

A Choose to Read Ohio Toolkit

Use this toolkit to plan book discussions, library programs, or classroom activities.

Meet co-authors J. Patrick Lewis from Ohio and George Ella Lyon from Kentucky.

Learn about a key event of the Civil Rights era, and select from a range of discussion questions and extension activities to deepen the experience of reading *Voices from the March on Washington*.

Discover interviews, informational texts, websites, and documentary videos to explore topics and themes in depth.

Voices from the March on Washington

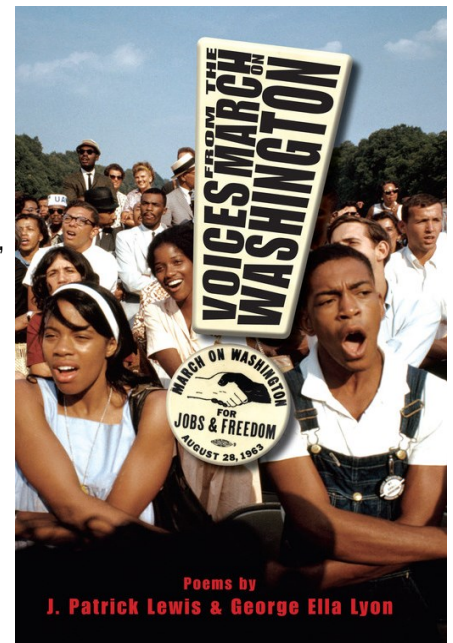
By J. Patrick Lewis and George Ella Lyon



About the Book

The poems in this collection weave together multiple voices to tell the story of the March on Washington, DC, on August 28, 1963. From the woman singing through a terrifying bus ride to DC, to the teenager who came partly because his father told him, "Don't you dare go to that march," to the young child riding above the crowd on her father's shoulders, each voice brings a unique perspective.

Six fictional characters tell their tales of this historic day in cycles of linked poems alongside the points of view of historical figures and other March participants. As the characters tell their personal stories of this historic day, their chorus plunges readers into the experience of being at the March — walking shoulder-to-shoulder with strangers, hearing Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous speech, heading home inspired.



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Book Details

Voices from the March on Washington by J. Patrick Lewis and George Ella Lyon.

WordSong: An Imprint of Highlights, 2014.

ISBN 9781620917855. Ages 10-18. 114 pages.

Leveled Reading: AR Points 2.0. ATOS Book Level 6.0. NP Lexile.

boydsmillspress.com/bmp/books/fiction-american-history/voices-march-washington

Available as an ebook through the Ohio Digital Library: ohiodigitallibrary.com

Enjoy the book trailer, featuring historic photos from the March on Washington and a recording of the African American spiritual "Oh Freedom" performed by George Ella Lyon and Steve Lyon:

youtu.be/PhwL6tx0kvU

Read an interview with J. Patrick Lewis and George Ella Lyon on the Cybils (Children's and Young Adult Bloggers' Literary Awards) website:

cybils.com/2015/04/interview-with-j-patrick-lewis-and-george-ella-lyon.html



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**“Now I watch
the weary
climb out of
buses
and see hope
rise in their eyes
Now I greet
folks arriving
in tobacco
wagons
on bicycles
in cars that
couldn't make it
but did
more Marchers
than I dared to
imagine
and I feel
my heart surge”**

About J. Patrick Lewis

J. Patrick Lewis is the 2011 winner of the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children and is former U.S. Children's Poet Laureate (2011-2013). His book, ***The Brothers' War: Civil War Voices in Verse***, was a 2011 & 2012 Choose to Read Ohio selection. Lewis earned his PhD in Economics at The Ohio State University and taught at Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio. He has written more than sixty books for children and adults. He also visits elementary schools, delivers keynotes at literature conferences, and presents teachers' workshops on introducing poetry in the classroom. J. Patrick Lewis lives in Westerville.

J. Patrick Lewis's official website

jpatricklewis.com

Reading Rockets interview with J. Patrick Lewis (video; transcript available)

readingrockets.org/books/interviews/lewisj

Author biography from The Poetry Foundation

poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/j-patrick-lewis

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

jpatricklewis.com/visits.shtml

Talk About It

Topics to share when discussing ***Voices from the March on Washington*** with teens.

- The poems are told in the voices of fictional characters participating in a major political rally for civil rights for African Americans. Six characters are recurrent voices (see pp. 113-114). All six were young at the time of the March on Washington. Select one and discuss how the March impacted him or her, citing evidence from the poems. We learn what became of two of these characters – Emma Wallace and Renée Newsome. Based on clues in the poems, imagine what the others may be doing today.
- As in real life, some of the characters in ***Voices from the March on Washington*** traveled a distance to attend. Some were encouraged by family, and others attended despite family disapproval. What were the motivations of the various characters? Have you ever participated in a rally, protest, or other political action? If so, what caused you to participate?
- Discuss ways that events in the news today connect to the concerns of the March on Washington organizers and participants over 50 years ago.
- The book includes many different types of poems, from the picture poems “Reflection” (which resembles the famous photo of marchers surrounding the Reflecting Pool) and “Tree”, to the terza rima “Commitment Bound in Joy”, to prose poems, to free verse. Why do you think the authors chose to use all these different types of poems? How does the variety of poetic forms influence your experience of the book?
- Which of the poems affected, surprised, or delighted you the most? What appeals to you about that poem? Do you identify at all with the speaker of that poem? Take turns reciting a favorite poem from the collection and leading discussion of that poem.

About George Ella Lyon

George Ella Lyon is the author of 45 books, ranging from poetry for children such as ***All the Water in the World*** (an ALA Notable book), to picture books such as ***The Pirate of Kindergarten***, to young adult novels such as her recent ***Holding On to Zoe***, to fiction and poetry for adults. She was appointed Kentucky's Poet Laureate for 2015-16 by Governor Steve Beshear. She lives in Lexington, Kentucky.



Author photo and biographical information courtesy Highlights; used with permission.

George Ella Lyon's official website

georgeellalyon.com

Poet Laureate George Ella Lyon appears on Kentucky Educational Television's One to One (video)

ket.org/arts/poet-laureate-george-ella-lyon/

Carol Polsgrove interviews George Ella Lyon on writing for young people

carolpolsgrove.com/interviewgeorge-ella-lyon/

For publicity and speaking engagement inquiries:

georgeellalyon.com/school.html

Go Further

Ideas for extending the experience of reading ***Voices from the March on Washington***.

Educators: Every CTRO book may be used to support Ohio's English Language Arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards. Other Learning Standards, such as *Social Studies: American History: Social Transformations (High School)* also apply. Discussion questions and educational activities for ***Voices from the March on Washington*** align with Learning Standards for Grades 5-up.

Librarians, parents, and others: These activities are also for library programs, family activities, and other projects. Learning Standards define what students should know and be able to do at each grade. For more information, see the Ohio Department of Education website, education.ohio.gov. From the Topics dropdown menu, click on "Ohio's Learning Standards."

- The youngest character, Ruby May Hollingsworth, was 6 at the time of the March on Washington, and would be 60 in 2017. The March, and other important events leading up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, are within living memory. Interview an older friend or family member (born before 1960) about their experience of the Civil Rights era. Possible questions to ask include:
 - ◇ What do you remember about the March on Washington? Did you know anyone who marched?
 - ◇ What is your strongest memory of the Civil Rights era?
 - ◇ Did the Civil Rights Movement impact you personally? How?
 - ◇ How do you perceive race relations and the challenges facing African Americans today, compared to the time of the March on Washington?
- The March on Washington was the occasion of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s most famous speech. As noted in the book, a prompting from singer Mahalia Jackson inspired Dr. King to go off-script and "tell them about the dream." The inspiring refrain "I have a dream..." was not even in the original text. Read "Mahalia Jackson, and King's Improvisation" by Drew Hanson in the *New York Times*. (nytimes.com/2013/08/28/opinion/mahalia-jackson-and-kings-rhetorical-improvisation.html)
- Listen to a recording of the "I Have a Dream" speech, and read the transcript, at the website of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University. (kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/i-have-dream-address-delivered-march-washington-jobs-and-freedom).

Go Further (continued)

- Watch and listen to Mahalia Jackson sing “I’ve Been ‘Buked and I’ve Been Scorned” at the March on Washington ([cbsnews.com/videos/mahalia-jackson-wows-crowd-at-march-on-washington/](https://www.cbsnews.com/videos/mahalia-jackson-wows-crowd-at-march-on-washington/)). Find other recordings by Jackson at your local library or an online music service.
- The March on Washington was one of many citizen actions of the Civil Rights Movement. Using online resources available to students through INFOhio (infohio.org) and to all Ohio residents through Ohio Web Library (ohioweblibrary.org), research another of these events, such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the desegregation of Central High School by the Little Rock Nine, or the sit-in at Woolworth’s in Greensboro, NC. Write an essay or prepare an oral presentation describing the event and explaining its significance to civil rights in America. Be sure to cite your sources.
- As a group, select a notable current event and research it using news archives available through INFOhio and Ohio Web Library. Have each student select an actual participant in the event, or develop a credible fictional character, and write a poem about the event from that person’s perspective. As a group, arrange the poems in a meaningful sequence and create a booklet of the collected poems, including an overview of the event as an introduction.

Explore More

*Additional ideas and resources to use with **Voices from the March on Washington**.*

March on Washington (video)

youtu.be/ZA9TJCV-tks

A movie compiled from original audio and video footage of the March on Washington, from the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

An Oral History of the March on Washington

smithsonianmag.com/history/oral-history-march-washington-180953863/?no-ist

The Smithsonian shares the voices of memory through video interviews with March on Washington participants, gathered 50 years after the event.

“Poetry and Social Justice” by Sylvia M. Vardell

booklistonline.com/ProductInfo.aspx?pid=6953437

This feature from *Book Links* (Sept. 2014) offers thoughtful advice on discussing civil rights and social justice with young people, using the lens of poetry. A sizeable bibliography, an interview with J. Patrick Lewis and George Ella Lyon, and classroom activities for **Voices from the March on Washington** are also included. The interview and activities may also be found in the *Educator’s Guide* to the book: tinyurl.com/voices-educator-guide (PDF).

March: Books 1-3 by John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell. Top Shelf Productions. ISBN 9781603093002 (Book 1).

This series reveals the history of the Civil Rights era in graphic novel form, told by Congressman John Lewis, who was a leader of the March on Washington. Many excellent books are available, for all ages and reading levels, about the Civil Rights era, its leaders, and its events. Ask your public or school librarian. For a directory of public libraries in Ohio, see oplin.org/fal.

Choose to Read Ohio, a project of the State Library of Ohio, the Ohioana Library Association, and the Ohio Center for the Book, encourages public libraries, schools, families, and others to build a community of readers and an appreciation of Ohio authors, illustrators, and literature. CTRO is adaptable for use in classrooms, libraries, bookstores, by book discussion groups, families, and other community groups.

Explore Choose to Read Ohio resources & toolkits:
library.ohio.gov/ctro

This toolkit revised
July 2016.