**During our upcoming unit, we will be reading a novel in which an African American man is charged with raping a young white woman. The main character’s father chooses to defend this man, even though he knows he will not receive a fair trial. Read the article below about a similar TRUE LIFE event which occurred in the south in 1931. Then, answer the questions that follow.**

Nine black young men - Olen Montgomery (age 17), Clarence Norris (age 19), Haywood Patterson (age 18), Ozie Powell (age 16), Willie Roberson (age 16), Charlie Weems (age 16), Eugene Williams (age 13), and brothers Andy (age 19) and Roy Wright (age 13) - were accused of the rapes of Ruby Bates and Victoria Price on March 25, 1931, on the Southern Railway line running between Chattanooga and Memphis. Several people were "hoboing" on the freight train, including the nine black youths, two white women, and several white youths. Four of the African American boys, Patterson, Williams, and the Wright brothers, had hoped to find work hauling logs on the Missouri River. The women, Ruby Bates and Victoria Price (PICTURE BELOW), were Huntsville, Alabama residents who had gone to Chattanooga, Tennessee to find work in cotton mills. Failing to obtain those jobs, they jumped aboard this freight train back to Huntsville, completely without money. A fight began between the white and black youths, allegedly when a white youth stepped on Patterson's hand as he hung on to the side of a tank car, just west of the Lookout Mountain tunnel. The fight involved name-calling, stone-throwing and fisticuffs. Most of the white youths were forced off the slow-moving train near Stevenson, Alabama. Several of them told the stationmaster about the fight and said they wanted to press charges.

A posse of some fifty white men armed with shotguns, rifles and pistols prepared for their arrival. Before the train stopped about 2 p.m., the posse had searched all forty-eight cars. Within ten minutes, they had arrested the black youths at gunpoint. From this time until the first trial twelve days later, none of the boys were permitted to call or speak to anyone, including each other. The initial arrest was for the assault and attempted murder of the white youths ejected from the train at Stevenson.

The posse was surprised to find Ruby Bates and Victoria Price on the train, dressed in men's overalls covering dresses. When discovered, the two women scrambled out of the gravel gondola car in which they had been riding. They ran in the direction of the engine, where they encountered three members of the posse coming the other way. They turned and started to run back in the other direction where other members of the posse stopped them. Deputy Latham ordered some of the men to take them to wait in the shade of a nearby gum tree, while they tied the African American boys together and hauled them 20 miles on a flatbed truck to the jail in Scottsboro, Alabama.

Twenty minutes after the train left Paint Rock, its station agent W. H. Hill asked the women whether any of the "negroes" had bothered them. At that point, Ruby Bates told Hill that they had been raped by them. Agent Hill quickly reported that accusation to Deputy Latham. Upon hearing this accusation, Sheriff Wann sent the women to be examined by two doctors. Scottsboro doctor, R. R. Bridges and his assistant, Dr. John Lynch, examined them within two hours of the alleged rapes. The doctors found little evidence of a violent attack. Bates and Price were arrested and jailed for several days, pending charges. It was alleged that Victoria Price was a known prostitute but charges in this regard were never filed and the women were released. A widely shown photo shows the two women shortly after the arrests in 1931, still in their hobo dress and still on very friendly terms.

Sheriff Matt WannIn the Jim Crow South, a black male was said to risk lynching by just looking at a white woman. Word quickly spread and a lynch mob gathered in front of the jail in Scottsboro and prepared to storm the jail. The crowd grew into the hundreds. Jackson County Sheriff Matt L. Wann barricaded the door to the jail. At 8:30 that evening, he decided to move the accused youths to a jail in another community, but could not, because the wires to the headlights on the squad cars had been cut. Mayor James David Snodgrass begged the crowd to leave; however, they refused and demanded that the youths be surrendered to them for immediate lynching. Alabama Governor Benjamin M. Miller, called in the National Guard to protect the jail. Authorities pleaded against mob violence by promising speedy trials and asking "the Judge to send them to the chair.” The editor of the local Scottsboro Progressive Age wrote, "If ever there was an excuse for taking the law into their own hands, surely this was one. Nevertheless, the People of Jackson County have saved the good name of the county and state by remaining cool and allowing the law to take its course."

1. **In 4-5 sentences, summarize the events which occurred in Scottsboro beginning on March 25, 1931.**

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1. **Do you believe the Scottsboro boys were treated fairly by the police and townspeople? Why or why not?**

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1. **In our country people are supposed to be “innocent until proven guilty.” Based on what you read, do you believe this is the case for the Scottsboro boys?**

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1. **Do you think the Scottsboro boys could receive a fair trial in Scottsboro?**

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