

## Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen

### Standards Focus: Exploring Expository Writing

Directions: Read the article below, then answer the questions that follow.

#### GIRL REPEATS STORY IN SCOTTSBORO CASE

The New York Times, Tuesday April 4, 1933

By F. Raymond Daniell

DECATUR, Ala., April 3. —Victoria Price, whose testimony two years ago at Scottsboro led Jackson County juries to condemn eight of nine Negro defendants to death, repeated her charges today before Judge James E. Horton and a jury in the Morgan County Court House at the first of the retrials ordered by the United States Supreme Court. Called to the witness stand by Attorney General Thomas E. Knight Jr. as the main witness against Haywood Patterson, the first of the nine prisoners placed on trial, she identified him unhesitatingly as one of six Negroes who, she testified, had attacked her on a freight train between Stevenson and Paint Rock. Her direct examination took just twelve minutes of the court's time. When it was finished she settled back in her chair, crossed her silk-stockinged legs and met a day-long attack upon her character and credibility with angry defiance. At times when Samuel S. Leibowitz, chief of defense counsel, pressed searching questions regarding her past, her lip curled and she snapped her answers in the colloquialisms of the "poor white." Mrs. Price entered an angry denial when Mr. Leibowitz asked if she had not concocted the whole story of the mass attack by the Negroes and forced Ruby Bates, the other victim of the alleged crime, to corroborate her story in order to forestall the danger of her own arrest for vagrancy or a more serious offense. She joined the Attorney General in challenging Mr. Leibowitz to produce the missing Bates girl to "ask her about it."

#### Shouts Answers to Questions

"That's some of that Ruby Bates' dope," she shouted in a voice that shook with anger. "You can't prove it," she shouted another time when Mr. Leibowitz promised to show the court that the condition in which doctors found her when she was examined at Scottsboro after an armed posse had taken the girls and the Negroes off the train on which the attack supposedly took place, was the result of her misconduct the night before in a hobo jungle on the outskirts of Chattanooga. Certified copies of court records from Huntsville where Mrs. Price lived with her widowed mother were offered by Mr. Leibowitz to show that prior to March 25, 1931, she had been arrested for offenses against the moral code. Judge Horton rejected one of the copies on the ground that an offense under the prohibition law is not a reflection on the credibility of a witness and barred the others on the ground that they charged violations of city

ordinances rather than State laws. Mrs. Price came to court wearing a black dress with a fichu of white lace at the throat. The little blue straw hat on her head was enlivened by a tall red feather sticking above the crown. A string of glass beads adorned her neck and on three fingers of her left hand were large and showy rings. She defended the testimony she had given with as much fire as she defended her reputation, heatedly denying at one moment that she had wrecked the home of a married woman with two babies, and in the next breath thrusting aside seeming inconsistencies in her testimony with apologies for her lack of education and faulty memory.

#### Doctor Describes Injuries

Although Mrs. Price insisted that she had fought the Negroes off until her strength gave out, and declared that her head was cut open by a blow from the butt of a pistol wielded by Patterson, Dr. R. R. Bridges, the Scottsboro, physician, who testified just before adjournment, said he had found only superficial bruises and scratches when he examined her. While the doctor was on the stand Judge Horton took a hand in the examination, showing particular interest in the physician's statement that neither Mrs. Price nor her companion, the Bates girl, were hysterical or nervous when they were brought to his office. Not until the next day, he said, did either of them show any signs of nervousness and then, after a night in jail, it manifested itself in tears. The star witness for the State told the sordid details of the crime before a crowded court with unabashed frankness and plain-speaking. She repeated the lewd remarks she said the Negroes made to her without the flutter of an eyelash and in a voice that carried to the furthest corner of the court room. The only women in the crowd which heard her story and the very clinical medical testimony which followed it were two visitors from New York. At times they looked as though they wished they had not come. There was little that was new in the testimony Mrs. Price gave under direct examination by Mr. Knight. She and the Bates girl, a mill worker like herself, decided she said to go to Chattanooga in search of employment. Wearing overalls over three dresses they wore to avoid

carrying hand luggage, she said, they hopped a freight train and arrived in Chattanooga on the evening of March 24, 1931.

### Sought Work in Chattanooga

There, Mrs. Price said, she was directed to the home of Mrs. Calli Brace, where she and Miss Bates spent the night. In the morning upon finding that jobs were as scarce in Chattanooga as in Huntsville she and her companion retrieved their overalls from the corner of the station where they had hidden them and started homeward on an outgoing freight train. They were in a gondola car with seven white boys, Mrs. Price declared when Patterson, with the other Negroes at his heels, jumped in from the top of a box car waving a pistol and ordering the white boys to "unload." Mrs. Price related all the rest of the conversation that she could remember without sparing any of the details. One of the printable remarks she attributed to the Negroes follows: "We're going to take you girls up North and make you our women." There was a fight in which all the white boys except one named Orville Gilley were thrown off the train soon after it left Stevenson, a way-station between Chattanooga and Scottsboro. Gilley, according to Mrs. Price, was afraid to jump off the train and said he would "rather stay in the car and die with these girls." Mrs. Price said that she too told the Negroes that she was "going to get off at Huntsville or die." The seven white men were rounded up and held in the jail at Scottsboro until the first trial of the Negroes was over. Only one of them, Gilley, was called upon to testify in the first trial, but it was indicated today that Lester Carter, another of the white hoboos, would be a surprise witness for the defense, if the State does not locate and call him first.

### Refuses to Go Over Crime Again

Mr. Leibowitz opened his examination of Mrs. Price, who had testified that she was 21 when the attack occurred, by asking if she was now 27 years old. "I ain't that educated that I can figure it out," she replied. The New York lawyer asked her to describe in detail how she resisted the Negroes. "Judge, you Honor, I've answered four times and I ain't going to say no more," she said as she turned to face Judge Horton. Once she protested that she could not understand the questions of Mr. Leibowitz. "Do I use words you don't understand?" he asked. "You speak them too fast," she said. The witness refused to identify a miniature train of box cars, gondolas and tank cars as similar to the freight train and the identification was made later by R. S. Turner, conductor of the train the girls had boarded at Chattanooga. He also testified that he had heard no shots or screams as he rode in the caboose, twenty-six cars behind the gondolas in which the attack is alleged to have occurred. Several times Mr. Leibowitz, angered at what he termed Mrs. Price's "speech-making," asked the judge to warn her to confine her remarks to answering questions. Twice Mr. Knight warned her to "be calm." When she leaned forward and screamed that Patterson had attacked her, Mr. Leibowitz said: "You're a little bit of an actress, aren't you?" "You're a pretty good actor yourself," she retorted. Mr. Leibowitz asked how many mills she visited in Chattanooga in search of work. "Its been two years ago and I disremember," she answered.

### Comprehension Check

*Directions: Answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate piece of paper.*

1. Mr. Leibowitz brings up the fact that prior to March 25, 1931, Mrs. Price was arrested for offenses "against the moral code." What do you think this means? Why do you think Leibowitz brought up this fact?
2. What sort of injuries did the doctor testify to? How did the women behave with the doctor on their first visit? Why might this be significant?
3. Why were the women headed to Chattanooga? What was unusual about the way they were traveling?
4. According to Mrs. Price, what happened when they decided to jump the train to go back home?
5. Describe similarities between the testimonies of Mrs. Price and Mayella Ewell.
6. **Bonus:** This article and the article on pages 17-19 were written by professional writers who should have been careful proofreaders. Find their mistakes, underline them in the story, and on a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the sentences as they should have been written for publication.