

from *Coming of Age in Mississippi*

Autobiography by Anne Moody

COMMON CORE

RI 3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text. **RI 6** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how content contributes to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

DID YOU KNOW?

Anne Moody ...

- went to college on a basketball scholarship.
- left the civil rights movement over concerns about black nationalism.
- rarely gives interviews or makes public appearances.

Meet the Author

Anne Moody born 1940

Anne Moody was one of many dedicated college students who were on the frontlines in the battle for civil rights. In her award-winning autobiography, she details the dangers she and other young activists faced as they challenged segregation laws across the South. Her unflinching descriptions of taunts, beatings, and intimidation reveal the violent realities of nonviolent protest. They also call to mind the words of Martin Luther King Jr., who commended these brave young men and women for “their sublime courage, their willingness to suffer, and their amazing discipline in the midst of great provocation.”

Climate of Fear Moody was the oldest of nine children born to desperately poor African-American farmers in rural Mississippi. When she was just nine years old, Moody began working after school as a maid to help her family pay for food and clothing. Periodic acts of racist violence effectively intimidated the black community in Moody's hometown. When local white supremacists set fire to her neighbor's shack, killing the family inside, her mother advised her, “Just act like you don't know nothing.” But Moody was part of a new generation that would no longer be silenced.

Dedicated Activist Moody first attended Natchez Junior College and later transferred to Tougaloo College, graduating in 1964. As a college student, she worked with major civil rights organizations such as the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Later, she became civil rights coordinator at Cornell University. Throughout her time in the movement, Moody faced constant threats to her life and worked to the point of exhaustion to integrate public facilities, extend voting rights, and promote literacy. Commenting on King's famous speech “I Have a Dream,” she once quipped, “We never have time to sleep, much less dream.” Often frustrated and discouraged at the slow pace of social change, Moody came to see the civil rights struggle as part of a larger fight for universal human rights. As she explained, “It's the fight of every ethnic and racial minority, every suppressed and exploited person, every one of the millions who daily suffer one or another of the indignities of the powerless and voiceless masses.” Her autobiography is a moving testament to the dedication and courage that inspired hundreds of thousands of people to take action for social justice.

Author Online



Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML11-1238

Negro Sitdowns Stir Fear Of Wider Unrest in South

By CLAUDE SITTON

● TEXT ANALYSIS: EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Anne Moody wrote this **eyewitness account** to document the violence she faced as a civil rights worker in Mississippi. Like a camera, Moody records events from her vantage point on the scene. She uses precise, factual **diction** to capture what she sees.

At exactly 11 A.M., Pearlma, Memphis, and I entered Woolworth's from the rear entrance.

Moody is not a journalist; rather, she is recording events as part of her personal story. Moody's **tone**, or attitude toward her subject, is for the most part objective as she describes what happens to her. However, she includes some subjective details about her thoughts and feelings, too.

But something happened to me as I got more and more involved in the Movement. It no longer seemed important to prove anything.

As you read Moody's account, think about how her perspective influences the way she describes events.

● READING STRATEGY: READING A PRIMARY SOURCE

Because Anne Moody had firsthand knowledge of the events she describes, her account is considered a **primary source**. From her recollections, you can learn about an important turning point in America's history and culture. Moody's **purpose** is to provide accurate background information to show the difficulties she and other African Americans faced.

In her account, Moody gives precise details about times and places:

Seconds before 11:15 we were occupying three seats at the previously segregated Woolworth's lunch counter.

Moody's careful attention to details helps validate her writing as a trustworthy primary source.

As you read, record in a chart like the one below specific details Moody includes in her account.

Details	Time	Place



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Who makes HISTORY?

Most people assume that history is made by great leaders, the ones who get their pictures in textbooks. But those leaders don't make history by themselves. Their achievements depend on the combined efforts of people like your parents, your teachers, and you.

DISCUSS Working in a small group, think of three or four historical events. In what ways did these events depend on the efforts of ordinary people? Make a list for each event.



Coming of Age in Mississippi

Anne Moody

BACKGROUND On February 1, 1960, four African-American college freshmen seated themselves at a whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, refusing to leave until they were served. Within a week, 300 people had joined the sit-in; within two months, sit-ins were being held in 54 cities across the South, most of them organized by college and high school students. By August 1961, more than 70,000 protesters, black and white, had participated in sit-ins. Students, impatient with the slow pace of change, had decided to confront segregation head-on. As you'll read in Anne Moody's account, those confrontations made the ugliness of racism impossible to ignore. Be warned that in relating the confrontations, Moody repeats certain offensive racial epithets.

I had counted on graduating in the spring of 1963, but as it turned out, I couldn't because some of my credits still had to be cleared with Natchez College. A year before, this would have seemed like a terrible disaster, but now I hardly even felt disappointed. I had a good excuse to stay on campus for the summer and work with the Movement, and this was what I really wanted to do. I couldn't go home again anyway, and I couldn't go to New Orleans—I didn't have money enough for bus fare.

During my senior year at Tougaloo,¹ my family hadn't sent me one penny. I had only the small amount of money I had earned at Maple Hill.² I couldn't afford to eat at school or live in the dorms, so I had gotten permission to move off campus. I had to prove that I could finish school, even if I had to go hungry every

Analyze Visuals ►

What details in the photo help convey the tension of the scene at the protest?

1. **Tougaloo:** Tougaloo College, a traditionally African-American college on the northern edge of Jackson, Mississippi.

2. **Maple Hill:** a restaurant in New Orleans where Moody had worked in the summer.

Left to right: John Salter, Joan Trumpauer, and Anne Moody, seated at the Woolworth's lunch counter



day. I knew Raymond and Miss Pearl³ were just waiting to see me drop out. But something happened to me as I got more and more involved in the Movement. It no longer seemed important to prove anything. I had found something outside myself that gave meaning to my life. **A**

I had become very friendly with my social science professor, John Salter, who was in charge of NAACP⁴ activities on campus. All during the year, while the NAACP conducted a boycott of the downtown stores in Jackson, I had been one of Salter's most faithful canvassers⁵ and church speakers. During the last week
20 of school, he told me that sit-in demonstrations were about to start in Jackson and that he wanted me to be the spokesman for a team that would sit-in at Woolworth's lunch counter. The two other demonstrators would be classmates of mine, Memphis and Pearlana. Pearlana was a dedicated NAACP worker, but Memphis had not been very involved in the Movement on campus. It seemed that the organization had had a rough time finding students who were in a position to go to jail. I had nothing to lose one way or the other. Around ten o'clock the morning of the demonstrations, NAACP headquarters alerted the news services. As a result, the police department was also informed, but neither the policemen nor the newsmen knew exactly where or when the demonstrations would start.
30 They stationed themselves along Capitol Street and waited.

To divert attention from the sit-in at Woolworth's, the picketing started at J. C. Penney's a good fifteen minutes before. The pickets were allowed to walk up and down in front of the store three or four times before they were arrested. At exactly 11 A.M., Pearlana, Memphis, and I entered Woolworth's from the rear entrance. We separated as soon as we stepped into the store, and made small purchases from various counters. Pearlana had given Memphis her watch. He was to let us know when it was 11:14. At 11:14 we were to join him near the lunch counter and at exactly 11:15 we were to take seats at it.

Seconds before 11:15 we were occupying three seats at the previously segregated
40 Woolworth's lunch counter. In the beginning the waitresses seemed to ignore us, as if they really didn't know what was going on. Our waitress walked past us a couple of times before she noticed we had started to write our own orders down and realized we wanted service. She asked us what we wanted. We began to read to her from our order slips. She told us that we would be served at the back counter, which was for Negroes. **B**

"We would like to be served here," I said.

The waitress started to repeat what she had said, then stopped in the middle of the sentence. She turned the lights out behind the counter, and she and the other waitresses almost ran to the back of the store, deserting all their white customers.
50 I guess they thought that violence would start immediately after the whites at the counter realized what was going on. There were five or six other people at the counter. A couple of them just got up and walked away. A girl sitting next to me

A EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Reread lines 1–15. In what ways do Moody's personal challenges motivate her to get involved in the civil rights movement?

COMMON CORE RI 6

B AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

Remember that one of Moody's overall purposes is to give detailed background information about an event during the civil rights movement. Reread lines 26–38. Then, summarize the timeline of the sit-in. Why does Moody give such specific details about the planning of the protest? What effect does her **diction**, or choice of words, have on her tone? How does her tone in this passage reinforce her central argument?

3. **Raymond and Miss Pearl:** Moody's stepfather and step-grandmother.

4. **NAACP:** National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, an organization that works to end discrimination against African Americans and other minorities.

5. **canvassers:** people who go from door to door to get support for a cause or gather opinions on an issue.

finished her banana split before leaving. A middle-aged white woman who had not yet been served rose from her seat and came over to us. “I’d like to stay here with you,” she said, “but my husband is waiting.”

The newsmen came in just as she was leaving. They must have discovered what was going on shortly after some of the people began to leave the store. One of the newsmen ran behind the woman who spoke to us and asked her to identify herself. She refused to give her name, but said she was a native of Vicksburg⁶ and a former resident of California. When asked why she had said what she had said
60 to us, she replied, “I am in sympathy with the Negro movement.” By this time a crowd of cameramen and reporters had gathered around us taking pictures and asking questions, such as Where were we from? Why did we sit-in? What organization sponsored it? Were we students? From what school? How were we classified?

I told them that we were all students at Tougaloo College, that we were represented by no particular organization, and that we planned to stay there even after the store closed. “All we want is service,” was my reply to one of them. After they had finished probing for about twenty minutes, they were almost ready
70 to leave.

At noon, students from a nearby white high school started pouring in to Woolworth’s. When they first saw us they were sort of surprised. They didn’t know how to react. A few started to heckle and the newsmen became interested again. Then the white students started chanting all kinds of anti-Negro slogans. We were called a little bit of everything. The rest of the seats except the three we were occupying had been roped off to prevent others from sitting down. A couple of the boys took one end of the rope and made it into a hangman’s noose. Several attempts were made to put it around our necks. The crowds grew as more students and adults came in for lunch.

80 We kept our eyes straight forward and did not look at the crowd except for occasional glances to see what was going on. All of a sudden I saw a face I remembered—the drunkard from the bus station sit-in. My eyes lingered on him just long enough for us to recognize each other. Today he was drunk too, so I don’t think he remembered where he had seen me before. He took out a knife, opened it, put it in his pocket, and then began to pace the floor. At this point, I told Memphis and Pearlina what was going on. Memphis suggested that we pray. We bowed our heads, and all hell broke loose. A man rushed forward, threw Memphis from his seat, and slapped my face. Then another man who worked in the store threw me against an adjoining counter.

90 Down on my knees on the floor, I saw Memphis lying near the lunch counter with blood running out of the corners of his mouth. As he tried to protect his face, the man who’d thrown him down kept kicking him against the head. If he had worn hard-soled shoes instead of sneakers, the first kick probably would have

Language Coach

Synonyms A synonym is a word with a meaning similar to that of another word. Synonyms of *sympathy* (line 61) include *accord* and *agreement*.

Use one of these synonyms to restate the woman’s statement in line 61.

Language Coach

Idioms An **idiom** is an expression whose overall meaning is different from the meaning of the individual words. “All hell broke loose” (line 87) means “everything was suddenly chaotic and confusing.” In what way did things get out of control?

6. **Vicksburg:** a city in Mississippi, west of Jackson.

killed Memphis. Finally a man dressed in plain clothes identified himself as a police officer and arrested Memphis and his attacker. **C**

Pearlena had been thrown to the floor. She and I got back on our stools after Memphis was arrested. There were some white Tougaloo teachers in the crowd. They asked Pearlena and me if we wanted to leave. They said that things were getting too rough. We didn't know what to do. While we were trying to make
100 up our minds, we were joined by Joan Trumpauer.⁷ Now there were three of us and we were integrated. The crowd began to chant, "Communists, Communists, Communists." Some old man in the crowd ordered the students to take us off the stools.

"Which one should I get first?" a big husky boy said.

"That white nigger," the old man said.

The boy lifted Joan from the counter by her waist and carried her out of the store. Simultaneously, I was snatched from my stool by two high school students. I was dragged about thirty feet toward the door by my hair when someone made them turn me loose. As I was getting up off the floor, I saw Joan coming back
110 inside. We started back to the center of the counter to join Pearlena. Lois Chaffee, a white Tougaloo faculty member, was now sitting next to her. So Joan and I just climbed across the rope at the front end of the counter and sat down. There were now four of us, two whites and two Negroes, all women. The mob started smearing us with ketchup, mustard, sugar, pies, and everything on the counter. Soon Joan and I were joined by John Salter, but the moment he sat down he was hit on the jaw with what appeared to be brass knuckles. Blood gushed from his face and someone threw salt into the open wound. Ed King, Tougaloo's chaplain, rushed to him. **D**

At the other end of the counter, Lois and Pearlena were joined by George
120 Raymond, a CORE⁸ field worker and a student from Jackson State College. Then a Negro high school boy sat down next to me. The mob took spray paint from the counter and sprayed it on the new demonstrators. The high school student had on a white shirt; the word "nigger" was written on his back with red spray paint.

We sat there for three hours taking a beating when the manager decided to close the store because the mob had begun to go wild with stuff from other counters. He begged and begged everyone to leave. But even after fifteen minutes of begging, no one budged. They would not leave until we did. Then Dr. Beittel, the president of Tougaloo College, came running in. He said he had just heard what was happening.

130 About ninety policemen were standing outside the store; they had been watching the whole thing through the windows, but had not come in to stop the mob or do anything. President Beittel went outside and asked Captain Ray to come and escort us out. The captain refused, stating the manager had to invite him in before he could enter the premises, so Dr. Beittel himself brought us out.

C EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Reread lines 90–95. Identify details that convey the danger of the protesters' situation. What is surprising about Moody's **tone** in this passage?

D GRAMMAR AND STYLE

Reread lines 113–118. Note how Moody uses a serious tone and strong **verbs** and **verbals** like *smearing* and *gushed* to recreate the mood of the violent scene.

7. **Joan Trumpauer**: a white classmate of Moody's from Tougaloo College, who had been active in voter registration.

8. **CORE**: Congress of Racial Equality, a civil rights organization that coordinated marches and demonstrations in the 1960s.



Anne Moody and other protesters leaving the sit-in

He had told the police that they had better protect us after we were outside the store. When we got outside, the policemen formed a single line that blocked the mob from us. However, they were allowed to throw at us everything they had collected. Within ten minutes, we were picked up by Reverend King in his station wagon and taken to the NAACP headquarters on Lynch Street.

140 After the sit-in, all I could think of was how sick Mississippi whites were. They believed so much in the segregated Southern way of life, they would kill to preserve it. I sat there in the NAACP office and thought of how many times they had killed when this way of life was threatened. I knew that the killing had just begun. “Many more will die before it is over with,” I thought. Before the sit-in, I had always hated the whites in Mississippi. Now I knew it was impossible for me to hate sickness. The whites had a disease, an incurable disease in its final stage. What were our chances against such a disease? I thought of the students, the young Negroes who had just begun to protest, as young interns. When these young interns got older, I thought, they would be the best doctors in the world
150 for social problems. **E**

Before we were taken back to campus, I wanted to get my hair washed. It was stiff with dried mustard, ketchup and sugar. I stopped in at a beauty shop across the street from the NAACP office. I didn’t have on any shoes because I had lost

E EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Reread lines 140–150. In what ways have Moody’s attitudes and beliefs changed due to her experience at the sit-in?

them when I was dragged across the floor at Woolworth's. My stockings were sticking to my legs from the mustard that had dried on them. The hairdresser took one look at me and said, "My land, you were in the sit-in, huh?"

"Yes," I answered. "Do you have time to wash my hair and style it?"

"Right away," she said, and she meant right away. There were three other ladies already waiting, but they seemed glad to let me go ahead of them. The hairdresser
160 was real nice. She even took my stockings off and washed my legs while my hair was drying.

There was a mass rally that night at the Pearl Street Church in Jackson, and the place was packed. People were standing two abreast in the aisles. Before the speakers began, all the sit-inners walked out on the stage and were introduced by Medgar Evers.⁹ People stood and applauded for what seemed like thirty minutes or more. Medgar told the audience that this was just the beginning of such demonstrations. He asked them to pledge themselves to unite in a massive offensive against segregation in Jackson, and throughout the state. The rally ended with "We Shall Overcome" and sent home hundreds of determined people. It
170 seemed as though Mississippi Negroes were about to get together at last. **F**

Before I demonstrated, I had written Mama. She wrote me back a letter, begging me not to take part in the sit-in. She even sent ten dollars for bus fare to New Orleans. I didn't have one penny, so I kept the money. Mama's letter made me mad. I had to live my life as I saw fit. I had made that decision when I left home. But it hurt to have my family prove to me how scared they were. It hurt me more than anything else—I knew the whites had already started the threats and intimidations. I was the first Negro from my hometown who had openly demonstrated, worked with the NAACP, or anything. When Negroes threatened to do anything in Centreville, they were either shot like Samuel O'Quinn or run
180 out of town, like Reverend Dupree.¹⁰

I didn't answer Mama's letter. Even if I had written one, she wouldn't have received it before she saw the news on TV or heard it on the radio. I waited to hear from her again. And I waited to hear in the news that someone in Centreville had been murdered. If so, I knew it would be a member of my family. 

Language Coach

Interjections An interjection is a word used to show emotion, such as "my land" in line 156. Similar interjections include "my goodness" and "oh, my." What emotion is the hairdresser showing? Why does she feel that emotion?

F PRIMARY SOURCE

Reread lines 162–170.

What does this paragraph tell you about the rally? Why would rallies like the one described be important to the success of the movement?

9. **Medgar Evers:** civil rights leader and organizer for the NAACP in Mississippi from 1954 until 1963, when he was killed by a sniper.

10. **Centreville . . . Samuel O'Quinn . . . Reverend Dupree:** In Centreville, the Mississippi town where Moody grew up, Samuel O'Quinn had been suspected of being associated with the NAACP. The Reverend Dupree had mentioned the NAACP in a sermon he preached.

Revolutionary Dreams

Nikki Giovanni



Love Letter I (1971), Charles Wilbert White. Color lithograph, 30" x 22 1/2". Gift of June Wayne. Image © 2007 Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. 1974.99.158.(B-27792)/PR. © 1971 The Charles White Archives.

i used to dream militant
dreams of taking
over america to show
these white folks how it should be
5 done
i used to dream radical dreams
of blowing everyone away with my perceptive powers
of correct analysis
i even used to think i'd be the one
10 to stop the riot and negotiate the peace
then i awoke and dug
that if i dreamed natural
dreams of being a natural
woman doing what a woman
15 does when she's natural
i would have a revolution

Comprehension

1. **Recall** What kinds of abuses were directed at the protesters during the sit-in?
2. **Recall** What role did the police play in the sit-in?
3. **Clarify** Why didn't the protesters fight back?

Text Analysis

4. **Make Inferences** After the sit-in, why was Anne Moody worried that a member of her family would be killed?
5. **Draw Conclusions from a Primary Source** Review the chart you created as you read. How does Moody's record of these events add to the validity of the account as a trustworthy primary source document?
6. **Synthesize Details** In what ways were students critical to the success of the movement? Use details from the background and the selection in your answer.
7. **Analyze Author's Perspective** Consider what you learn about Moody's character and private life from the account. What factors contributed to her decision to take action and become part of history? Be specific in your answers.
8. **Evaluate an Eyewitness Account** In your opinion, is Moody a credible reporter of events? In your answer, consider each of the following aspects of her account:
 - presentation of facts (lines 31–38)
 - diction and tone (lines 106–118)
 - opinions expressed (lines 140–147)
 - character traits (lines 171–180)
9. **Compare Texts** Reread the poem on page 1247. In what ways are Nikki Giovanni's thoughts about social change similar to Moody's? Cite details in your answer.

Text Criticism

10. **Different Perspectives** Anne Moody and Martin Luther King Jr., provide different views of the struggle for civil rights: that of a rank-and-file activist and that of a movement leader. In what ways do their accounts reflect their different roles within the movement? Support your answer with details.

COMMON CORE

RI 3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text. **RI 6** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how content contributes to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

Who makes **HISTORY?**

When you consider great people from history, do you also think about everyone who helped make them great? Anne Moody mentions several people who helped her and her friends during and after the sit-in. In your opinion, how important was the contribution of these people? Explain your answer.

Language

◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Create Mood

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 1244. **Mood** is the feeling that a writer creates for the reader through such elements as **word choice, imagery, and tone**. Moody's account has a tense, serious mood. She uses plain, powerful language, avoiding sensationalism to let the mob's actions speak for themselves.

Simultaneously, I was snatched from my stool by two high school students. I was dragged about thirty feet toward the door by my hair when someone made them turn me loose. (lines 107–109)

The author's choice of strong **verbs** like *snatched* and *dragged* allows her to convey the violence of the scene while maintaining a calm, controlled tone. Note that Moody uses straightforward **declarative sentences** to describe her experiences, without adding details about her own responses to what occurs.

PRACTICE The following paragraph is written to create a tense, dramatic mood. Rewrite the paragraph, adjusting word choice, imagery, and tone to create a lighter, more comic mood. A sample beginning is provided for you.

We all sat quietly, waiting for news. My palms began to sweat and I had trouble swallowing. I looked over at my friend, seated two rows away, but I couldn't catch her eye. She looked like she was about to cry. I was hoping the news wouldn't be as bad as we feared. Then, the door opened and he walked in. I couldn't believe it. All the rumors were true: we'd been assigned the toughest teacher in the entire school for homeroom. It was going to be a long, long year.

EXAMPLE

"Hi, everybody!" our new teacher said, holding a bunch of balloons. "Welcome to homeroom!"

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Expand your understanding of Moody's account by responding to this prompt. Then, use the **revising tips** to improve your report.

WRITING PROMPT

WRITE AN EYEWITNESS REPORT An effective eyewitness report puts the reader in the midst of the action while providing the context needed to understand the events described. Write a **three- to five-paragraph eyewitness report** on an event of your choosing, such as a sporting event or a community gathering. Use precise details and a clear, logical structure to make the event accessible to your audience.

REVISING TIPS

- Use descriptive language to describe the event.
- Use action verbs to show rather than tell.
- Choose an appropriate tone for your subject matter.
- Include an explanation of why the event was meaningful to you.

COMMON CORE

L 5b Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations. **W 3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. **W 3d–e** Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters; provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

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