



Fire from the Rock by Sharon M. Draper

Subjects: African Americans—Fiction; School integration—Fiction; Race relations—Fiction; Family life—Arkansas—Fiction

Book Lists: Civil Rights



Sylvia Patterson lives in Little Rock, Arkansas in the year 1957. Sylvia is a smart young lady. She works hard in high school, listens to her parents and has recently noticed boys. She is also aware that her town has decided to comply with federal law and integrate the white high school next year whether the citizens or governor of Arkansas like it or not. She knows that the white city leaders will interview prospective black students and select only a few. They will select those they feel are most appropriate—blacks who work hard in school, can control their temper (because they will be provoked) and who can accept that they will not be allowed to join any school functions or belong to any school clubs. Sylvia's older brother, Reggie, desperately wants to be one of the lucky chosen few. But due to his short temper he is not selected.

Sylvia, however, is. She is shocked when her teacher, Miss Washington, asks her to consider being one of those special few chosen. Sylvia is a level headed young lady and considers her options. On the one hand, if she agrees to integrate, she will be giving up her senior

year with her new boyfriend and lifelong friends. She will not be able to be a cheerleader or attend school functions like her prom. She will be shunned by some blacks who think she is being uppity wanting to attend a white school. Plus, she will almost certainly be subjected to threats and possibly violence. On the other hand, she will be able to attend an excellent school and be part of something big, something bigger than herself, something that could make huge steps for future generations.

As Sylvia gets closer to the imminent first day of school, several acts of violence and prejudice begin to convince her that maybe she should just return to her own school. If you were Sylvia, what would you do? Go to a school where you are not wanted, where you are even hated by many? Or stay safe and leave change to someone else. Find out what Sylvia did, (*Pick up book*) read *Fire from the Rock* by Sharon M. Draper.