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March Forward, Girl: From Young Warrior to Little Rock Nine

Lisi Merkley

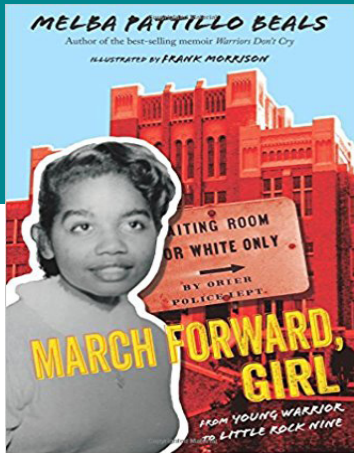
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Book Review

March Forward, Girl: From Young Warrior to Little Rock Nine

Author

Melba Pattillo Beals

Illustrator

Frank Morrison

Reviewer

Lisi Hong

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

224

Year

2018

Publisher

HMH Books for Young

ISBN

9780062498755

Though Melba is smart, capable, and kind, her black skin curses her to a life of less in segregationist Little Rock, Arkansas. From a young age, she noticed that separate wasn't really equal. She saw the signs at every corner that said "whites only" and watched as the adults, who were supposed to protect her, submissively stood back and let bad things happen to "their people." The more she witnessed the abuses towards blacks, the more she knew she needed to do something. Through these experiences as a child, Melba gained the strength and patience needed to become one of the nine high schoolers, known as the Little Rock Nine, who were the first to integrate into a white high school in Arkansas.

March Forward, Girl is a very real memoir of childhood in the Jim Crow South. For junior high students, this book will open their eyes to the realities of segregation. It outlines the fear and mistreatment African Americans endured, and from the perspective of a child, it is powerful. Melba identifies the lack of equality early on in her life, and from then on, struggles with her inability to make a difference without inciting the wrath of the Ku Klux Klan. The writing itself isn't particularly beautiful or flowery, but the simplistic, clear style allows the message of the need for equality to hit home without any roadblocks. Melba does describe a hanging in her church and a situation where she was almost raped, but both events help the reader understand what life was really like in the 1950s in Arkansas without going into too much detail for younger readers. This is a wonderful book to learn about the life of an African American girl during segregation.

*Contains mild sexual content and moderate violence.