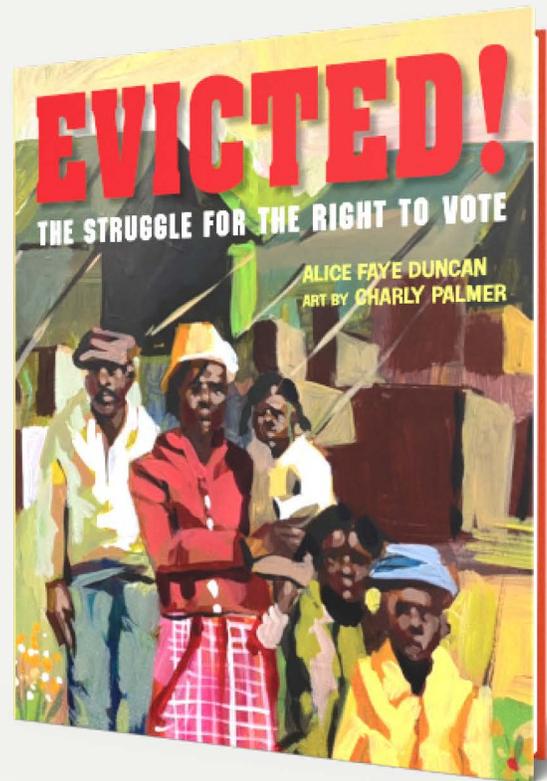


# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## *EVICTED! The Struggle for the Right to Vote*



Written by Alice Faye Duncan  
Illustrated by Charly Palmer

\$18.99 US / \$24.99 CAN  
ISBN: 978-1-68437-979-8

Grades: 4-7  
Ages: 9-12

"In this absorbing collection of profiles . . . Duncan illuminates the grassroots Fayette County Tent City Movement in late-1950s Tennessee, which opposed racial terror aimed at Black voters and eventually helped lead to the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Duncan follows the Black activists in quietly compelling prose...[and] Palmer's abstract spreads, rendered in surreal-colored acrylic, offer mesmerizing visual accompaniment. An empathic tribute that will resonate amid present-day conversations about voter suppression."

*—Publishers Weekly*

"A series of interconnected stories about real-life people illuminates the history of Tennessee's Fayette County Tent City Movement . . . Palmer's painterly, evocative paintings effectively capture the era, are suffused with emotional honesty, and bring reverence to the heavy subject matter."

*—Kirkus Reviews*

Alice Faye Duncan is a National Board educator. She writes to help children remember important moments from American history. Her lyrical texts include *A Song for Gwendolyn Brooks; Just Like a Mama; Honey Baby Sugar Child*, which received an NAACP Image Award Nomination for Outstanding Literary Work for Children; and *Memphis, Martin, and the Mountaintop*, which received a Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor. She lives in Memphis, Tennessee. Visit [alicefayeduncan.com](http://alicefayeduncan.com).

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**ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR**

Charly Palmer is a graphic designer, illustrator, and a fine artist. He has illustrated multiple children's books including *The Teachers March* by Sandra Neil Wallace and Rich Wallace, *There's a Dragon in My Closet* by Dorothea Taylor, and *Mama Africa* by Kathryn Erskine for which he received the Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe Award for New Talent. He lives in Atlanta, Georgia. Visit [charlypalmer.com](http://charlypalmer.com).

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**NOTE ABOUT THE GUIDE AND *EVICTED!***

This guide is designed for grades 4 and up. It offers discussion questions to help the teacher immerse students deeper into this important historical event. The guide includes extension activities to help students with comprehension and real-world connections to their own lives. It is assumed that teachers will adapt each activity to fit the needs and abilities of their own students.

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**OVERALL GENERAL CONSIDERATION FOR EDUCATORS**

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**KIDS CAN TACKLE TOUGH TOPICS**

Some people today do not think that children can tackle “controversial topics” like racism and white supremacy, but kids can tackle tough topics. They just need nuanced and caring adults and quality pieces of literature like *Evicted!* to be able to do so. Educators know that school is a microcosm of the larger macrocosm of society, and as such, children face issues such as racism and white supremacy every day of their lives. For the children in our classrooms, these topics are just another day of the week.

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**PICTURE BOOKS ARE GOOD TO USE IN THE SECONDARY CLASSROOM**

Secondary educators and, in particular, high school teachers, often believe that picture books are for elementary grades only. Nothing could be further from the truth! There are many reasons that *Evicted!* works as a teaching tool at all grade levels. For one, great literature knows no reading level. Secondly, when used sparingly in upper-grade settings, students generally welcome the use of a picture book because it evokes warm memories of loved ones reading to them as a younger child. The third reason is that struggling readers will be able to use the art to cue the text for deeper comprehension. Media-driven teenagers love the multiple, rich images and the high-quality art in picture books, and the use of primary documents also aids in deep learning about topics. The picture books of today are not the ones most of us grew up with, and *Evicted!* is a perfect example of that because of its rigorous content.

Students can benefit from frontloading the following items to maximize understanding and comprehension of *Evicted!*

## THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

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The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a landmark piece of federal legislation in the US that prohibits racial discrimination in voting. It was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, and it aimed to overcome the legal barriers that state and local government had enacted to prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote as guaranteed under the 15th Amendment to the US Constitution. The Voting Rights Act is considered to be one of the most far-reaching pieces of civil rights legislation in US history.



## VOTING RIGHTS VIOLATIONS TODAY

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The fight for voting rights remains as critical today as it did in the 1950s and 1960s. Politicians across the country continue to engage in voter suppression, including efforts like requiring additional obstacles to registration, cutbacks on early voting, and strict voter identification requirements.

## EVICITION AS A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE TODAY

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Eviction is still a civil rights issue today, especially because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities of Color have long had disparities in health and health care. Disasters like the COVID pandemic always disproportionately harm vulnerable and minority populations. The pandemic has increased housing instability once again for communities of color. A large majority of renters of color who are behind on their rent have experienced job loss during the pandemic. Eviction remains a critical civil rights issue today.

## VOCABULARY

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Go over and front-load some of the vocabulary with students before you read the book.

- **White supremacy:** The false belief that white people constitute a superior race and should therefore dominate society, typically to the exclusion or detriment of other racial and ethnic groups, in particular Black or Jewish people.
- **Voter suppression:** A strategy used to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing specific groups of people from voting.

- **Lynching:** A mob killing of someone, especially by hanging, for an alleged offense with or without a legal trial.
- **Eviction:** The act of expelling someone, especially a tenant, from a property.
- **Blacklist:** A list of people or things that are regarded as unacceptable or untrustworthy and should be excluded or avoided.
- **Integrate:** To bring people into equal participation in or membership of a social group or institution.
- **Segregate:** To set apart from the rest or from each other; isolate or divide.
- **Racial gerrymandering:** When a political group tries to change a voting district to create a result that helps them or hurts the group who is against them.

#### FOR MORE READ THIS

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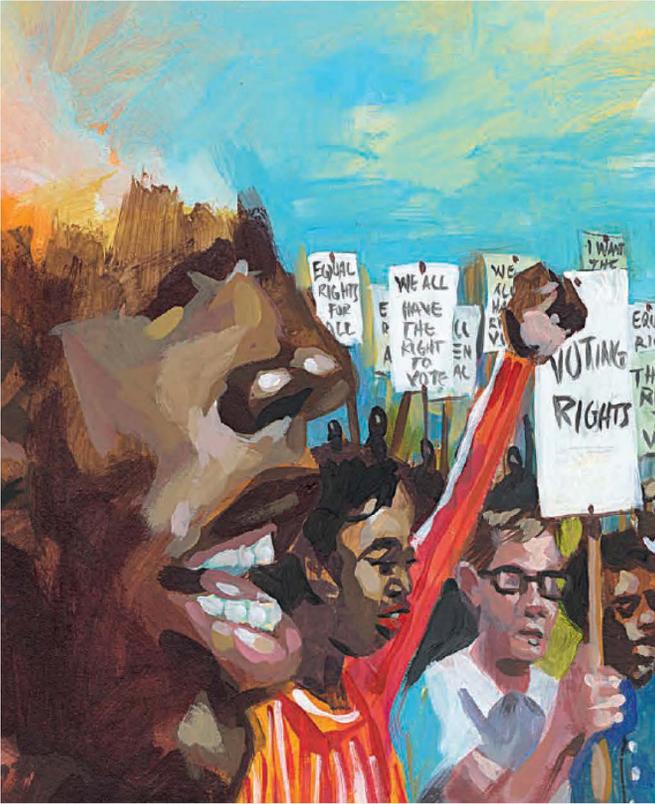
Read an interview with author Alice Faye Duncan from *the School Library Journal* about *Evicted!*

[blogs.slj.com/afuse8production/2021/09/28/evicted-an-interview-on-a-timely-topic-with-alice-faye-duncan](https://blogs.slj.com/afuse8production/2021/09/28/evicted-an-interview-on-a-timely-topic-with-alice-faye-duncan)



Students may need information on the groups mentioned within the text. The chart below defines which side of history they stand on – whether they were on the side of hate or on the side of love and liberation.

<p><b>A WHO'S WHO OF HATE AND WHITE SUPREMACY</b></p> <p><b>Who is this and what do they stand for?</b></p>	<p><b>A WHO'S WHO OF LOVE AND LIBERATION</b></p> <p><b>Who is this and what do they stand for?</b></p>
<p><b>The Ku Klux Klan</b> An American white supremacist hate group that targets African Americans.</p>	<p><b>The Benjamin Hooks Institute for Social Change</b> People studying and promoting civil rights and social change. <a href="http://www.memphis.edu/benhooks">www.memphis.edu/benhooks</a></p>
<p><b>The White Citizens' Council</b> A group of segregationists who, among other acts of violence, used economic reprisals to punish those who added their names to the voting register.</p>	<p><b>The Original Fayette County Civic and Welfare League</b> People who advocate for equal voting rights for the African American community in Fayette County, TN. <a href="http://www.memphis.edu/tentcity">www.memphis.edu/tentcity</a></p>
<p><b>Jim Crow</b> Is not a person, but a set of rigid laws which made Black people second-class citizens. These laws lasted from 1877 to the mid-1960s.</p>	<p><b>Operation Freedom</b> 1964 was known as Freedom Summer and young people from all over America joined in the movement for civil rights. <a href="http://www.memphis.edu/tentcity/people/outside.php">www.memphis.edu/tentcity/people/outside.php</a></p>
	<p><b>Jet Magazine</b> <i>Jet</i> magazine was a weekly magazine for African Americans. It chronicled the civil rights movement from its earliest years. <a href="http://www.jetmag.com">www.jetmag.com</a></p>



### ***The League Link***

A newsletter to inform the Black community about voter registration, the needs of families, resources, demonstration marches, and the importance of being civically engaged.

[www.memphis.edu/tentcity/organizing](http://www.memphis.edu/tentcity/organizing)

### **The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**

A civil rights organization founded in 1909 to advance justice for African Americans.

[naacp.org](http://naacp.org)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These discussion questions can be used in various ways. Use all of them to facilitate comprehension and discussion around the book. Select the ones most relevant for your students. Find a question or two that might make a great writing prompt. It's your choice to use what works best for you and your students.

1. What is a sharecropper?
2. How did the white ruling class discourage Black participation in the voting process?
3. As the story begins, what was the living situation for young James Junior and his younger sister Baby Ann?
4. Reverend Burton Dodson went to jail for a crime he did not commit. In 1959 when he stood trial, why were Black people not in the jury?
5. What was ironic about John McFerren having been in the army and helping America and the Allied Forces defeat Hitler?
6. What does it mean politically for a group to “wield collective power”?
7. In the poem titled “The Ghost of Thomas Brooks” what do you think it means to “study my broken body like a book”?

8. What does Harpman Jameson mean when he states, “A man and woman don’t have no country if they don’t have no vote”?
9. Minnie Jameson was a Black teacher in Fayette County schools. If Black teachers got involved in the League, what might happen to them?
10. What kinds of retaliation did members of The White Citizens’ Council do if Black citizens registered to vote?
11. In 1961, how many Black families were evicted in Fayette County and nearby Haywood County?
12. Why was it important that reporters and photographers documented what was happening and got it out in the press?
13. What were ways that people around the country began to help those in Tent City?
14. As Black voter registration increased, so did white violence against it. What kinds of violence increased?
15. Why was the *League Link* so important in the Black community?
16. What law was signed in 1965 by President Lyndon Johnson?
17. In what year were Black people voted into political offices in Fayette County?
18. When the Voting Rights Act of 1965 came into law, did that end voting intimidation and suppression?

## ACTIVITIES

These activities are specifically designed to activate various modalities (writing, art, interviewing, interpersonal skills, and reflective practice) so that all students can successfully reflect on the important themes of *Evicted!*. Use these activities to check for comprehension and extend your students’ learning.



**“John wanted eyes to witness the pain of Black folks.”  
(*Evicted!*, page 36)**

This lesson highlights the media that are mentioned throughout the story of *Evicted!* Today's students have grown up with the world at their fingertips and a constant barrage of news information hitting their senses twenty-four hours a day, but this wasn't always the case, especially for Black Americans. The photography of Ernest C. Withers as he chronicled the civil rights movement, the national coverage of Blackness provided by magazines like *Jet*, *Ebony*, and *The League Link* local newsletter were crucial to documenting as a form of resistance and liberation.

### OBJECTIVES

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- Students will understand the importance of media in the historical context of the Tent City Movement.
- Students will learn about how media coverage is an act of resistance.

### TIME AND MATERIALS

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- One class period to read and discuss handouts and make conclusions.
- A copy of the Media Handout for each student.
- The Withers Collection, [www.thewitherscollection.com](http://www.thewitherscollection.com)
- Ebony magazine, [www.ebony.com](http://www.ebony.com)
- Jet magazine, [www.jetmag.com](http://www.jetmag.com)
- The League Link, [www.memphis.edu/tentcity/organizing](http://www.memphis.edu/tentcity/organizing)

After students read *Evicted!*, have a conversation with them about how whiteness has always dominated the media. Ask them to provide their own examples, and why they think representation matters. Next, have them read the Media Handout and highlight with a marker why Black media mattered so much during the civil rights movement. Lead students in a discussion about the importance of access to information during the civil rights era. Instruct them to draw conclusions about the impact of photographic images, historical first-person accounts, representation, and the sharing of important information.

Continue the dialogue with students about how recording events either photographically or in narratives is one way of resisting injustices because it bears witness to the violence of racism and other acts of violence. A modern-day connect is how Blacks today video with their personal phones the common acts of racism that they experience to show all Americans the impact of racism on their everyday lives. Many of them have heard of Christian Cooper, a Black bird-watcher in a section of New York City's Central Park known as the Ramble, and how a white woman falsely accused him of threatening her. He filmed the incident with his phone, and it revealed the everyday racism that Blacks often face. By the way, the Central Park bird-watching incident happened on the same day

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**TIME AND MATERIALS (CONTINUED)**

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as the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police Department officers. This is exactly what was occurring with the work of Withers, *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines, and the local newsletter *The League Link*—these forms of media bore witness to what was happening in Fayette County, Tennessee and across America.

With a highlighter, note the reasons in the text that explain exactly why each form of media was important to the Black community and the movement for justice and equity in America.

**Ernest C. Withers** was a Tennessee native who was an internationally acclaimed photographer recognized for his iconic photographs during the civil rights movement. His most famous photo, “I Am a Man,” was taken during his coverage of the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike in 1968, which was the revolt that ended in Dr. King’s assassination. Withers’s images illustrated the dramatic stories of the era—Dr. King riding the first desegregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, the murders of civil rights workers, voter registration drives, lynchings, and strikes. His cumulative work ended up as a moving chronicle of the great American crusade for justice and equity.

**Ebony Magazine** provided a national forum for Blacks. The contents of the magazine centered on Black history, entertainment, business, health, personalities, occupations, and sports. By highlighting the accomplishments of Black Americans, the magazines provided positive images for Blacks in a world of negative images and nonimages. *Ebony* magazine honored Black identity by portraying Black life, refuting stereotypes, and inspiring readers to overcome racial and other barriers. By the 1960s, it featured articles supporting civil rights and provided reliable coverage of the movement as it unfolded across the US. It encouraged Blacks to exhibit racial pride.



**Jet Magazine** was founded in 1951 and was marketed as “The Weekly Negro News Magazine,” and is famous for its role in covering the civil rights movement, including coverage of the Emmett Till murder, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and Martin Luther King, Jr. It was one of the main media connecting Black culture across the US in all aspects, including entertainment, opinions, politics, and fashion. *Jet* became nationally known for its graphic coverage of the murder of teenager Emmett Till. The publication showed Till’s brutalized corpse on the cover of its magazine and inspired the Black community to address racial violence and catalyzed the civil rights movement.

**The League Link** was the official newsletter of The Original Fayette County Civic and Welfare League. It informed the Black community about voter registration drives, the needs of families and available resources, demonstration marches, and the importance of being civically engaged. It documented the events and now serves as a detailed history of the Fayette County movement. The local newsletter became a one-stop shop for all kinds of critical information and led and inspired many people to register to vote and become more involved in politics.

List at least three reasons why media was important:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.





## OBJECTIVES

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- Students will understand the toxic and violent strategies that white supremacists used to suppress the Black vote.
- Students make connections from the text to voter suppression tactics used today.

## TIME AND MATERIALS

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- One class
- One copy of the handouts for each student.

Voter suppression of Blacks remains headline news today in 2022. Today's students may not know just how far white supremacists have gone in the past to suppress the votes of Black Americans. This example of the 1965 Voter Literacy Test from Alabama will make voter suppression concrete for students by showing them some of the calculated and conniving ways that white supremacists suppressed Black votes.

Ask students to read the Voter Literacy Handout themselves or, since it was often the strategy to have those who were trying to register to vote to have to transcribe Section 20 or Section 260, read it aloud and have students transcribe the words onto paper. Don't separate students into two groups, but instead have each of them transcribe Section 20 first, and then quickly read to them the Section 260—knowing of course that they will not be able to keep up or transcribe such dense text. Debrief with them what they were feeling or thinking as you kept reading it.

Secondly, show students the Voter Suppression Today Handout and strongly remind them that voter suppression is not a fight that is over. They can join the modern-day civil rights movement by continuing the march toward justice for all people. The march continues!

In Part “A” of the Literacy test people were given a section of the Alabama Constitution to read aloud. The sections were taken from a big, loose-leaf binder. Some were easier than others. If white applicants were given a test at all—and most often they were not—they generally got an easy one, like Section 20 below. The registrar would make sure that Black applicants would get much more difficult sections, like Section 260 below. These sections would be filled with legalese and long, convoluted sections. The registrar marked each word that he felt were mispronounced. In some counties, people even had to orally interpret the section to the registrar’s satisfaction. The register’s office sometimes made Blacks copy out by hand a section of the constitution or write it down from dictation as they purposefully mumbled it. White applicants were allowed to copy, but Black applicants had to take dictation. The registrar would then judge whether a person was “literate” or “illiterate.” His judgment was final and could not be appealed.

**A white applicant might be given this section:**

Section 20: That no person shall be imprisoned for debt.

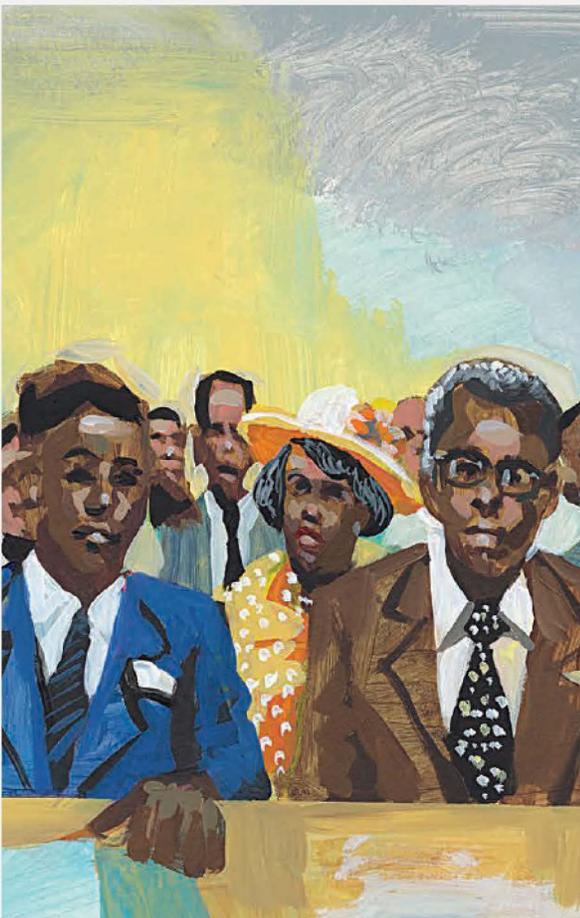
**While a Black applicant might be given this section:**

Section 260: The income arising from the sixteenth section trust fund, the surplus revenue fund, until it is called for by the United States government, and the funds enumerated in sections 257 and 258 of this Constitution, together with a special annual tax of thirty cents on each one hundred dollars of taxable property in this state, which the legislature shall levy, shall be applied to the support and maintenance of the public schools, and it shall be the duty of the legislature to increase the public school fund from time to time as the necessity therefor and the condition of the treasury and the resources of the state may justify; provided, that nothing herein contained shall be so construed as to authorize the legislature to levy in any one year a greater rate of state taxation for all purposes, including schools, than sixty-five cents on each one hundred dollars’ worth of taxable property; and provided further, that nothing herein contained shall prevent the legislature from first providing for the payment of the bonded indebtedness of the state and interest thereon out of all the revenue of the state.

But, wait! There was more! After Part “A” there was also “B” and “C” as well. They included some 30-plus difficult and obscure facts.

**Here are a couple of examples:**

- In what year did the Congress gain the right to prohibit the migrations of persons to the states?
- If a bill is passed by Congress and the President refuses to sign it and does not send it back to Congress in session within the specified period of time, is the bill defeated or does it become law?
- If a person charged with treason denies his guilt, how many persons must testify against him before he can be convicted?
- If the president does not wish to sign a bill, how many days is he allowed in which to return it to Congress for reconsideration?



Do you think that voter suppression is a thing of the past? It's not! Here are 50 (and this isn't even all of them) forms of voter suppression that still occur today.

1. Strict voter photo ID laws
2. Closing of DMVs in strict voter ID law states
3. Failure to accept government-issued state university and college student ID's
4. No early voting
5. Early voting cuts
6. No Sunday Souls to the Polls Early Voting
7. Harsh requirements/punishments for voter registration groups
8. Tough Deputy Registrar Requirements
9. Harsh voter registration compliance deadlines
10. Failure to timely process voter registrations
11. Cuts to Election Day (Same Day) registration
12. Polling place reductions or consolidations
13. Polling place relocations
14. Inadequate or poorly trained staffing at polls
15. Inadequate number of functioning machines, optical scanners, or polling books
16. Running out of ballots at polling sites
17. No paper ballots
18. Failure to accept Native American tribal IDs
19. Barring Native American voters through residential address requirements
20. Failure to place polling sites on Native American lands
21. Refusal to place polling sites on college campuses
22. Lack of available public transportation to polling sites
23. Excessive Voter purging
24. Disparate racial treatment at polling sites
25. Student voting restrictions
26. Ex-felon disenfranchisement laws
27. Requiring Payment of Fines or Fees as Condition of Vote Restoration

28. Failure to Inform Formerly Incarcerated Persons of Their Voting Rights
29. Excessive Use of Inactive voter lists
30. No Public Outreach or Notification to Voters Placed on Inactive Lists
31. Language discrimination and failure to accommodate
32. Lack of language-accessible materials
33. Failure to accommodate voters with disabilities
34. No disability accessibility
35. No Curbside Voting
36. Not enough disability accessible voting equipment
37. Barriers to assistance by family members or others for voters
38. Deceptive practices—flyers and robocalls
39. Voter intimidation—impersonating law enforcement personnel or immigration officers
40. Police at polling places
41. Racial gerrymandering
42. Creating polling confusion by splitting Black precincts
43. Partisan gerrymandering
44. Barriers for homeless voters to voter registration
45. Voter caging—use of one-time post cards/mailers
46. Voter challengers at polls
47. Voter challenges to voter registration lists
48. Use of Suspense lists
49. Absentee Ballot Short Return Deadlines
50. Exact match requirements for signatures or other information



Source:

[www.votingrightsalliance.org/forms-of-voter-suppression](http://www.votingrightsalliance.org/forms-of-voter-suppression)

Alice Faye Duncan, the author of *Evicted!*, did extensive firsthand field research to write this book. She interviewed several aging voters in Fayette County who participated in the 1959 voting rights struggle. These lessons has students digging into the history of their own family members' voting experiences to capture some family history that gives nuance to *Evicted!* and helps connect the stories in the book to their own families and lives.

### OBJECTIVES

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- Students will learn about the power of oral histories and interviewing.
- Students will make connections to *Evicted!* to show comprehension of the story.

### TIME AND MATERIALS

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- Two classes—one to introduce the interview and a second day for students to share
- A copy of the handouts for each student

We can learn a lot from the collective stories we tell each other. That is what makes *Evicted!* very powerful. Each student's family in class has stories around voting, and this is a chance for students to do what Alice Faye Duncan did and interview their wise elders. Make it as simple as possible and just invite students to ask elders in their lives what they remember about the first time they voted. How old were they? Were there barriers to voting and, if so, what were they? Students will write a short biography of who they chose to interview and why they chose them.

Students can just listen and then write up a short summary on the Oral History Handout later. After that, have them write one more paragraph where they make connections to the narratives in *Evicted!*. How was the story they heard from their wise elder the same or different than what they read/heard about in the book?

Below is an example of someone who did this very lesson. It can be copied as a model to give to each student, or simply read aloud so that students have an idea of what they are to do.

When students bring in their interviews, help them draw conclusions about voting rights, voting suppressions, and the unequal experiences that their peers have shared. Reinforce that voting suppression remains a key issue in elections today.

The long march toward justice and equality remains and we are all a part of it.

**Who I interviewed and why I chose them?** I called my grandmother who lives in West Virginia and asked her about my great-grandparents who were immigrants from Europe. I know that I have heard Grandma talk about them and how really patriotic they were about America, and so I wondered what their voting experiences were like. I remember that they were proud to become citizens.

**Here is what they told me:** I asked her what she remembered about my great-grandparents and voting. She lit up because she loves being asked about them. They died a long time ago. She said they just loved to vote and were always very proud to do it. They were poor immigrants from Romania and Austria and were so proud to get citizenship in America. Grandpa was a coalminer in West Virginia. The place where they voted was an old general store several miles away from where they lived. Grandpa used to have to walk to that store for work each day and it was a long walk. Grandma said that on the day they were to vote that the political party they were a part of actually sent a car to their house and picked them up to take them to the general store to vote! After my Grandpa voted, they even gave him a shot of whiskey! (Grandma told me not to write that part!) Then they drove them back to their home. She said that this was such a big deal to them and made them feel very, very important.

**How this connects to the story *Evicted!*** The thing I thought of right away is that my great-grandparents were white and how weird that the political party actually drove and picked them up to make sure that they voted. I know that Grandma has mentioned the Black people that lived near her and who also worked in the coalmines, so I asked her if she knew anything about their experiences and she did not recall anything. My grandma is eighty-eight years old right now, and so this would have been about one-hundred years ago. The story of *Evicted!* happened over sixty years ago and I can't imagine that voting rights were any better at that time, so the fact that someone in my great-grandparents' political party drove and picked them up really shows how unequal voting was for white people and Black people. Plus, I just can't believe grandpa also got a shot of whiskey! What a story! I'm glad we did this interview because I would have never known this story.

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**Who I interviewed and why I chose them?**

**Here is what they told me:**

**How this connects to the story *Evicted!***