

**New  York  City  in  the  late  1980s  is  a  city  beset  by  violence  and  deepening  rifts between races  and classes  on  account  of  tense  race  relations,  intense  poverty,  and high crime.  On  April  20,  1989, the  body  of  a  woman  barely  clinging  to  life  is discovered  in  Central  Park.  Within  days,  Antron McCray,  Kevin  Richardson, Raymond  Santana,  Korey  Wise,  and  Yusef  Salaam  confess  to  her rape  and  beating after  many  hours  of  aggressive  interrogation  at  the  hands  of  seasoned homicide detectives.**

**VIDEO WORKSHEET – DIRECTIONS:**

* **ANSWER *SEVEN* of the following 10 questions**
* **You may answer EXTRA questions for EXTRA CREDIT**

***The City / The Crime***

1. **Think  back  to  the  news  clips  shown  at  the  beginning  of  the  film  and  the  comments  made  about  New  York  City.  Quickly  brainstorm  what  you  saw  and  heard,  then  compose a  one-­‐‑  or  two-­‐‑sentence  statement  that  describes  New  York  City  in  the  1980s.  What  seems  to  be  on  most  people’s  mind  about  New  York  City  at  this  time?**

1. **For  what reason did  members  of  the  Central  Park  Five  go  to  the  park  on  the  night  of  April  19,  1989?  In  their  own  words,  how  involved  do  they  seem  to  be  with  the  large  group’s  actions  in  the  park?    What  is  your  feeling  about  their  involvement  in  the  larger  group  of  teenagers  who  attacked  the  two  joggers,  the  bicyclists,  and  the  homeless  man?  What evidence gives you this impression?**

***Public Reaction, Media Frenzy, and False Confessions***

1. **Discuss  how  the  circumstance  of  a  white  woman  allegedly  attacked  by  black  and  Hispanic  teenagers  played  into  the  existing  fears  and  prejudices  of  New Yorkers  at  the  time.**
2. **Review  the  following  terms  used  by  the  media  in  reporting  about  the  case:**

* **Characterizing  the  suspects:  “Wilding,”  “Rampaging  in  Wolf  Packs,”  “Wolf  Pack’s  Prey”**
* **Characterizing  the  victim:  “Lived a Dream  Life,”  “Golden  Girl,”  “Female  Jogger  near  Death  after  Savage  Attack by Roving Gang”**
* **Characterizing  the  crime:  “Central  Park  Horror,”  “Nightmare  in  Central  Park,”  “Wolf  Pack  Ignored  Her  Cries,  Called  It  Fun”**

**Discuss  whether  using  such  terms  to  refer  to  the  suspects,  the  victim,  and  the  crime itself  represent  objective  news  reporting  or  editorializing. Why do you think the media chose to use these terms?  What kinds of conclusions does the public draw from such terms?  Do  you  feel  the  media  coverage  further  fueled  the  public’s  anger  over  the  crime?**

1. **After hours of confrontational questioning, the boys began to break down. The police played them against each other, and suggested that if they cooperated they would be able to go home. Do you think these tactics were ethical on the part of the police? Why or why not? Does it matter that the boys facing such aggressive interrogation tactics were between the ages of 14 and 15? Do you feel they were interrogated fairly?**

***Trial and Conviction***

1. **During the trial, different groups of protesters gathered outside the courthouse. Examine the motives of each group of protesters. What was the message each of these groups were trying to send? What was each side trying to accomplish? Were their messages similar in any way?**
2. **Examine Trisha Meili’s (the victim’s) day in court. What impact did her presence in the courtroom have on the jury, the public, and the fate of the young men on trial?**

***Exoneration and Aftermath***

1. **From  all  indications,  including the  report  from  the  District  Attorney,  the  police  and  prosecutors  erred  during  the  investigation and trial  procedure.  According  to  Jim  Dwyer,  “the  result  of  prosecuting  the  wrong  people  for  the  Central  Park  jogger  case  was  that  Matias  Reyes  continued  to  hurt,  maim,  and  kill.”  Why  do  you  think  the  investigation  led by Mike  Armstrong  cleared  the  police  of  wrongdoing?  Do  you  feel  the  police  broke  any  laws  or  committed  racial profiling  in  this  case?**
2. **Carefully  review  historian  Craig  Steven  Wilder’s  statements  toward  the  end  of  the  film:**

***I felt  ashamed,  actually,  for  New  York  and I also  felt  extremely angry  because  their  innocence never got the attention that their guilt did. The furor around prosecuting them still drowns out the good news of their innocence.  These  were  five  kids  who  we  tormented,  we  falsely accused,  we  pilloried in the  press,  we  attacked,  we  invented  phrases for  the imagined crimes that we’re accusing them of. And then we put them in jail. We falsely convicted them. And when the evidence turned out that they were innocent, and they were released, we gave a modest nod to fairness, and we walked away from our crime.***

***I want us  to  remember  what  happened  that day  and  be horrified  by  ourselves  because it really is a  mirror  on  our  society.  And rather  than tying  it  up in a  bow  and  thinking  that  there  was something  that  we  can  take away  from  it,  and  we’ll  be  better people,  I think  what  we  really  need  to  realize  is  that  we’re  not  very  good people.  And  we’re  often  not.***

**Summarize the main points of both statements.  Do you agree with his conclusions? Are  outcomes  like  this  an  acceptable  level  of  imperfection  in  the  criminal  justice  system?**

1. **Review the members of the Central Park five’s account of their experience in the criminal justice system. Do you think more needs to be done for them, and if so what? If not, why not?**