

# Preparation and Study Guide for Red Line



Age range: 10–15 year-olds

## Story and preparation

*Jennifer Halteman Schrock wrote Red Line. She is a free lance writer and has also written for Jubilee and Story Friends. She is active in worship leading and Christian education at Neil Avenue Mennonite Church (Columbus, Ohio).*

*The graphic design was done by Cynthia Friesen, who volunteers her time for the PJC after putting in full days at Habitat for Humanity in Americus, Ga.*

*Created by the former Peace and Justice Committee of the Mennonite Church.*

*For information about current Mennonite peace resources, contact Roberta Harms, 316-283-5155, Ext. 277, RobertaH@MennoniteMission.net*

*Please do not copy story without permission.*

## Story synopsis

Fifteen-year-old Libby and twelve-year-old Jason are hot and bored on a summer day. Their pastor, Kimbel Limes, invites them to help solve a mystery. Old Milo Miller lies dying in a nursing home, but something “in the attic” keeps him restless. Kimbel asks the children to sort through the attic to find whatever it is. In the process, they learn a bit about white privilege.

## The activity

This activity was designed for a General Assembly, spread out over several days, in a large building. Youth came by our display to pick up the eight-page story, then needed to walk around between other activities looking for the “clues,” the 58 words left out of the

story. You may adapt for your purposes as your imagination leads. If you have the opportunity to gather the youth to introduce the activity, they may gain more meaning.

Each of the clues is written on a half sheet of paper. You may want to laminate the papers so they last and can be reused. In random order, hang these papers throughout the meeting area. Youth need to find the papers, fill in the blanks, and complete the story. You might want to offer a prize (book wraps and posters are available from the Mennonite Church Peace and Justice Committee, above) to encourage youth to finish the activity before the discussion time. To simplify your life, the word list is printed below.

## Study guide

*Jane Stoltzfus Buller, who prepared this study guide, is associate pastor at Walnut Hill Mennonite Church (Gosben, Indiana). She works with worship and youth. Jane just completed a six-year term with the executive committee of the Indiana-Michigan Conference.*

## Bible texts

Exodus 23:2

Luke 4:16-21

Ephesians 2:13-22

## A word to the leader

This is a story of the beginning of a new awareness about what it means to be white. It works because of how well it says the truths about the experience of

---

## Word list

- |                        |                         |                         |                     |                  |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. red                 | 13. 1924                | 25. Bible               | 37. Toyota pick-up  | 48. snarling     |
| 2. line                | 14. key                 | 26. Psalm               | 38. gummy bears     | 49. tree         |
| 3. popsicles           | 15. broken relationship | 27. newspaper clipping  | 39. gang            | 50. Scrimshaw    |
| 4. porch               | 16. enemy               | 28. Klan hood           | 40. Reverend Odessa | 51. cartoons     |
| 5. unicycle            | 17. stepladder          | 29. Ku Klux Klan        | James               | 52. teenage guys |
| 6. cat                 | 18. ghost               | 30. Rose of Sharon      | 41. street mural    | 53. sling-shot   |
| 7. Starship Enterprise | 19. Balaam's donkey     | 31. labor unions        | 42. Jesus           | 54. quilt        |
| 8. die                 | 20. Monopoly Game       | 32. cross               | 43. disciples       | 55. engineer     |
| 9. nursing home        | 21. baseball cards      | 33. children            | 44. door            | 56. laugh        |
| 10. spirit             | 22. giraffe             | 34. Christian           | 45. nose            | 57. script       |
| 11. at peace           | 23. Jackie Robinson     | 35. I'm sorry           | 46. blue-eyed       | 58. murders      |
| 12. attic              | 24. Titanic             | 36. play computer games | 47. come back       |                  |

white people in our days. Several things to note as you read:

- a) Be careful. Don't get taken in by the more obvious racist expressions such as the KKK and the guilt of a probable member. The story lies with the young persons and the pastor.
- b) The first paragraph sets the tone. "All of us were a little different by the time our next birthdays rolled around." What difference do you note in these young people at the end of the story?
- c) There are a number of discoveries made about white privilege, or white advantage. Can you find them? (White privileges are those unnamed and sometimes unrecognized privileges that are given to white people, those with the majority of power and wealth in our world.)

The central text for preparation could be the Luke 4 passage. Is it possible that we have to hear this text in a new way as we discover the racism of our day? Are we the ones who are captive, sick and blind? How has the overt racism of the KKK helped to blind us to the reality of a more subtle yet sinful racism that continues to operate in our time? How has the overt racism of the past bound us and made us captive to patterns and institutions that grow oppression and guilt?

### Questions for discussion

1. Make sure everyone is familiar with the KKK and what it symbolizes. Point out that it and other white supremacist groups continue to be active today. Why are Libby and Jason surprised to find a Klan hood in Milo's attic? How does Kimbel explain it?
2. How are the hearts and minds of Libby and Jason being changed during this experience? Make a list of learnings about their world which led them to a new awareness of racism.
3. How is the Jesus in the mural described and what might be reasons for the artist to represent him in this way? Is there a "right" image of Jesus?
4. What do you learn about this town from the story? Note clues you are given throughout the story about it.

### Notes from Jennifer on quilting

The woman on the porch is based on, though not identical to, Carolyn Mazloomi. When I met Ms. Mazloomi about five years ago, she was the coordinator of the Women of Color Quilters Network based in Cincinnati, was well known within the African-American quilting community, commanded high prices for her quilts and frequently did workshops. Her style of quilting was, as the story suggests, highly detailed and precise. Although I have seen a Mazloomi quilt similar to the one described, the story is not entirely accurate: the real Carolyn Mazloomi prefers not to use a quilt frame to quilt. This enables her to hit 22 stitches to the inch. (I didn't think anybody would believe that without inserting a cumbersome technical explanation, so my character does things in a more typical fashion.) In her spare time, Mazloomi taught aerospace engineering. The fact that she was fond of saying this in workshops has to do with a feud among African-American quilt fans. Some champion the African, improvisational, "Who needs a ruler?" aspect of African-American quilts, as in Eli Leon's *Who'd A Thought It: Improvisation in African-American Quilting*. Others, such as Mazloomi, resent being stereotyped and defend the validity of African-American work that does not fit this category.

Aminah Robinson is a well-known Columbus, Ohio, fiber artist whose work you can see in the Columbus Museum of Art. A typical Robinson quilt would be an irregular shape, a wild collage of textures and colors and covered with buttons.

Recommended: *Stitching Memories: African-American Story Quilts* by Eva Ungar Grudin

# Racism awareness program resource list For youth and children

by Tobin Miller Shearer, Racism Awareness Program  
Director, MCC U.S., P.O. Box 500, Akron, PA 17501-0500;  
phone (717) 859-3889; fax (717) 859-3875;  
e-mail TMS@mccus.org

## For Adults working with children and youth

- Clemens, Sydney Gurewitz. "A Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Curriculum: Playing the Dream," *Young Children* (January 1988): 6-11, 59-62. Presents concrete suggestions for working with young children to experience Dr. King's dream.
- Derman-Sparks, Louise. *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Association for Education of Young Children, 1989. Describes developmental tasks, goals, and activities for fostering children's healthy identity and attitudes about race, ethnicity, gender, and disabilities and how teachers can work with parents.
- Derman-Sparks, Louise, María Gutiérrez, and Carol B. Phillips. "Teaching Young Children to Resist Bias: What Parents Can Do," National Association for the Education of Young Children, unnumbered pamphlet. Excellent, concise resource for parents.
- Kohl, Herbert. "The Politics of Children's Literature: The Story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott," *Rethinking Schools* (January/February 1991): 10-13. Insightful essay on how children's literature can be presented in a way that encourages social change.
- McGinnis, Kathleen. *Dreaming God's Dream: Family Activities Guide*. A practical and multi-faceted guide specifically designed for families with children. Sub-titled, "Celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." Available from Southern Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, P.O. Box 280, Lake Junaluska, NC 28745; (704) 456-1881.
- McGinnis, Kathleen and James. *Parenting for Peace and Justice*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1981. Includes a chapter on encouraging involvement with other cultures. Based on authors' own experiences with their children.
- Phillips, Carol Brunson. "Nurturing Diversity for Today's Children and Tomorrow's Leaders," *Young Children* (January 1988): 42-47. Excellent article for educators of young children.

## Curriculum/Study Guides

Bullard, Sara, ed. *Teaching Tolerance*. Montgomery, Ala.: Southern Poverty Law Center, 1991. Excellent resource for educators desiring to welcome

differences and delight in sharing across cultures. Available from Teaching Tolerance, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.

- Dotts, M. Franklin, ed. *Building A New Community: God's Children Overcoming Racism*. Nashville, Tenn.: Cokesbury Press, 1992. Excellent story-based curriculum for pre-teens on racism. Available from Shalom Education, 1448 East 53rd St., Chicago, IL 60615; (312) 363-2020 (only pre-paid orders accepted, call for current price).
- McGinnis, Kathleen. *Celebrating Racial Diversity*. St. Louis, MO: Institute for Peace and Justice, 1994. Includes multiple handouts and lesson plans that can be adapted for elementary or high school settings (also in Sunday School settings). Special emphasis on strengths and heroes of ethnic groups.
- Shearer, Jody Miller. *Challenging Racism*. Newton, Kans.: Faith and Life, 1993. A four-session, activity-oriented guide for jr. high students.
- Shearer, Tobin Miller. "I won't play by your rules." A Bible study available from the Racism Awareness Project (address above)
- Shearer, Tobin Miller. "White privilege packet." Graphics and Bible study activity to help young people think about white privilege. Available from Racism Awareness Project, (address above) or for \$4 from Peace Factory, PO Box 173, Orrville OH 44667; phone/fax 330-683-6844.

## Videos

- "A Class Divided." Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. A blue-eye/brown-eye experiment conducted with third graders in 1970 is reviewed by those students as adults in 1984. Shows the same experiment conducted at a prison with 175 employees. Available from Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017; (212) 490-2525.
- "Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965." Boston: Blackside, Inc., 1987. Insightful, comprehensive, and moving history of the civil rights movement.
- "The Family of God: Helping Pre-Adolescents Respond to Racial Stereotypes." Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, 1995. A video and study guide for pre-adolescents that works through basic understanding of stereotypes with creative activities.
- "You Can't Do It Alone: Fighting Racism." Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993. For ages 15-25, a six-session video and study guide designed to help young adults respond to issues of racism in church and society. Encourages a variety of experiential activities. Best for use in multi-ethnic settings. Available by contacting ELCA, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631.