Russell Freedman, *The Voice that Challenged a Nation*

**The Text: Chapter One: Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939**

Despite cold and *threatening* weather, the crowd began to *assemble* long before the concert was to begin. People arrived singly and in pairs in large animated groups. Soon the streets leading to the Mall in Washington, D.C., were *jammed* with thousands of people heading for the *Lincoln Memorial*.

The earliest arrivals found places as close as possible to the steps of the great marble monument. As the crowd grew, it spread back along the Mall, stretching around both sides of the long reflecting pool and extending beyond to the base of the Washington Monument, three-quarters of a mile away. Baby carriages were parked among the trees. Folks *cradled* sleeping infants in their arms and held youngsters by the hand or *propped up* on their shoulders. Uniformed Boy Scouts moved through the festive holiday *throng* handing out programs.

Anticipating a huge *turnout*, the National Park Service had *enlisted* the help of some five hundred Washington police officers. By five o’clock that afternoon, when the concert was scheduled to start, an estimated 75,000 people had gathered on the Mall. They waited patiently under *overcast* skies, bundled up against the brisk wind that whipped in from the Potomac River. They had come on this chilly *Easter Sunday* to hear one of the great voices of the time and to demonstrate their support for *racial justice* in the nation’s capital.

Marion Anderson had been *applauded* by many of the crowned heads of Europe. She had been welcomed at the White House, where she sang for the president and first lady, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. She had performed before *appreciative* audiences in concert halls across the United States. But because she was an African American, she had been denied the right to sing at Constitution Hall, Washington’s largest and finest auditorium. The Daughters of the American Revolution, the *patriotic* organization that owned Constitution Hall, had *ruled* several years earlier that black artists would not be permitted to appear there.

News of the DAR’s ban had caused an angry *controversy* and set the stage for a historic event in the struggle for *civil rights*. Working behind the *scenes*, a group of influential political figures had found an appropriate concert space for Anderson. *Barred* from Constitution Hall, she would give a free *open-air* concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Shortly before the concert got under way, the skies above Washington began to clear. Clouds, which had shadowed the monument, *skittered* away to the north, and the late afternoon sun broke through to bathe the reflecting pool and shine on the *fully* dressed Easter crowd. *Secretary of the Interior* Harold L. Ickes appeared on the speaker’s platform. He introduced Miss Anderson, and she stepped forward to the *bank* of microphones.

The massive figure of Abraham Lincoln gazed down at her as she looked out at the expectant throng. Silencing the *ovation* with a slight wave of her hand, she paused. A *profound* hush settled over the crowd. For that moment, Marian Anderson seemed *vulnerable* and alone. Then she closed her eyes, lifted her head, clasped her hands before her, and began to sing.

**Vocabulary**

- *lively*
- *park for large gatherings; monument in honor of Abraham Lincoln, 16th President*
- *crowd*
- *gathering; engage*
- *annual Christian festival; fair treatment of all races*
- *Legal and social equality; outdoor*
- *rapidly run merrily*
- *advisor to the President; large collection*
- *lengthy applause; intense open to attack*
“Should Students Be Paid To Do Well In School?”

In September 2007, New York City implemented a new program to try to motivate students to do well in school. The mayor wanted to undertake the task of raising student achievement in a new way. He offered students money as an incentive to try hard. Some fourth and seventh graders were paid up to $500 per year for doing well on the city’s math and reading tests.

Many people are excited about the mayor’s idea. They think this will make school more like the real world, where people earn money for working hard. Students might do better if they get immediate rewards. It is hard for them to wait for the “payoff” of getting into college or finding a good job. Also, they might learn more. Knowing they will be paid for high scores could make them study harder.

However, some people think that this is not fair. They worry about students who try their hardest, but still don’t score well enough on the test to get the reward. Those students might stop trying in the future. Also, many people believe that education should be its own reward. A good education makes someone a better critical thinker and more creative. It enables people to deal with challenges they face. If students are only motivated by earning money, they might not understand that learning can be fun.

Will New York City’s program help students succeed in school? Should students be paid for high test scores?