The Freedom Riders
After you watch the video, choose eight of the following questions and answer each in a 3-5 sentence paragraph.

1. Where in the South did Freedom Riders challenge segregation? Why did they choose those locations?

2. Where did the buses start their journey in early May? Where did they encounter trouble? What kind of trouble did they encounter?

3. Why did the first group of Freedom Riders stop their effort? Who led the next group of Freedom Riders so that the Freedom Rides could continue?

4. Who was the attorney general in 1961? Why did he send someone to Birmingham?

5. Why did the Freedom Riders have trouble getting a bus to leave Birmingham?

6. What happened when the Freedom Riders got to Montgomery?

7. How did John Seigenthaler, from the Attorney General’s office, respond to a question about whose responsibility the beatings were?

8. How did Alabama’s governor understand the Freedom Riders’ actions? Based on what you know about segregation in 1961, why do you think he might have perceived the actions that way?

9. What did the federal government do in response to the violence in Montgomery? What was the result of their actions?

10. Why were the Freedom Riders arrested in Mississippi?

11. What was the outcome of the Freedom Rides?
State Laws and Federal Laws
Segregation laws varied across the Southern states in 1961 when the freedom rides took place. But there were situations in which segregation was illegal throughout the country. One of those situations was interstate travel.

In 1946, in the *Morgan v. Virginia* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was illegal in interstate travel. In the 1960 *Boynton v. Virginia* case, the Court ruled that segregation was also illegal in bus terminals. Despite these rulings, segregation continued. Most African Americans did not challenge tradition and assert their rights because of the likelihood of violent white resistance. Nor did the federal government enforce the rulings.

In 1961, the freedom riders challenged segregation on interstate buses and in interstate bus terminals. In doing so, they also challenged the federal government to enforce the law.

*Answer each of the following in separate eight-sentence, accordion paragraphs:*

1. Many parts of Alabama had laws in 1961 that segregated public transportation and public facilities. Why, then, was it legal for whites and blacks to sit together on a bus traveling through Alabama on its way from Washington, DC to Louisiana?

2. Were the Freedom Riders breaking the law? Why or why not?