

Sample Pages from

# Exploring Tennessee

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# Exploring Tennessee

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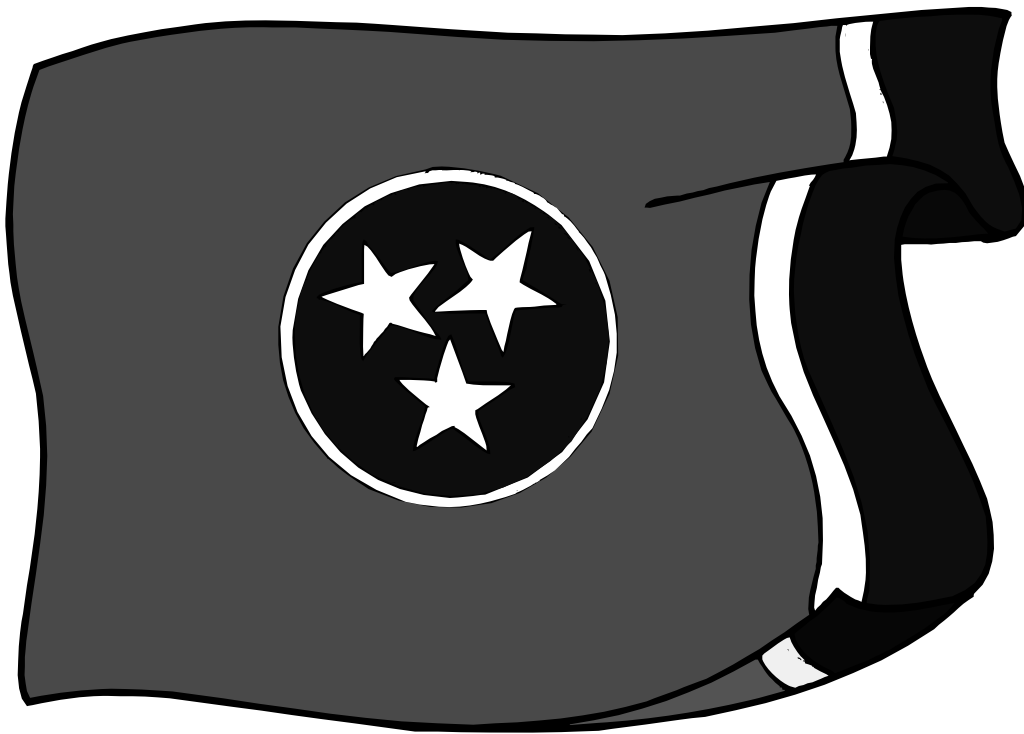
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# Exploring Tennessee

## Unit 4: European Explorers and Settlers in Tennessee

### Lesson 18

#### Who Are the Melungeons?

#### Early Encounters with the Melungeons

In 1673 James Needham and Gabriel Arthur explored in Tennessee. Needham and Arthur were employed by Abraham Wood, who owned a trading business in Virginia. That same year Abraham Wood wrote a letter to a John Richard in London to tell him about what his scouts had found in the Tennessee wilderness (Needham was killed on this journey, so perhaps only Arthur met them.)

He wrote that there were people living in Tennessee who were “white,” had long beards, and wore clothes. He said the people had a bell over six feet high that they rang morning and evening. When John Sevier traveled in the area 111 years later in 1784, he met “white” men in the same area. The people said that they had been living there for some time.

#### Melungeon Homelands in America

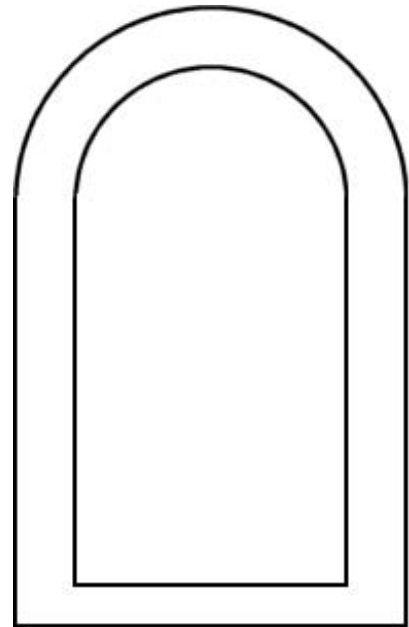
Over time many English and Scots-Irish encountered these mountain-dwelling “white” people in the wilderness of America. Groups of them were found in what are now Hancock, Hamblin, Grainger, Claiborne, Hawkins, and Rhea counties in East Tennessee. Early settlers also found them in several counties in southwestern Virginia and western North Carolina.

#### Origins of the Melungeons

Wherever other “white” people met these “white” people in the wilderness, they called themselves “Portyghee” or sometimes Turkish or Spanish. Some claimed to be descended from Portuguese who had either shipwrecked or been abandoned on the Atlantic coast of North America. These mysterious people soon began to be called Melungeons (pronounced *mul-LUHN-juhns*) or perhaps called themselves by this name.

#### Culture of the Melungeons

These “Portyghee” spoke a broken Elizabethan English like that spoken in England in the 1500’s. Their last names were also English. They practiced Christianity. When they buried their dead, they followed a southern European custom and built cupolas to put over the graves. They were olive- or copper-skinned, with European features, blue or brown eyes, and dark hair.



*Typical window shape in Melungeon log cabins.*

## The Melungeons Face Racial Prejudice

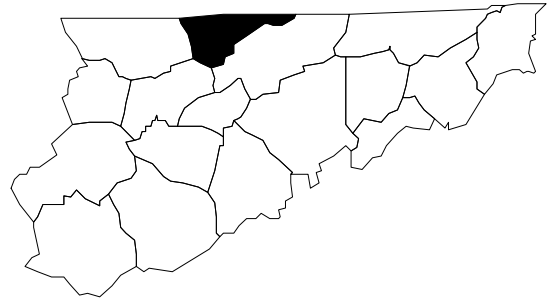
The English and Scots-Irish who came to settle in the Appalachian mountains expected to find red-skinned Native Americans. They did not expect to find other Europeans. The Scots-Irish and English wanted land. Gradually they forced the Indians off their land. They began to force the Melungeons farther up the mountains and indeed forced some of the Melungeons west when the Cherokee left during the Trail of Tears (You will learn about the Trail of Tears in a future lesson). Despite the fact that the Melungeons claimed European ancestry, the Scots-Irish settlers labeled them “free persons of color” and took away their rights. They were mistreated like the African Americans and Native Americans. By 1834 most of their rights of citizenship were denied in Tennessee and North Carolina.

The Melungeons have often faced racial prejudice from other Americans. Well into the Twentieth Century people were often lumped into the categories of “white” or “black.” This has erased the cultural heritage of many in our “melting pot.” This lesson is included to give honor to one of America’s forgotten people.

### Melungeons Today

In 1969 genetic studies were performed on 177 persons of Melungeon descent from Hancock County, Tennessee and Lee County, Virginia. They were found to be similar genetically to persons from the Galician Mountains of Spain and Portugal, Libya and Morocco in North Africa, Northern Iraq and Iran in the Middle East, and the Mediterranean countries of Greece, Syria, and Turkey.

Melungeons today are spread across the country, but many still reside in Hancock County, Tennessee and other Appalachian locations.



*Hancock County, Tennessee*

## Common Melungeon Surnames

Adams	Burton	Collins	Evans	Hammond	Miner	Powers	Swindall
Adkins	Byrd	Collinsworth	Fields	Hendricks	Minor	Pruitt	Tolliver
Barker	Campbell	Colyer	Freeman	Hendrix	Mizer	Ramey	Turner
Barnes	Carrico	Counts	French	Hill	Moore	Rasnick	Vanover
Beckler	Carter	Cox	Gann	Hillman	Morley	Reaves	Watts
Bell	Casteel	Coxe	Garland	Hopkins	Mullins	Reeves	White
Bennett	Caudill	Crow	Gibson	Jackson	Nash	Roberson	Whited
Berry	Chavis	Cumba	Gipson	Keith	Niccans	Robertson	Williams
Biggs	Clark	Cumbo	Goins	Kennedy	Noel	Robinson	Willis
Bolen	Coal	Cumbow	Goings	Kiser	Orr	Sexton	Wright
Bowlin	Coffey	Curry	Gorvens	Lawson	Osborn	Shephard	Wyatt
Bowling	Cole	Davis	Gowan	Lopes	Osborne	Short	
Bownman	Coleman	Denham	Gowen	Lucas	Perry	Sizemore	
Branham	Coles	Dorton	Graham	Maggard	Phelps	Stallard	
Brogan	Colley	Dye	Gwinn	Maloney	Phipps	Stanley	
Bullion	Collier	Ely	Hall	Martin	Polly	Steel	

*Having these last names does not guarantee Melungeon ancestry, since they are also English, Scottish, and Irish. However, if any of these names are in your ancestry, you might like to find out if you are descended from this interesting ethnic group.*

List of names from **The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People** by N. Brent Kennedy. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, p. 148.

We love because he first loved us.  
 If anyone says, "I love God,"  
 yet hates his brother he is a liar.  
 For anyone who does not love his brother,  
 whom he has seen,  
 cannot love God, whom he has not seen.  
 I John 4:19-20 NIV

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## Activities

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- ◆ The Melungeons have been known for their skill in silversmithing. Examine some pieces of silver at home or at a store. Appreciate the skill needed to create these. Read about this craft.
- ◆ Look up "prejudice" in a dictionary. Discuss with your family some prejudices you may have now or have had in the past. What has caused these prejudices?
- ◆ Find the Galician Mountains on a map of Spain and Portugal; Libya and Morocco on a map of Africa; Greece on a map of Europe; and Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey on a map of Asia.



# Exploring Tennessee

## Unit 23: The 50s - Rights, Rocketships, and Rock 'n Roll

### Lesson 114

#### Tennessee in the Civil Rights Movement

Civil rights means the rights that a person has in society: the right to speak, the right to shop in a store or eat at a restaurant, the right to rent an apartment, and so forth. In the 1950s, blacks wanted to have the same civil rights that whites had. The law denied them these rights, and court rulings that said blacks should have equal rights were usually ignored by state and local governments.

#### Non-Violence

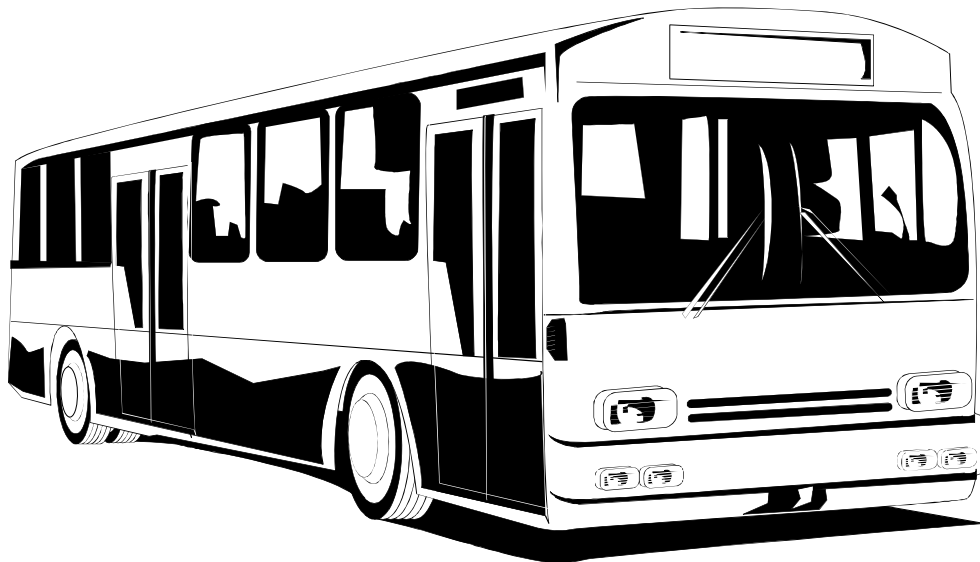
Many blacks decided that they would try to change things. Most of the action that was taken was called non-violent resistance. Blacks did not attack whites or white businesses or schools; they simply showed in a non-violent way that they wanted equal rights.

Sometimes blacks went into a whites-only restaurant and sat down at a table or counter. Many times a large group of blacks would walk through a town to draw attention to their desire for equal rights. These were called civil rights marches.

In 1955, the law in Montgomery, Alabama, said that a black person riding on a city bus had to give up his or her seat to a white person when asked to do so. One day a black woman, Rosa Parks, was sitting in a seat on a Montgomery bus when a white man asked her for the seat. She refused to get up and was arrested. Blacks in Montgomery organized a boycott of the bus system. They did not ride the buses until the rules were changed. This meant that the bus system lost a great deal of money. A court eventually declared the law to be wrong.

The non-violence movement was inspired in part by **Mahatma Gandhi** who used a non-violent approach when leading India in its quest for independence from Great Britain.

**Rosa Parks** is a heroine of the Civil Rights movement.



## Working for Civil Rights in Tennessee

One influence on the civil rights effort in Tennessee and the South was the Highlander School near Monteagle. It was organized in 1932. The leaders of the school held classes to teach people how they could improve their lives. They taught workers how to organize labor unions. They discussed steps to take in the non-violent civil rights movement (Rose Parks went there before the Montgomery bus boycott, and the song “We Shall Overcome” originated at Highlander). Blacks were instructed on how to pass literacy tests so they could vote.

Some people believed that the Highlander School was a Communist organization. The state closed it down in 1962, but the leaders had started a similar school in Knoxville the year before. It later moved to New Market, Tennessee. In the 1960s, the school taught people from Appalachia how to improve their lives.

In 1950, black parents in Clinton, Tennessee, sued the local school system to allow their children to attend the local high school rather than be bused to an all-black school in Knoxville. It was not until 1956, however, that a judge ordered the Clinton high school to admit blacks. Twelve black students enrolled in the fall of 1956. When school began, whites from New Jersey and Alabama were present to stir up local residents against integration. About 1,500 people gathered at the courthouse to protest desegregating the schools. Governor Clement called out 600 National Guardsmen to keep the peace. About eighty reporters from around the country

Schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, were desegregated about the same time as Nashville and Clinton schools were. A movie that shows what happened in Little Rock is *The Ernest Green Story*. It will give you an idea of the attitudes people had in Tennessee about school integration.

and even from England were in Clinton to cover the story. Most people accepted the change, but a few incidents occurred throughout the school year.

The only black senior was Bobby Cain, Jr. As the end of the year approached in 1957, the school principal was afraid that Cain might get hurt during the graduation ceremony. Cain’s parents went with him to the ceremony, and then a student patrol guarded him while he changed into his cap and gown. Bobby Cain was the first African-American to graduate from a formerly all-white public school in

Tennessee. Much later, on a Sunday morning in October of 1958, a bomb exploded in the Clinton High School building. It was set by whites who wanted to stop integration. The result of the bombing, however, was to make people in Clinton want the violence to stop.

In 1957, Nashville schools integrated the first grade. Thirteen black students enrolled in formerly all-white schools. For the first few days of the school year, about half of the white students stayed home. On September 9, 1957, a bomb blew up part of one elementary school where one black child was enrolled. No one was hurt in the explosion. Nashville integrated one grade per year. Memphis and other cities moved even more slowly to integrate their schools. Less than 200 of the 146,000 black school children in Tennessee attended an integrated school in 1960.

African-American ministers and university students participated in sit-in demonstrations in Nashville restaurants in 1960. They entered all-white restaurants and sat at the counters. Many of them were arrested, but other black students then did the same thing. Blacks refused to do business with downtown merchants. A bomb destroyed the home of a black lawyer, Z. Alexander Looby, on April 19, 1960. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke to a large audience at Fisk University the next day. In May a few downtown

### Bobby Cain

Bobby Cain was the first African-American to graduate from a formerly all-white public school in Tennessee. He graduated from Tennessee State University in 1961. He worked at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and then was drafted into the Army. He remained in the Army Reserve for twenty-one years and retired as a captain. He now works for the State Department of Human Services in Nashville.

stores agreed to serve blacks. Nashville was the first major city in the South to integrate in this way. Black students in Knoxville conducted sit-ins in June of 1960. The next month, downtown Knoxville businesses agreed to serve blacks.

African-Americans won important victories, but they still had to deal with much prejudice and segregation in their communities. The 1960s would bring more demonstrations and violence as blacks tried to gain their civil rights.

Mark the blameless man, and behold the upright;  
For the man of peace will have a posterity.  
Psalm 37:37 NASB

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## Activities

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- ◆ Read Psalm 41:1-3. Look around for people who need your help and see what you can do. Are people being discriminated against in your community? Talk with your family about how you can help the helpless and the weak and also those who are strong, but are looked down on because of some trait they have had since birth, like the color of their skin.



Sample Pages from the

# Exploring Tennessee Student Workbook

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# Exploring Tennessee

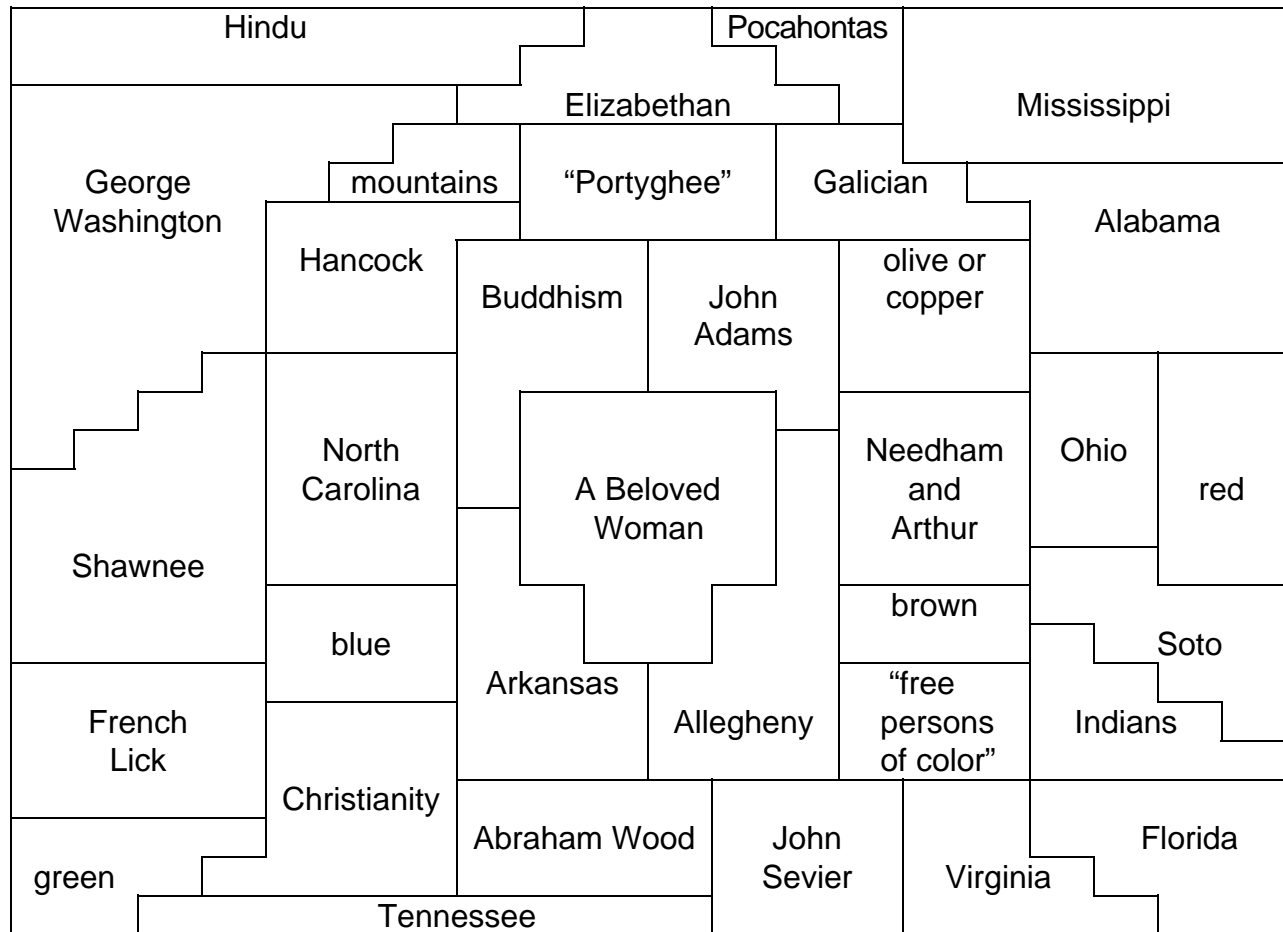
## Unit 4: European Explorers and Settlers in Tennessee

### Lesson 18

#### Who Are the Melungeons?

### A Cupola

**Instructions:** Answers to the questions are printed in the spaces below. Read the question and then color in the space that has the correct answer with gray. Some questions have more than one answer. Be sure to color all the correct spaces. Not all spaces will be colored. When you are finished, you will have colored a cupola.



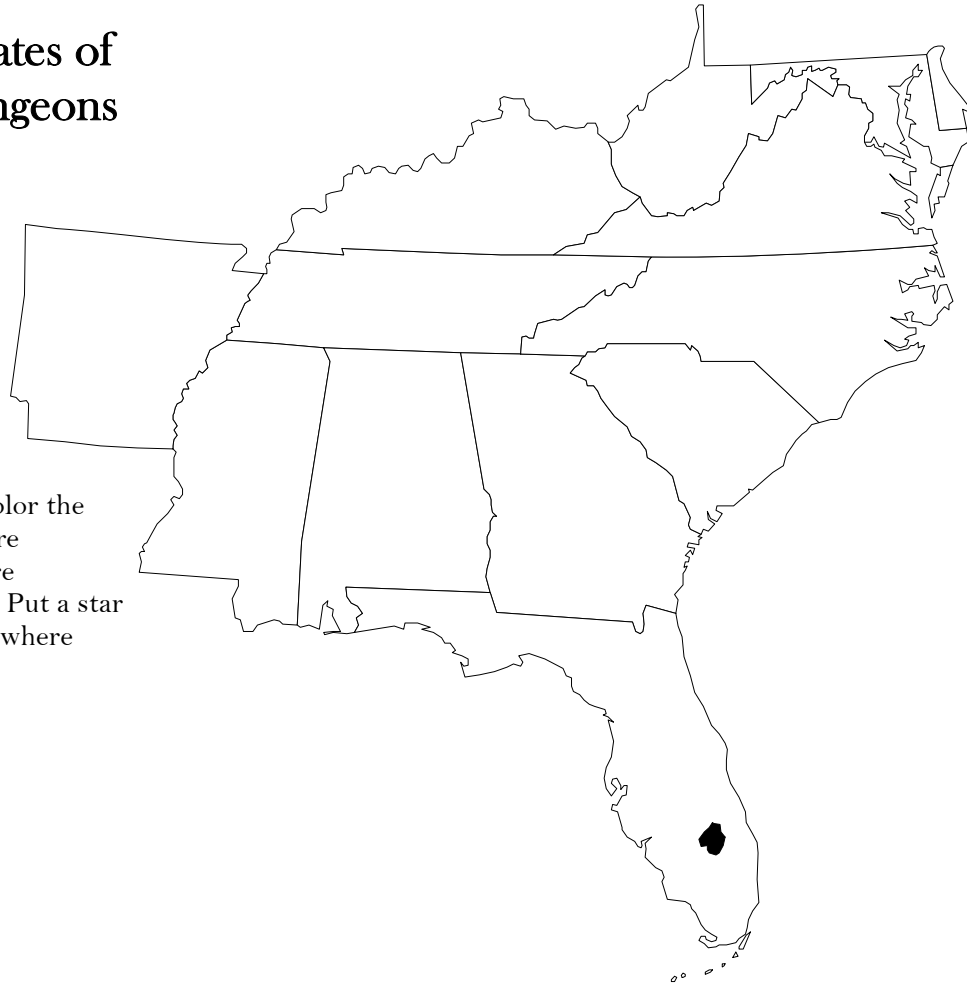
1. Who wrote a letter to London about "white" people found in East Tennessee?
2. Whom did Abraham Wood send on the journey?
3. Who met the Melungeons in 1784?
4. In what three states did early English and Scots-Irish settlers find Melungeons?
5. What did the Melungeons usually call themselves?
6. The Melungeons spoke what type of English?
7. What was the religion of the Melungeons?
8. What two eye colors were found among them?
9. What color was the skin of the Melungeons?
10. What label was put on the Melungeons and was connected with their losing rights?
11. What Spanish and Portuguese mountains are mentioned in the lesson?
12. What Tennessee county has many Melungeons living in it today?
13. On what type of land do many Melungeons live?

# Hiding God's Word in My Heart - 1 John 4:19-20

Copy I John 4:19-20 from your Bible.

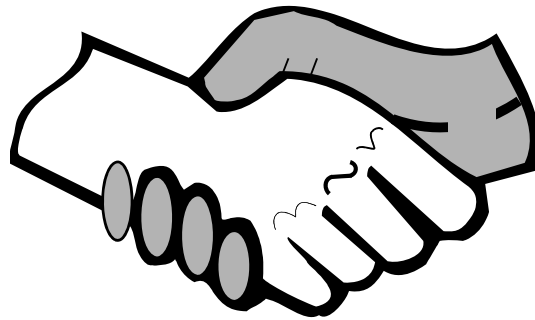
## Home States of the Melungeons

**Instructions:** Color the three states where Melungeons were originally found. Put a star in the main area where they have lived.



HIDING GOD'S WORD IN MY HEART –  
2 CORINTHIANS 13:11

Copy **2 Corinthians 13:11** from your Bible.



Exploring Tennessee

Unit 23: The 50s - Rights, Rocketships, and Rock 'n Roll

Lesson 114

Tennessee in the Civil Rights Movement

HIDING GOD'S WORD IN MY HEART –  
PSALM 37:37

Copy **Psalms 37:37** from your Bible.

