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STEPPING OVER THE LINE OF SEGREGATION – THE VISUAL ARGUMENT OF PICTUREBOOK NARRATIVES FROM THE SIT-IN MOVEMENT

Abstract: Six decades after the historic sit-in movement, the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, once an epicentre of the Civil Rights Movement, still exhibits de facto segregation along racial divides. The division within the city of Greensboro poses a question that many places in the U.S. struggle to answer: how to address a painful history while promoting optimism for the future. This paper advocates for the use of storytelling in children’s picturebooks which have been cited as one of the most effective tools for encouraging social action and promoting positive societal values.

The article discusses two picturebooks, *Sit-in Movement: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (2010) and *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-ins* (2007). The analysis of the picturebooks draws on the working strategies of O’Rourke and Pace (2020), including the visual rhetoric of the illustrations, somatic rhetoric, elements of performative studies, and the legacies of the sit-ins.

Keywords: engaged literature, sit-in movement, African American children’s literature, picturebooks, visual rhetoric, somatic rhetoric, cultural memory

Streszczenie: Po sześciu dekadach od historycznego strajku okupacyjnego, miasto Greensboro w Północnej Karolinie, niegdyś epicentrum Ruchu Praw Obywatelskich, nadal doświadcza podziałów na tle rasowym. Segregacja w Greensboro stawia pytanie, z jakim mierzy się wiele innych miejsc w USA: w jaki sposób traktować bolesną historię jednocześnie torować optymistyczną przyszłość. Niniejszy artykuł sugeruje, aby w tym celu wykorzystać narracje zawarte w książkach obrazkowych dla dzieci, które są uznawane za najbardziej skuteczne narzędzia promujące akcje społeczne oraz pozytywne wartości.

Artykuł omawia dwie książki obrazkowe, *Sit-in Movement: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (2010) oraz *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-ins* (2007). Analiza oparta jest na strategiach opracowanych przez O'Rourke and Pace (2020), obejmujących retorykę wizualną ilustracji, retorykę somatyczną, elementy studiów performatywnych oraz spuściznę ruchu okupacyjnego.

Słowa kluczowe: literatura zaangażowana, ruch okupacyjny, afroamerykańska literatura dziecięca, książki ilustrowane, retoryka wizualna, retoryka somatyczna, pamięć kulturowa.

On July 25th, 1960, four black college students started a sit-in protest in Greensboro, North Carolina at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter, which served only white customers.¹ Known as the "Greensboro Four", they remained in their seats despite reprimands to leave. Their actions, marked by their passive resistance to violent segregationists, inspired other college students in the American South to carry out similar demonstrations inside restaurants and cafes over the next six months. The Greensboro sit-in protest and others ultimately contributed towards the end of the segregation in public places across the United States. Six decades after the historic sit-in movement, the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, once an epicentre of the Civil Rights Movement, still exhibits de facto segregation along religious, economic and racial divides. In his book *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Struggle for Freedom*, William Chafe made an insightful comment on the racial situation in Greensboro during the 1980s, "The realities of it are that it has not changed that much because the underlying issues of seriously listening to black concerns have not really infiltrated the political process" (1981:240). Furthermore, this statement could adequately be applied to the current state of the city, as it still has a considerably large black population and a continued geographic racial divide.

The division within the city of Greensboro poses a question that many cities struggle to answer: how to address a painful history while promoting optimism for the future. It is the view of this paper that the city of Greensboro must find a way to retell its history and take further steps to integrate its multiracial society. One of several institutions which has attempted to memorialize the history of the protest and help the community move forward is Greensboro's International Civil Rights Center and Museum, which is housed in the former Woolworth's building. Today, the museum's exhibitions and events encourage racial integration within the city and inspire visitors to rethink their position within a racially diverse community. On the sixty-second anniversary of the Greensboro Sit-in Movement, three participants of the protests shared their stories with ABC News and reflected on the current state

¹ These four black students, David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and Ezell Blair Jr. (Jibreel Khazan), were students at the North Carolina Agriculture and Technical College.

of racial divisions in Greensboro. Brenda James, who was a teenage activist in Greensboro during the movement, emphasized the need to draw on the past experiences to resolve current problems: “(...) if you don't remember your past, you're prone to repeat it. So, I think we need to understand from where we came up to now and then how do we move forward” (Ross & Su, 2022). Given the continued racial divide within Greensboro and countless other cities in the United States, this paper advocates for the use of storytelling through literature as an effective tool for the positive shaping of communities and the remembrance of the past.

The need to address those issues with their new narratives of the Civil Rights Movement has long been recognized by politicians, social activists, contemporary artists, and authors. Furthermore, the struggle for African American's social progress is widely recognized to have not yet come to an end, but to still be an ongoing process. In 2005, Jacqueline Dowd Hall formulated the term “long civil rights movement,” with which she complicated the context of civil rights in the United States (Hall, 2005). Hall believes there is a need to retell the story of the racial protests, maintaining that current dilemma cannot be resolved without focusing on the past. Being colour-blind to social issues, according to Hall, “impoverishes public discourse, discourages investment in public institutions, and undermines our will to address the inequalities and injustices that surround us now” (Hall, 2005:1262).

Among the many artistic and literary forms used for the retelling of history, children's picturebooks have been cited as one of the most effective tools for encouraging social action and promoting positive societal values. In the case of racial justice in the United States, African American children's picturebooks have recently become a popular genre for encouraging social action and promoting racial harmony. Whether fiction or non-fiction, these picturebooks provide readers with an outlet to visualize Black history while highlighting the need for further social change. In her book *Civil Rights Childhood* which discusses African American photobooks, Katherine Capshaw argues that many authors and illustrators of children's books use the strategy of masking: “(...) by placing the imperative for social action within a history book, the authors were, on one level, covert in their intentionality, suggesting that the books addressed the historical alone rather than the present moment” (Capshaw, 2014:68).

Engaged literature

The presence of political issues in children's books requires a discussion of the relationship between literature and ideology. In their study of engaged children's literature, Robyn McCallum and John Stephens argue that “No narrative is without an ideology, and since narratives for young readers maintain a primary focus on events and characters which are isomorphic with actions in the world inhabited by readers, they are always imbricated with ideological positions” (2011:370). Exploring ideologies conveyed within children's texts is essential especially in relation to books that deal with race issues and provide solutions to social and political problems. Transgression, which means exhibiting conflicting ideologies

and privileging one over another, is one of the basic concepts that are relevant to understanding ideology in children's literature. It entails showing the status quo as negative and proposing transformed patterns of behaviour. McCallum and Stephens believe that "Ideologies may thus serve to establish or maintain social dominance, as well as to organize dissidence and opposition" (2011:360). In picturebooks, ideology is communicated both through verbal text and illustration (Bredekamp, Dunkel & Schneider, 2015), more often implicitly rather than in an overt manner. Ideology operates through linguistic semiotic systems such as lexical selection or conversational dynamics, as well as by means of visual strategies like dress code or placement of characters within the scene.

The following sections of the article discuss two picturebooks, *Sit-in Movement: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* (2010), written by Andrea Davis Pinkney and illustrated by Brian Pinkney (Fig. 1), and *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-ins* (2007), written by Carole Boston Weatherford and illustrated by Jerome Lagarrigue (Fig. 2). Both books, as examples of engaged literature, tell the story of the Greensboro protests with simple narratives and elaborate illustrations. Although many scholars have studied the aesthetic qualities of the books, certain aspects remain relatively unstudied, such as the masking strategy used by the books' creators and the books' social and political impact on contemporary residents from historical locations which still face racial injustice. The authors of this paper argue that the books should be read as instructions on how to resist contemporary racial inequalities. Rather than being mere reflections of the historical turmoil they describe, the illustrations of rhetoric of resistance and protest found within picturebooks about the Greensboro sit-in movement provide accurate narratives of contemporary black life.

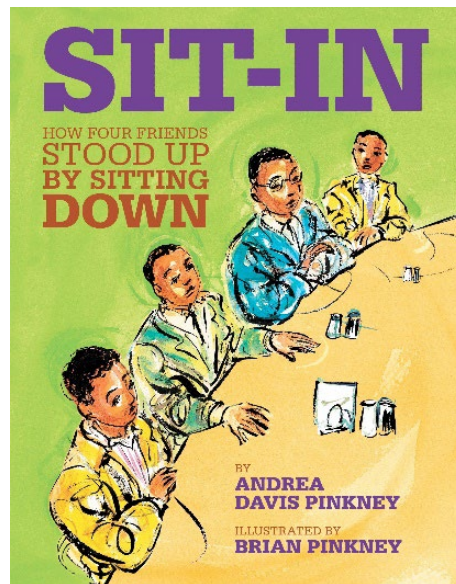


Fig. 1

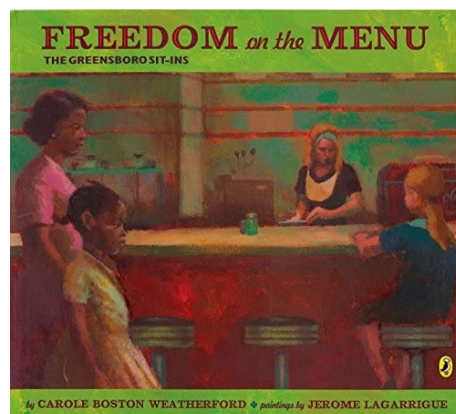


Fig. 2

The rhetoric of resistance

While both picturebooks present the Greensboro sit-in movement as a process rather than a single event taking place within a day, *Freedom on the Menu* focuses on how the segregation system in the town encouraged young people to take a stand, while *Sit-in* illustrates how the movement spread inside and outside of the town. Based on the rhetoric of resistance to the racial divide, both books end on a positive note, illustrating racial integration as the expected change.

Although there are many historical accounts of the sit-in movement, including visual materials and oral history reports, very few scholars have analysed

the rhetorical strategies from the protest. Sean Patrick O'Rourke's and Lesli K. Pace's collection of essays *Like Wildfire* (2020) is the most recent study which portrays the sit-ins as "essentially persuasive activities" (146). It reconsiders the protests from four perspectives: somatic rhetoric, analysing the body as the central site of rhetorical activity; visual rhetoric, focusing on the persuasive appeal of images; performative studies, explaining the persuasive power of human activity; and public memory studies, concerned with the ways of communicating the past and affecting future generations (O'Rourke & Pace, 2020). This and other existing research studies about the sit-ins are based on archival materials, including photographs, films, police reports, or interviews with the historical protestors. None of the studies, however, have analysed contemporary art or literary works. Namely, picturebooks have the potential to offer a new perspective of the story with a wide range of rhetorical strategies. Thus, this article fills the gap within the existing scholarship on the persuasive power of creative works to address pressing political issues.

The following discussion of the selected picturebooks draws on the working strategies of O'Rourke and Pace (2020) to explain how verbal and visual narratives can convey messages, including resistance to historical racial divisions and the assessment of contemporary issues, which may not be directly mentioned or masked within the stories. The analysis starts with the visual rhetoric of the illustrations which portray locations and people involved in the process of desegregation. Special emphasis is placed on the rhetoric of the body, the movements, gestures, and attire of both the black protestors and the audience of other races. Elements of performative studies are also applied, with sit-ins being described in terms of arranged theatrical performance. Finally, the discussion focuses on the legacies of the sit-ins and collective memory as a rhetorical act.

Visual arguments

Both picturebooks discussed in this article can be referred to as "picture narratives," a genre defined by Maria Nikolajeva and Carole Scott in their seminal work *How Picturebooks Work*: "Although there are some very short, simple sentences to accompany the pictures, the plot can be easily understood from the pictures alone" (2006:13). Verbal narratives play several roles in picturebooks: offering an independent story, expanding the visual narrative, or just reflecting on what is said in the verbal text. In the selected picturebooks, illustrations are more telling than the text. Words only support the verbal narrative with short descriptions, which are redundant in most pages, or with dialogues that are easily predictable. Thus, understanding the message of the books means understanding their visual arguments and how they present locations, people, emotions, and changing attitudes.

Freedom on the Menu tells the story of Greensboro Sit-ins from the perspective of a young girl. The book's illustrations reveal how she encounters the segregation system while shopping with her mother and walking around the town. She notices the signs informing the public about black and white spaces. In one of the pictures,

there is the following statement: “We cater to white trade only.” Another one shows a water fountain with the sign “Whites only.” The verbal text placed next to the illustrations includes short dialogues between the girl and her mother, who keeps telling her they are supposed to abide by the rules of segregation. In one of the pictures, we can see the girl drinking a Coca-Cola while standing, as she was not allowed to enter the lunch counter. Initially, the girl seems to accept the rule. However, she soon learns from her great-aunt Gertie from New York that it does not have to be like that. The elderly woman is portrayed while drinking water from a “white” fountain. She says: “I’ve never heard of colored water,” or “I’m too old for silly rules.” The girl seems to be encouraged to break the rules, which she actually does. In the next illustration we can see the young character using the “white” water fountain, like her great aunt, despite the fact that a white man is gazing at her.

The image of black students protesting at the lunch counter is the climax of the story. In the double-page illustration we can see a political act of resistance. The black protestors sit at the “white’s only” counter and patiently wait to be served. Meanwhile, the white figures keep a distance from the students and appear to ignore them; from this, it can be assumed that there is no chance that the black students will get what they want. Interestingly, at this moment, the girl observing the students seems to be convinced that civil disobedience is the right thing. She gets this message from her mother who concludes that “Some rules have to be broken.” There is one more character in the picture who draws the readers’ attention to this moment of the story. The presence of the white woman who seems to support the protestors adds a new voice to the story of racial segregation. She says: “I’m so proud of you. (...) I wish someone had done this sooner.” The readers are reminded that white Americans also understood the injustice of segregation and joined in the struggle for equality.

Beyond their focus on the Woolworth’s lunch counter, the books depict how the sit-ins spread across the Southern United States. The illustrations in *Freedom on the Menu* depict black families watching the protests on TV and reading newspapers with headlines such as, “Negro Students Stand Up by Sitting Down.” These images indicate how the protests spread from the lunch counters to the streets, and even black people’s homes. In his illustrations for *Sit-Ins*, Bryan Pinkney uses the strategy of extending the lunch counter. The first illustration depicts four students who initiated the protest while the following pictures include more protestors at a never-ending table swirling along the pages and finally making a circle around a white waiter who is serving everyone else in the restaurant.

The power of visual material cannot be underestimated in either of the books. Although the pictures are part of a longer narrative presenting a sequence of events, they can be also analysed individually, beyond the context of the stories. The pictures of the four black students sitting at the Woolworth’s lunch counter, included in both picturebooks, convey considerable information about the nonviolent protest, including how the students were treated by white people – waitresses, other customers, and the police. Each of the illustrations provides a single story within the series of events that ultimately ended the segregation system. For instance,

the picture of protesting students doing their homework or studying for tests while sitting at the lunch counter shows how they spent the long hours during their nonviolent protests. Many scholars maintain that these images helped the students win the struggle (Reed, 2019; O'Rourke & Pace 2020, 2021). Moreover, the protestors were well-dressed, well-behaved, well-organized, and determined to achieve their goals.

Somatic rhetoric

As O'Rourke and Pace point out in their study of the sit-ins, black students' bodies were the central sites of rhetorical activity. They were protesting with their bodies rather than voices. It was their mode of behaviour, their movement, gestures, and clothing that convinced other Americans to join them in their struggle for racial equality. Drawing on historical sources and analyses of the students' posture, the illustrators of the selected children's picturebooks introduce somatic rhetoric into their images to contrast the black and white approach to segregation.

One of the strategies employed by the illustrators is contrasting the non-violent style of the sit-in protests with the physical abuse the black students received. The illustration indicates a strong element of risk as the black students, in their best clothes, sit patiently at the lunch counter waiting to be served. In his illustrations for *Sit-in*, Pinkney portrays a number of situations as the risk continues to grow after each consecutive day of the protest. First, he focuses on how the white customers ignored the students, which is marked by an empty space between the black and white people sitting at the same counter. Another illustration portrays the figure of a white waitress who provides service to whites while refusing to serve the black protestors. Then there is the image of the police officer entering the place with a stick. He seems to find no problem with the students and leaves the lunch counter. But in the next illustration, we can see the owner of the restaurant pointing his finger at the police officer, more than likely telling him to remove the students. The following pictures show the growing number of student protestors. Their bodies cover a large space which extends far beyond the Woolworth's lunch counter. From here, the students continue to take even more risks. There is one image which specifically depicts the physical abuse the students experienced during the sit-in. We can see the silhouettes of angry white men dumping ketchup and pepper on the students' heads or pouring coffee down their backs.

The pictures showing the abuse of the human body have a clear affective dimension. Black bodies are placed in contested spaces, thus becoming the site of the actual struggle. Before the students sat down at the "white" lunch counters, they undoubtedly knew the risk they were taking. In fact, their intention was to be arrested and imprisoned, and thus draw people's attention to the unfairness of the segregation system. Despite their decent behaviour and looks, the students become victims of the angry crowd treating them as serious offenders. There is physical suffering involved as well as humiliation and shame. Admirably, the students do not respond with violence but accept the suffering for the cause

of desegregation. As O'Rourke and Pace observe, "The simplicity and purity of the act of sitting in, completed with dignity and grace with which most participants acted, lent to the sit-in movement a kind of sanctity difficult to find in other protest demonstrations" (2020: 103). The somatic rhetoric, exposing the bodily harm to individual protestors, adds a deep emotional aspect to the story. It makes readers easily imagine how they would behave were they to be in the shoes of those devoted students.

Sit-ins as performative acts

Many scholars and journalists describe the sit-in protests in theatrical terms (Kowal, 2004; Reed, 2019). They claim the students' participation in the movement was carefully planned, rehearsed, and finally staged with the expected results. As a result, they claim there was no spontaneity. The location was carefully selected, the protestors' attire was their Sunday's best, and they were well-versed in providing the right verbal response. As Rebecah Kowal rightly observes, people who were responsible for preparing black students for such risky endeavours "faced the kinds of decisions directors or choreographers confront concerning venue, mise-en-scene, casting, script, costumes, choreography, and audience" (2004:137). During their secret training sessions, they conducted role-playing activities that were supposed to help students when facing desperate situations.

Student protestors occupied spaces which were prohibited to them, and, paradoxically, these spaces became the stage for their performance. They positioned themselves in the centre of the stage while white onlookers, who had the privilege of accessing the place freely, gradually withdrew from the contested area. Thus, the sit-in protestors became political actors who proceeded until they achieved their goals.

The performance conventions are easily discernible in picturebook illustrations showing the process of preparing for the sit-ins and actual protests. In Pinkney's illustrations, black characters are proportionally larger than white people and almost always occupy central positions. The importance of the Greensboro Four is additionally marked with strong colours and lines. Their suits are painted with yellows, greens, and blues, making them more visible from the crowds of white onlookers or other protestors. All of this indicates who is to play the main role. The illustrator also portrays the students' learned responses to violence and attacks. It is always the same – while the white audience abuses them, the students never strike back and just sit still with great resolve.

The performative function of sit-ins is also emphasized in the illustrations depicting black families watching news coverage of the protests. One of the purposes of sit-ins was to be seen, as well as expose the reactions of onlookers. The Greensboro students appear on TV like celebrities. In doing so, they get the attention of both the authorities and from viewers of different races from across the country. They become widely recognized figures, known for their determination and nonviolent tactics. Consequently, they have crowds of followers and become leaders of a new group of protestors.

The sit-ins, as presented in the picturebooks, are not wordless performances. Although the story may well be understood from the visual material, the accompanying text adds to the theatricality of the protest. The inclusion of short dialogues between the students and the waitresses suggests the protest is an improvisational performance. It is common knowledge that protestors were provided with instructions on how to interact with the restaurant workers. The dialogues included in the books are rather sparse. The students start with making an order: “A doughnut and coffee, with cream on the side”, which is always ignored by the waitresses. In Pinkney’s book, this phrase becomes a refrain to the story, where it is used after verbal description of each stage of the movement. In the end, it is placed in large font as a conclusion to the story: “A doughnut and coffee, with cream on the side, is not about food – it’s about pride”.

Another phrase pointing to the performative character of the protest is the recipe for integration, which is a number of rules that bring racial segregation to an end. In his narrative, Pinkney uses the term “recipe” to refer to students’ idea of how to stop segregation. In response to “Whites only” signs, the author says, “This was the law’s recipe for segregation”. But then he mentions another recipe, the one used by the black students:

Those kids had a recipe, too.
A new brew called integration.
It was just as simple.
Combine black with white
To make sweet justice.
For them, integration was better than any chef’s special.
Integration was finer than homemade cake.
Integration was a recipe that would take time. (Pinkney)

The book ends with a recipe for integration consisting of ten steps. The combination of verbs often associated with food preparations with abstract nouns expressing positive ideas, such as “season with hope”, “fold in change” or “sprinkle with dignity,” suggests that integration is possible as long as one takes the right steps. As it is mentioned in the stories, the students’ recipe for integration is not only for the people of Greensboro, as it soon spreads to other locations and encourages other Black Americans to resist segregation in different communities throughout the South.

In her discussion of the verbal and nonverbal responses of the protesting students, Kowal writes about the ritual behaviour based on repetition of patterns, explaining that “protest organizers conventionalized/ ritualized their behaviour to enhance the communicative aspects of the performance as well as to limit the ambiguity of their message” (2004:140). In Pinkney’s and Weatherford’s stories, there is no ambiguity either. The message is clear – the students take a stand against segregation by following the guidelines established by the Student Executive Committee

for Justice and philosophy of nonviolent struggle advocated by Martin Luther King Jr. King's quotes are placed amongst the main verbal text and are emphasized through the use of larger font and more visible colours. This further clarifies the intentions and tactics of the protesting students. Among others, the following statements accompany the illustrations of the Greensboro Four in Pinkney's book: "We must . . . meet hate with love", "Be loving enough to absorb evil", or "We must meet violence with nonviolence". All these quotes remind the readers of the students' peaceful attitudes and notable courteous behaviour. They are also instructions for contemporary readers who witness race-related protests in their own lives. Thus, they can realize a defiant behaviour may lead to an alternate reality where race is no longer a matter of social division.

The legacies of the sit-ins

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees, "the right of the people peaceably to assemble". Protesting is perceived by many as not only an aspect of freedom and rights, but also as an obligation of U.S. citizens. In 1849, Henry David Thoreau came up with the concept of civil disobedience as "disobedience to the state", which he found essential in a democratic society. Many contemporary American scholars have continued to promote democratic citizenship, which is not a static position but a form of performance, or, as Robert Asen described, "Citizenship as a mode of public engagement" (2004:191). Citizenship performance is connected with contacting strangers or opponents, which always involves taking risks. In the example at hand, ordering a coffee and doughnut becomes a political act, which first involves physical and mental suffering, but finally leads to dramatic changes in racial relations on a national scale.

The Greensboro Sit-in protests continue to have a large impact on Americans' civic life. As Kelton Edmonds contends in his recent assessment of the sit-ins, "The student movement of 1960, ignited by the Greensboro Four, provided a blueprint for future students to build upon, perfect, and utilize in a variety of ways for a plethora of circumstances" (2020). He finds correlations between the student movement started by the Greensboro Four and more recent protests of 2014-15 in Ferguson, Missouri, and claims that the Greensboro Sit-ins strengthened the American protest tradition.

Although there is a myriad of historical accounts and media reports of the sit-in movement, they do not enshrine the cultural memory of the events as much as contemporary literary and art works. In most cases, the past materials are King-centric narratives that omit lesser-known episodes from the history of the Civil Rights movement, or to use O'Rourke and Pace's words, they incite "the forgetting process" (2020:8636). The authors and illustrators of picturebooks, on the other hand, expose the strength and determination of ordinary young people who recognized the need to protest and summoned the courage to occupy the contested spaces. In this way, they revive the easily forgotten initiators of the sit-in movement: the minor agents who contributed to the racial changes with their little acts of courage. Weatherford's story, for instance, includes an elaborate illustration

of a little Black girl being denied a place at the lunch counter and having a drink while standing, or the image of young black students being abused with food products in the restaurant. These pictures are certainly more memorable than standard photographs of the Greensboro Four just sitting at the counter. Added to this, the use of food metaphors in the selected picturebooks requires deeper reflection than mere historical facts. It is an effective strategy conveying the message of resistance to segregation rules. For instance, *Sit-in* includes a picture of President Lyndon Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ended segregation in public places. The page is accompanied with the following words: “They [black students] had taken a bite out of segregation. Now it was time to savor equality. Now they were ready for a big sip of freedom.” Finally, we learn that “integration sure tasted good,” which is reflected in the illustrations depicting crowds of Black Americans enjoying their meals at Woolworth’s. In *Freedom on the Menu*, it is the image of a banana split which serves as a symbol of racial equality. First, the young character is not allowed to have it inside the restaurant though there is an empty seat beside a white girl enjoying her dessert. Finally, after the protests have concluded, her family takes a trip downtown, where they can sit at the lunch counter, previously reserved only for whites. Now the girl gets her banana split inside the restaurant, which is a climax in the difficult path to racial integration.

Conclusion

Books can serve as eye-openers to contemporary readers who either witness or experience racial injustices in their lives, as modelled by the examined picturebooks on the Greensboro Sit-in Movement. The Greensboro students protested at the lunch counters because it was one of the public spaces which was divided within society. They were fully aware that racism extended far beyond the counters,

as it does today. Although it has been over seventy years since the Greensboro events, the Sit-in Movement remains relevant. The picturebook versions of the story reveal the narrative to the youngest of audiences who may not have realized yet that at some point in their lives they will need to perform virtuous citizenship, whether through the adversity of a civil rights issue, or a cultural or economic barrier. These stories make the readers aware of the fact that they must not always follow rules that limit their freedom. As Franklin McCain, one of the Greensboro Four, says in one of his public interviews: “Almost instantaneously, after sitting down on a simple, dumb stool, I felt so relieved. I felt so clean, and I felt as though I had gained a little bit of my manhood by that simple act” (Wilson 2020).

With the rhetoric of resistance hidden within the verbal and visual narratives of the stories, the books promote ideological equality which does not discriminate on the basis of race. By portraying the status quo of the 1960s and the attempts of young people to challenge the existing social order, the selected picturebooks engage readers in attitude formation. They transgress ideologies and build new realities.

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