

Color and Character
Book Group Questions and Connections
colorandcharacter.org

Questions

What factors make a successful school? A strong community?

How do schools and the roles they play change as a society changes?

Can a school be understood apart from its political and community context?

What roles do legal and political decisions play in shaping a community's schools? How did those roles – and their relationship to each other – change during the period covered by Color and Character?

How did racial stereotypes and forms of discrimination change during the period covered by the book? What factors drove those changes?

How were legal, cultural, political and educational developments in Charlotte affected by shifts in national culture, politics and priorities?

How did economic shifts affect Charlotte, its residents, and its schools? How does the narrative link race and economics?

This book covers 80 years, a longer period of time than many historical works. What are the advantages of covering such a long period? What are the disadvantages? How does the overall story look different at different points in the narrative?

What does the book say about Charlotte as a city? The U.S. as a nation?

Can separate ever be equal?

Connections

What role did public schools play in the community/ communities where you grew up?

What political forces were at work in the communities where you grew up? What tensions existed? Was there a push for change, or an acceptance of the status quo? Did you have opportunities to stand up for your beliefs?

What actions have been taken to bring diverse groups of students together at schools you attend/ have attended? What tensions between different groups of students have you experienced?

From your experience, how does a city's overall racial climate affect what happens in its schools?

Have you experienced racial, ethnic or economic stereotyping? How have you and your family/peers/community dealt with that stereotyping?

On page 171, civil rights lawyer James Ferguson argues that "If we are to move beyond our sorry racial past, we must be willing to have an honest discussion about race, something we have never had as a community." Do you agree with that statement? What would "an honest discussion about race" look like?

What do you think public schools should seek to accomplish?

Is the never-ending process of creating and maintaining integrated schools worth the effort required?