

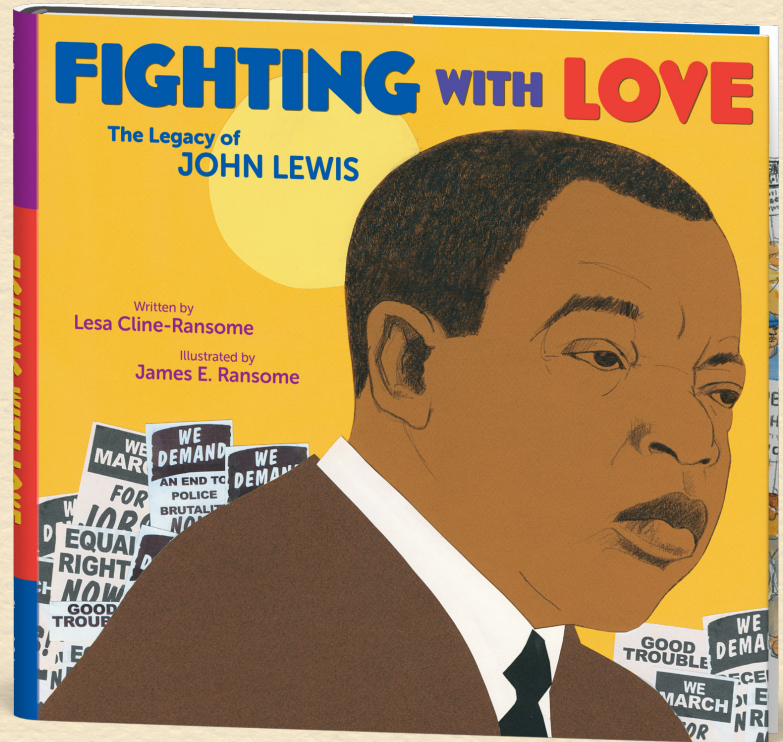
## A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

# FIGHTING WITH LOVE

## The Legacy of JOHN LEWIS

Written by  
**Lesa Cline-Ransome**

Illustrated by  
**James E. Ransome**



## ABOUT THIS BOOK

*Fighting with Love* chronicles the life of the late civil rights activist and leader John Lewis, who grew up surrounded by the love of his family. Despite this, he keenly felt the impact of segregation and understood the injustice of racism. One morning, after hearing Martin Luther King Jr. on a radio show, he was inspired to embrace nonviolent protest to “take a stand for truth and justice.”

The story unfolds as Lewis embarks on a mission to attain civil rights for all, taking part in pivotal events like the Freedom Summer Project, the March on Washington, and the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Throughout, Lewis tirelessly learned and practiced nonviolence, emphasizing, “Nonviolence is love in action.”

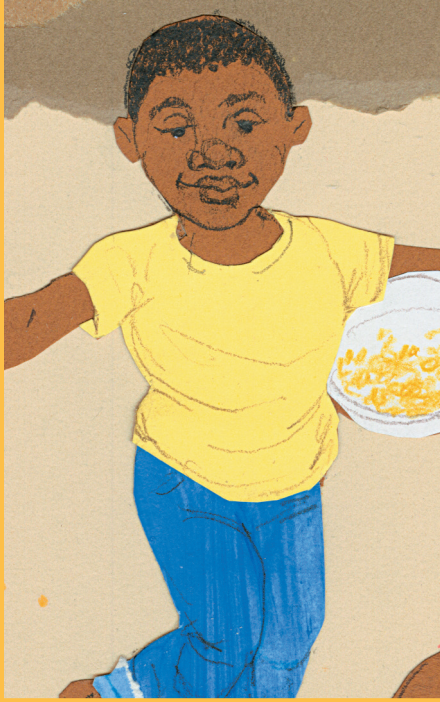
The narrative reaches a culmination at the start of the 1965 Selma march, leaving readers at both a literal and proverbial bridge—an impactful ending that sparks curiosity and the determination to continue learning, understanding, and taking action.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

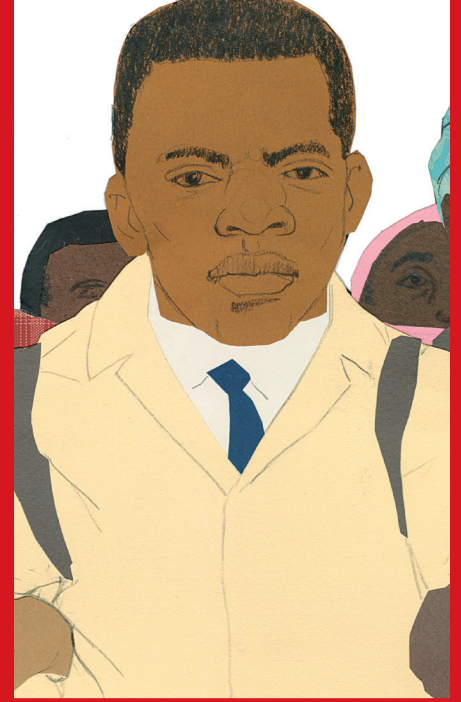
1. Who was John Lewis and what was he like...



**A:** as a boy?



**B:** as a college student?



**C:** as a young man?

2. What did John care about? How do you know?
3. When did John first begin fighting for Black people's civil rights?
4. What were some of the civil rights events John organized and participated in?
5. Why did John choose to practice nonviolence, using only peaceful ways to solve problems?
6. How did John's work help the Civil Rights Movement?





## Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: **LOVE IN ACTION**

1. What does it mean to fight with love?  
Why did John Lewis believe so strongly in this?
2. Faith is believing in something even if you can't see it.  
How did John's faith help him to fight for civil rights?
3. What happened in John's childhood  
that helped him to do civil rights  
work when he was older?
4. What lessons or  
ideas can we take  
from John Lewis's  
story?





## Craft and Structure:

# QUOTATIONS IN CONTEXT

Quotations are when we write or say exactly what someone else said. Quotations help us to understand people and their ideas without changing them. "Quotation marks" signal that we are reading someone's exact words. In *Fighting with Love*, author Lesa Cline-Ransome includes lots of quotations to help tell the story of John Lewis's life. Let's explore how the quotations help us gain a deeper connection to and understanding of the story.

In the fields, marching up one row and down another, John plowed and planted, chopped and picked alongside his family. One, two, three, four hundred pounds of cotton each day till their hands were bloodied. Insects, drought, low cotton prices, the white men's math that never added up to enough, all kept John's family working harder and longer, season after season.

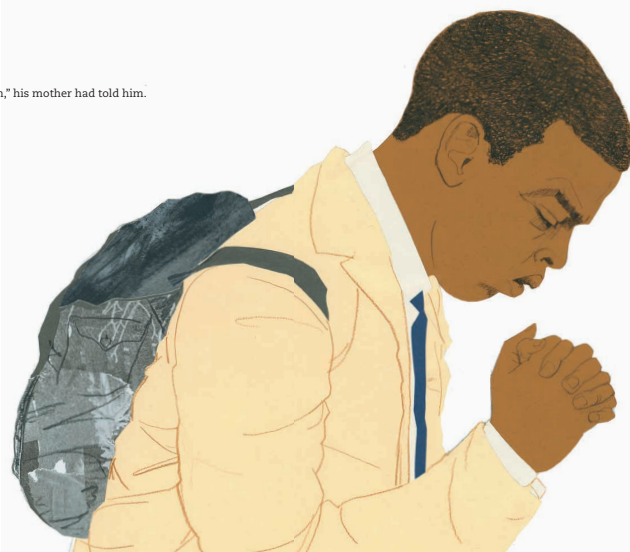
"Working for nothing," is what John mumbled to his parents as he dragged his cotton sack behind him.

"God's gonna take care of his children," his momma told him, and kept on, picking all day, praying all night.



**"God's gonna take care of his children." (pp. 8–9)**

"God's gonna take care of his children," his mother had told him.  
He bowed his head and prayed.



**"God's gonna take care of his children." (pp 36–37)**



**"When you see something that's not right...you have to do something." (p. 28)**

- ➔ What is happening in the story?
- ➔ To whom is Lewis speaking?
- ➔ What do you think this quotation means?
- ➔ What does the quotation tell us about the person speaking?
- ➔ Why do you think this quotation is important?



**"No child is born in hate." (p. 20)**

[illegible]

**"We want our freedom and we want it now." (p. 30)**



# COLLAGE

Throughout the book, illustrator James E. Ransome uses collage to create pictures that help tell the story of John Lewis. A collage is a form of art that takes different materials such as photos, fabrics, or objects and uses them together to express a new idea. Examine the following collage illustrations from the book. For each, consider the following questions:

1. What sorts of things do you see collaged in these illustrations?
2. How do the colors and materials make you feel?
3. Are there any images of patterns that are repeated?
4. What do you think the illustrator wanted us to pay attention to in this picture?
5. What do you enjoy most about these illustrations?



Winning one city meant others in the South could be won too. John missed his graduation because he was marching onto a Greyhound bus as one of hundreds of Freedom Riders, white and Negro protesters traveling together throughout the South during the summer of 1961. Atlanta and Anniston. Richmond and Rock Hill. Petersburg and New Orleans. Riding to desegregate buses and waiting rooms. At nearly every stop they were met by white mobs, barking police and their dogs, bomb threats, and angry chants.



Stop singing and start fighting, some folks told John. Why are Negroes the only ones going to funerals? others asked, after homes and churches were bombed. Bandaged and bruised, the Freedom Riders again climbed aboard.





## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. Write a letter as if addressing the late John Lewis, describing a time that you solved a problem by fighting with love. If possible, include a quotation of something you said that helped.
2. A fact is something true and real. Using the book, make a list of five facts you learned about John Lewis. On a separate piece of paper, create a collage to illustrate your list.
3. There are a number of other well-known civil rights activists mentioned throughout *Fighting with Love*. Choose one of the following figures and, using the library and other trusted resources, research information about the person you chose. Create a poster of that person, either drawing or using collage, and write out the information you learned.

a. Pastor James Lawson	d. Marion Barry
b. Diane Nash	e. Bernard Lafayette Jr.
c. Paul LaPrad	f. Ralph Abernathy
4. Have the class split into groups of three or four, and assign each an event from the time line in the back matter of the book. Using the library and other trusted resources, have groups research their event and present their findings to the rest of the class. Each presentation should include what the event was about, why it occurred and if the setting was important, who the people involved were, and how the event affects the country today.
5. Choose an event from the timeline located in the back of the book. Pretend you are a journalist and that you're going to interview John Lewis or another participant about that event. Write out your questions first. Then, using information from *Fighting with Love* and further research, write a paragraph summarizing what you learned and how you think your interviewee would have replied to each question.
6. Using the library and trusted Internet sources, research other nonviolent movements in America and around the world. Write a paper or create a presentation that includes the reasons for the build up to the movement or protest, how the movement was organized, when and how long it was, and the impact it had on the community. Make sure to note if the movements had a specific leader, with some information about them or their organization. A few other countries with notable nonviolent movements to consider are China, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Iran, Ireland, Libya, Russia, and South Africa, among many others.



## EXTENDING THE EXPERIENCE

### Read other books similar to *Fighting with Love: The Legacy of John Lewis*

*Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation*  
by Duncan Tonatiuh

*Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer: Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement*  
by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Ekua Holmes

*Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*  
by Doreen Rappaport, illustrated by Bryan Collier

### Read other books by Lesa Cline-Ransome

*Loud and Proud: The Life of Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm,*  
illustrated by Kaylani Juanita

*Counting the Stars: The Story of Katherine Johnson, NASA Mathematician,*  
illustrated by Raúl Colón

*Overground Railroad,*  
illustrated by James E. Ransome

### Read books illustrated by James E. Ransome

*The Bell Rang*  
by James E. Ransome

*On Her Wings: The Story of Toni Morrison*  
by Jerdine Nolen

*Be a King: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream and You*  
by Carole Boston Weatherford



**Melanie Kirkwood Marshall** holds a BA in Secondary English Education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a MEd in reading education from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has taught in many learning contexts from high school ELA teacher to primary literacy interventionist. Currently, Melanie is completing her doctoral studies in multicultural children's literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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