March: Book One

John Robert Lewis grew up in the segregated American South and his desire for an education led him to becoming one of the organizers of the first lunch counter sit-ins and participating in marches for equality. The memoir flashes between his childhood years and the year of Barack Obama’s inauguration as President of the US. This award-winning memoir in graphic novel format describes events in an accurate and clear fashion and the clearly drawn illustrations capture the emotion and significance of the conflict-filled era. The themes of equality, acceptance, and non-violence can launch discussion of civil rights movements, non-violent protest, and rebellion and revolution. Social considerations noted.

CURRICULUM FIT

Does the resource support BC curriculum? Extensively

This product supports the Core Competencies of the BC curriculum:

- Creative Thinking
- Critical thinking
- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

Comments:
Because this graphic novel is about racial segregation and the civil rights movement, the SS Big Idea that "world views lead to different perspectives and ideas about developments in Canadian society" is appropriate. In ELA, the Big Idea that "the exploration of text and story deepens our understanding of diverse, complex ideas about identity, others and the world" is illustrated through this historically depicted moment in American history.
### SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

**Age:** At one point during the civil rights movement in the American south, the protagonist feels that there is not only a race divide, but also a generational divide whereby older African Americans are too willing to settle too easily for an unacceptable compromise in the fight for equality.

**Gender Roles, Identity & Sexual Orientation:** A male character calls a female character "little lady".

**Multiculturalism:** Each building, social gathering place, is defined as either white only, black, or interracial. The novel centres on the segregated American south. Blacks were forced to ride in different areas on the buses and sit in the balcony if attending a desegregated church.

**Belief System:** There are references to segregated churches.

**Violence:** Honest descriptions of the methodology for killing chickens are depicted in writing and in art. Participants at the non-violent sit-ins at segregated lunch counters are beaten. There is a clash on the Edmund Pettus Bridge where black protesters are met by white police. There is a graphic visualization of Emmett Till's mutilated body.

**Ethical:** Emmett Till, a black man, is murdered by a group of white men because they overhear him call a white woman "baby". The all-white jury acquits the defendants, despite evidence that should have convicted them. Later, the guilty men admit what they did because they know they can't be tried again. The book is based on the non-violent protests in the American south where interracial student groups attempt to change segregation laws by sitting at lunch counters. Essentially, these groups are breaking the law of the day. These protesters are arrested and sent to jail for holding sit-ins at segregated lunch counters.

**Safety:** The protestors are aware and train for the inevitability that they will be attacked by outsiders, despite the protestors' non-violent intentions.

**Language:** Words such as "nigger", "negro", "nigra", "son of a bitch", "coloured" are used to try to dehumanize and segregate the two populations. Characters are told to go back to Africa.

### Social Considerations Comments:

Do the social considerations support, rather than detract from, student learning? Extensively

Because this book is a memoir of a major character's actions during the American Civil Rights movement, the social considerations are necessary for an accurate depiction of the times. There is no gratuitous violence or language. The protesters intended non-violent action.

### GENERAL CONTENT

**Content:**

Is the resource engaging? Extensively
### GENERAL CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the content current for the intended curriculum and grade?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the content accurate for the intended curriculum and grade?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the content timely and important for student broad understandings?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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**Audience:**

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<th>Question</th>
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<td>Is the content appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the resource provide opportunities for creative and critical thinking?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the level of detail appropriate?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the language use appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are the visuals appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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**Comments:**

As a standard graphic novel, the reading level and content cannot be differentiated and adjusted. Given the historically sensitive nature of the content, nothing is overblown. Further, given the modern political reality in the US this novel is extremely relevant as a reminder of what could happen if history isn't heeded. For junior ELA students, some background on African American derogatory terms and its usage might be necessary for them to understand its implications.

### TECHNICAL DESIGN

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<tr>
<td>Does the resource make effective use of the medium?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<td>Is the location of illustrations appropriate?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the resource easy to use?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the use of font, text size and presentation uniform?</td>
<td>Moderately</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are extraneous elements/illustrations kept to a minimum?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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**Comments:**

As a graphic novel, the illustrations are necessary for furthering the story. They capture atmosphere and develop conflict by using shading, panel size, and subject effectively. The novel is purposefully made in black and white - the only colour appears on the cover. Text is sometimes obscured to give the effect of murmuring. Text size and speech bubbles change to dramatize shouting.

### PRINT NOVEL

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<td>Does the text show insight into the complexity of the human condition?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<td>Does the text broaden students’ experiences and understanding?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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<td>To what degree is this text stylistically rich?</td>
<td>Extensively</td>
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**Plot description:**

The series centres on the need to change legislation making segregation illegal and improving voting rights. Book one introduces the protagonist, John Robert Lewis, as a child growing up in a segregated American south. His desire for a better education leads him to being one of the organizers of SNCC, organizing the first lunch counter sit-ins. The novel flashes back and forth between his childhood and the day of President Obama’s inauguration.

**Related Comments:**
As a memoir, the events and concepts are historically accurate and cover a conflict-filled time in American history. The images are clear, well-developed to show emotion, and highlight significance. The topics of equality, acceptance, and non-violence lead to well-developed themes.

Descriptors:

Genre:
Historical
Autobiography
Illustrated Novel

Literary Highlights:
Complex conflict
Well-developed themes
Point of view

Type:
Graphic Novel

Visual Highlights:
Effective use of visual elements
Compelling images
Clear sequence of images
Visual convey character, emotions and attitudes
Visuals convey mood

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE

Comments:
Despite being book one in a trilogy, in ELA it can stand alone as an example of memoir and as a study of graphic novel because it is the perfect marriage between visual and written text. In Social Studies classes, this book would make an excellent discussion springboard for non-violent protest, civil rights movements, and rebellion and revolution.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Readability:
At intended grade level(s)

Comments:
Coretta Scott King Honor Book, Robert F. Kennedy Book Award - Special Recognition, National Book Award, Michael L. Printz Award, Will Eisner Comic Industry Award, Robert F. Silbert Informational Book Medal, YALSA Nonfiction Award, Walter Dean Myers Award, YALSA’s Outstanding Books for the College Bound, Reader's Digest Graphic Novels Every Grown-Up Should Read.