Heritage Highlights

READING COMPREHENSION IN OUR IMAGE

BLACK CHANGE MAKERS

15 STORIES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVISM

What You're About to Explore

This sample comes from Heritage Highlights: Black Changemakers, a reading comprehension workbook designed to help students strengthen their literacy skills while learning about African American leaders who worked to make the world more fair and just.

Inside this sample, you'll find one complete lesson. The same structure is used throughout the entire book (and the entire series). Each lesson is intentionally designed to guide students through a full learning experience that builds:

- Reading comprehension
- Academic vocabulary
- Critical thinking
- Written expression

The passage you're about to read highlights Septima Clark, an educator whose work shows how knowledge, literacy and community action can create lasting change. Her story is a powerful example of leadership rooted in education and empowerment. After the reading, you'll see how the lesson unfolds:

- Vocabulary words are clearly defined to support understanding
- Comprehension questions check for key details
- Thinking questions encourage deeper analysis and connection
- A writing prompt invites creativity and real-world application

This structure repeats for every passage in the book, helping students become confident, independent learners while engaging with meaningful, culturally affirming content.

As you explore this sample, consider:

- Can your student navigate the lesson independently or with light guidance?
- Does the balance of structure and open-ended thinking feel right?
- Can you imagine this format being used consistently over time?

This sample is just one lesson, but it reflects the depth, clarity and purpose found throughout the entire book.

SEPTIMA CLARK: **THE TEACHER WHO EMPOWERED A MOVEMENT**

In the struggle for civil rights in America, many names stand out as heroes and leaders. While figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks are widely recognized, there are others whose contributions were just as **vital** but often overlooked. One such person is Septima Poinsette Clark, sometimes called the "Mother of the Civil Rights Movement."

Born in 1898 in Charleston, South Carolina, Septima experienced firsthand the injustices of racism. But she refused to let it define her future. Her parents, a formerly enslaved man and a laundrywoman, **instilled** in her the importance of education. Despite facing many obstacles, Clark pursued her dream of becoming a teacher. She attended Avery Normal Institute, a private school for African Americans, and later earned her bachelor's degree from Benedict College.

Clark's teaching career began on Johns Island, off the coast of South Carolina. There, she encountered extreme poverty and **illiteracy** among the local African American population. This experience inspired her lifelong commitment to education as a tool for empowerment

and social change.

In the 1950s, Septima joined the Highlander Folk School, a social justice training center in Tennessee. It was here that she developed the concept of "Citizenship Schools." These schools were designed to teach African Americans basic literacy skills, allowing them to pass voter registration tests that were often used to **disenfranchise** them.

Citizenship Schools were **revolutionary** in their approach. Unlike traditional classrooms, they were often held in people's homes, churches, or community centers. The curriculum wasn't just about

reading and writing; it also included lessons on **civics**, voter registration procedures, and community organizing. Through role-playing and discussions, they gained the confidence to challenge injustice and demand equality. Clark believed that education should be practical and directly tied to improving people's lives.

The impact of the Citizenship Schools was **profound**. They spread across the South, with hundreds of local people trained to become teachers. By 1961, the program had become so successful that it was adopted by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Martin Luther King Jr. Over the next decade, more than 900 Citizenship Schools were established, helping to register thousands of African American voters.

Clark's work wasn't without challenges. She faced constant threats and **intimidation** from those who opposed civil rights. In 1956, she was fired from her teaching job for refusing to give up her membership in the NAACP. But she refused to be silenced, often saying, "I have a great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos a gift."

Throughout her life, Clark emphasized the importance of empowering individuals to create change in their own communities. She believed that true progress came not just from high-profile leaders, but from ordinary people working together at the **grassroots** level. Her citizenship schools **embodied** this philosophy, giving people the tools they needed to stand up for themselves and their rights.

Septima Clark's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement extended far beyond the citizenship schools. She participated in several protests and demonstrations, worked alongside other civil rights leaders, and continued to fight for equality well into her later years. In 1979, she received the Living Legacy Award from President Jimmy Carter in recognition of her lifetime of service.

Clark passed away in 1987, leaving behind a powerful legacy. Her creative approach to education and community organizing had a significant impact on the Civil Rights Movement and continues to inspire activists today. Her Citizenship Schools empowered hundreds of thousands of African Americans, giving them the tools to fight for their rights and become active participants in the democratic process. As she once said, "The greatest evil in our country today is not racism, but ignorance." Through her tireless efforts to combat that ignorance, Septima Clark helped shape a more just and equitable America.

VOCABULARY:

1. **civics:** learning about how government and citizens work together
2. **democratic:** where everyone gets a say, usually through voting
3. **disenfranchise:** take away someone's rights, especially the right to vote
4. **embodied:** represented or expressed something perfectly
5. **equitable:** fair, everyone gets what they need
6. **grassroots:** a movement or idea that starts with regular people, not leaders
7. **illiteracy:** not being able to read or write
8. **instilled:** put an idea or feeling into someone's head, usually slowly over time
9. **profound:** deep, meaningful, makes you think a lot
10. **revolutionary:** something that brings a big, important change
11. **vital:** super important, can't do without it

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where and when was Septima Clark born?

2. What was the main purpose of the citizenship schools?

3. Where did Clark develop the concept of citizenship schools?

4. What organization adopted the citizenship school program in 1961?

5. What award did Clark receive in 1979?

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS:

1. How did Clark's early experiences as a teacher on Johns Island influence her later work in civil rights?

2. The passage mentions that citizenship schools were often held in homes, churches, or community centers. How might this approach have been more effective than traditional classroom settings for adult learners?

3. Clark said, "I have a great belief in the fact that whenever there is chaos, it creates wonderful thinking. I consider chaos a gift." What do you think she meant by this? Can you think of any examples where difficult situations have led to positive change?

4. How do you think the skills taught in citizenship schools (literacy, civics, voter registration) related to the broader goals of the Civil Rights Movement? Why were these skills so important?

5. Why is it important for people to be informed and active participants in the democratic process?

WRITING PROMPT

Citizenship Schools often took place in homes, churches, and community centers rather than traditional classrooms. Imagine you're designing a new type of school or learning program to address a specific need in your community. Where would classes be held? What would be taught? How would the setting and curriculum differ from traditional schools? Write a proposal for your innovative learning space, explaining how it would benefit learners and the community.

Continue the Journey

If this sample feels like a good fit, Heritage Highlights: Black Changemakers offers much more.

Inside the full book, students will explore:

- 15 engaging passages featuring African American leaders, activists, and movements
- A consistent lesson structure that supports routine and skill development
- Thought-provoking questions that go beyond surface-level comprehension
- Writing prompts that encourage reflection, creativity, and real-world connections

This workbook is ideal for:

- Homeschool families
- Independent learners
- Guided instruction in small groups or classrooms
- Students ready to deepen their reading and thinking skills

Whether used as a standalone resource or alongside a history or social studies curriculum, Black Changemakers helps students strengthen literacy while seeing themselves reflected in the stories they read.

Ready to continue?

Choose Heritage Highlights: Black Changemakers to give your student meaningful reading practice rooted in history, culture and critical thinking.

To access the full workbook and bundle options, visit:

Black Classical Academy
www.blackclassicalacademy.com/shop

Thank you for exploring this sample.