1965*.

Today black and Latino students live in a different America than the nation that existed at the time of *Brown*. The nation’s neighborhoods and public schools are more segregated in many areas than they were before *Brown*.

In the big cities, especially in the Northeast and the Midwest, there is a far higher number of black and Hispanic students. At the same time, white families and their children have left urban neighborhoods and schools. The result is that most black and Latino students are in schools that are made up of mostly minority students. In addition, the schools under the most pressure to deal with poverty’s impact on children are usually those minority-dominated schools in the cities.

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**Reproducible 5.6****Page 3 of 3**

But I would argue that even those students are better off than before *Brown*. Spending on those schools is far higher than the spending on segregated black public elementary and secondary schools before *Brown*.

The cultural acceptance of inferior schools for black and brown children is gone. Americans know this is wrong. The problem is that people close their eyes. But legal action and public policy arguments rage today over how to improve those schools. That is why the controversy over vouchers, charter schools and the use of magnet schools is at the center of any discussion of public education in America today. In addition, don't forget the public schools outside those big cities. Hispanic and black students are in those schools today. Fifty years ago their attendance would not have been possible.\*

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\*This essay originally appeared in *Teaching Tolerance* magazine (*Teaching Tolerance*, no. 25, Spring 2004). Reprinted with permission.



**Reproducible 5.7****Planning a Project**

In planning your project, you may wish to work alone, with a partner, or in a team. Begin by deciding what individual, idea, or event you would like to remember and why.

If you decide to build a monument:

- Sketch possible ideas for your monument on paper or in clay. You may want to research possible images for your monument before choosing a design.
- Once you have decided on an appropriate design, choose the building materials for your monument and select an appropriate site for the completed work.
- Build a three-dimensional model of your monument and then write a short essay explaining the concept behind your monument and the process involved in creating it. The following questions may help you organize your thoughts:
  - What is the title of the monument?
  - What prompted you to create this particular monument?
  - What are the ideas underlying your monument?
  - Describe the details of your monument that you think are the most powerful or important.
  - Where would you like your monument to stand? Why did you choose this setting?
  - How do you hope people will respond to your monument?

Share your essay and your monument with your classmates. Discuss the process as well as the final product. What did you learn about yourself and the memories that shape your identity?

If you decide to build a website or an exhibition, write a story or a poem, or create a set of lessons, the process is similar:

- What is your main idea? What do you want people to know, experience, or feel?
- Brainstorm ways that you can share that idea with others.
- Once you have decided on a project, decide on the elements that you will include in it. For example, if it is a set of lessons, how will you divide them? What will you teach first, second, and so on? If it's a website, what stories or images will it include? How will users navigate the site?
- Create a rough draft of your project. Ask friends to look it over and make suggestions. What can you do to make it more powerful? More interesting? Easier to read?
- Create your project and then write a short essay explaining what prompted you to create this particular project. How do you hope people will respond to it?