

# **The Civil Rights Era**

*Richard P. Holmes*

*The Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Center*

**Overview**  
**Rationale**  
**Objectives**  
**Strategies**  
**Lesson Plans**  
**Student Assessment/Reflections**  
**IRA/NCTE Standards**  
**Resources**

## **Overview**

The fight amongst the different races of the world has raged on for centuries in Asia, we witnessed the Indians arguing with their Pakistani brothers in South Africa we watched the horrific affects of apartheid and on our very own shores we had slavery and segregation. Deemed by many as “one of the most interesting periods in American history.” The civil rights movement began in 1955 and ended in 1968.

In my curriculum, I will explore and discuss select points within the civil rights movement and the impact that it had on both the Caucasian and African American populations in our country, as it primarily affected these two races. I hope to explore the complex relationship that exists between the two races and the impact that it has had on our nation’s history. This curriculum shall look at several pivotal points in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s and the impact that it had on race relations. More specifically, the speech delivered by the movement’s founder Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, the march on Washington, the deaths of the three young black girls in an apparent bombing, the sitting in North Carolina, with the students from North Carolina A&T.

This curriculum shall explore the nature of the relationships and institutions and the ways in which race has helped to both shape and develop American history and society. To do that we will look at the March on Washington and the Mississippi Freedom summer of 1964. During which the COFO brought nearly 1,000 activists to Mississippi mostly (mostly Caucasian) to register voters, teach in “Freedom Schools” and organize the Mississippi Democratic Party. From June until August, Freedom Summer activists worked tirelessly in 38 local projects scattered across the state of Mississippi. At least 30 Freedom Schools, with close to 3,500 students were established and 28 community centers were set up. During this time 1,600 African Americans succeeded in becoming registered voters and 80,000 joined the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). Although the Freedom Summer failed to register the amount of people that they initially hoped for they did have a significant impact on the course of the Civil Rights movement. The deaths of affluent Caucasian citizens brought the media to Mississippi

and enraged African Americans who felt the Unit Their fellow American citizens viewed the lives of their Caucasian counterparts as more valuable than there own. Lastly, we will look at the role of the American Jewish community and the Civil Rights movement for many members of the community supported and participated in the movement. In fact statistics have indicated that American Jews were one of the most actively involved non-black groups in the movement. Many Jewish students worked alongside African Americans for CORE, SCLC and SNCC, they made up nearly half of the white northern volunteers in the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project and approximately half of the civil rights attorneys active in the South during the 1960s. In 1964 Jewish rabbis were arrested while heeding a call from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in St. Augustine, Florida.

Overall, the goal of this unit is to help students understand the civil rights movement and the impact that it had on African Americans and the United States as a whole. Furthermore, it is my hope that in writing this, I will provide students with a better understanding of what can happen when you stand up for something that you believe in.

### **Rationale**

Examining this period in American history has provided me with a greater insight into the African American culture. Although, I am African American we sometimes tend to forget those who struggled to attain all the freedoms that we have today. I choose to discuss the Civil Rights movement for numerous reasons, but was primarily influenced by the fact that not only is it an era that I lived through but moreover, has risen above with the election of an African American president. The election of now President Obama shows the death of an era of thought and the birth of a new beginning and has given hope to those who once lost it. In the past decades so much has been proven, but above all we have proven that we are a race that is resourceful, capable of tolerance, sensitive and loving. I hope that all students regardless of race learn from the words that I have written. The civil rights movement shall forever live in the hearts and minds of many we have accomplished what we fought so hard for, but we must never forget the past or we shall be doomed to repeat it.

As an art teacher the composition of a paper based upon the civil rights movement may seem like a daunting task, however I plan to incorporate it within my curriculum just as my students incorporate their daily struggles in their art. I hope to first have students research the Civil Rights Movement, utilizing the Internet, library and various other research materials, thus allowing them to expand upon their computer skills. From this data students will design a mural depicting the Civil Rights Movement.

I believe that in having students read a wide variety of both print and nonprint texts they will gain a deeper understanding of the movement. Furthermore, they will be utilizing a variety of technological and informational resource to “gather and synthesize information.” (NCATE standards).

## **Objectives**

The goal of this curriculum unit is to help students better understand the civil rights movement and the impact that it had on our society. In this unit I plan to focus primarily upon the 1960's time period and how it influenced our society. I shall look primarily at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, the march on Washington, the deaths of the three young black girls in an apparent bombing, the sitting in North Carolina, with the students from North Carolina A&T, the Mississippi Freedom summer of 1964 and the role of the Jewish community in the civil Rights movement.

We shall research the above events of this period and a journal shall be kept and ultimately a mural created. This mural will be presented during an assembly and their journals submitted to the teacher to be critiqued.

The lower grades will review artist that lived and produced artwork during the 1960's they shall then create drawings based upon daily life during that time period. The students will have a discussion on the many different styles of artists. One question that they may ask themselves is how their daily life artwork compares to that of the art created by the artists of that time period. Based on this discussion and the individual artwork that they have created they too shall produce a mural of their own which will represent the civil rights movement. The teacher will provide lower grades with a brief oral history and film on the civil rights movement. The lower grades will not be asked to keep a research journal but shall rather participate in a class discussion upon conclusion of the unit.

I truly hope that in completing these activities students will gain greater insight into this pivotal time in American history.

## **Strategies**

As I initially noted, the population within our school is ever changing thus I plan to provide each student with an individual project plan. Furthermore, each student will be allowed to utilize classroom resources along with the Internet and the school library. They will be asked to construct a timeline noting events spanning from slavery, its ultimate demise, and the impact that it had on our nation and later the Civil Rights movement but specifically highlighting in greater detail the events during the civil rights movement that I mentioned in the above overview. I will advise students to use a variety of search engines, such as Google, Dog Pile, and perhaps web quest. They will be asked to analyze work from the time periods in question, and pick a piece to reproduce. Lastly, students will be asked to keep a documentation journal of all information that they have researched. It is my belief that through researching, and reproducing art from both the era of slavery and civil rights, students will gain a greater insight of the work from slavery to the civil rights movement.

For younger groups, I plan on providing a brief oral presentation of all artists to be discussed and samples of their art work, the artists focused upon should be from the time period that the events noted in the overview occurred. We will discuss the lives of the artist and how their lives differ from ours today. We shall then look at the events noted in the overview,

discussing how the people may have felt during that time and what turmoil our nation may have been in. We will create anchor charts to go along with our discussion and later we shall create artwork depicting the people of the time. Students will be able to create art based on what they thought daily life was like, or a sit, the summer of 1964 or the March on Washington. In order to gain the attention of the younger children I plan on using posters and other visual aids.

I plan on providing classroom assignments for all students and resources for them to utilize along with the Internet references and those that they acquire from school or the local library. They will be asked to construct a timeline briefly notes events that occurred during the civil rights movement and the events that have impacted our nation. I will advise the students on how to use various search engines, such as Google, dog pile and ask. Lastly, students will be asked to keep a journal of what they researched.

## **Lesson Plans**

Theme the Civil Rights Movement

Objective: Upon completion of Unit 1 students will be able to:

- A. Conduct research, evaluate and synthesize information pertaining to the civil rights movement.
- B. Highlight their understanding of the civil rights movement through the creation of an exhibit and or time line and discussion.
- C. C. Highlight connecting across carried disciplines arts, history, music and English.
- D. Demonstrate an understanding through oral presentations and reflective writing and the effects that it had on African Americans. Research and present oral and written presentation of the effects of the civil rights movement.

Instructional Plan

Preparation

1. Preview the civil rights movement websites.
2. Select background information to share with students. Perhaps spend some time reviewing the history of the civil rights movement.
3. Reserve computers in the library for students to use. Preview and add websites to lab computers.
4. Use a bookmark if all of the websites are listed under headings “websites related to the civil rights movement websites lists. As students preview these sites think about how they will utilize them. Also consider comfort level with the reading.
5. If possible, arrange use if LCD projector during sessions 1 and 4. If not locate copies of pictures of the time period for the 1960s civil rights movement.
6. Visit PBS re: the civil rights movement.
7. Students will create a library or museum exhibits as part of this lesson, they will gather art material which shall include poster paper, construction paper, glue scissors and markers.
8. Make copies of the civil rights movement websites and list the museum exhibit rubric reflections on the civil rights movement for each student.

Materials needed for all three lessons

1. Computers
2. Pencils
3. Color Pencils
4. Journals (notebook)
5. Paper
6. Construction paper
7. Markers
8. Crayons
9. Paint
10. Cloth
11. Lab projector

Instruction and Activities

Lesson 1

The Civil Rights Movement

Estimated duration: Two weeks

Materials:

1. Pencils
2. Paper
3. Computers
4. Journals

Standards: See Appendix for all standards addressed in lessons

Lesson Assessment: Will be conducted at the conclusion of lesson one, during which time students will be asked to briefly reflect and write about what they have learned. They will be asked to use specific names and dates in their essay. They may choose to write specifically on the origins of the civil rights movement or instead on the key time lines or events.

Overall Assessment: Will be given at the end of the unit and based upon the oral presentation given by students.

Outcome: Upon completion of this lesson students will be familiar with the origin of the civil rights movement.

Lesson 2

The March on Washington

1. Begin but asking students to access prior knowledge of the civil rights movement-using information researched (see preparation1). Provide students with an overview of the civil rights movement.
2. Ask a class to visit a website to the March on Washington explore the research on the march. Why it occurred and how it impacted the time period. Ask students to write a written response to this question.
3. What were you able to learn? Next ask students for volunteers to share their thoughts with the entire class. Focus the discussion on the impact of the march on the time period and how it impacts our current society.

4. Have students predict or think about what the world would be like if the March had never occurred.
5. Have student's research civil rights movements collect pictures; make a collage that tells a story.

Racism and stereotyping/Social Studies, history and art can be modified for grades 5-12.

Objectives:

To engage in critical thinking about what might be considered stereotyping. The lesson will also enable students to complete research and writing projects, analyze information; make comparisons white/black and draw conclusions about racism based on experiences in everyday life today.

Student writing, research/background information:

Read about racism. Research stereotypes that were used in early images of African-American, which provide negative and false racial views. Write a comparative essay about how life similar today or how different it is from your parents.

Discussion Lesson:

In class, discuss the meaning of stereotypes. Ask students to give examples of stereotypes. Discuss why stereotypes are bad and wrong. Think of images in the media today that you might find stereotyped. Have students find an example in products, film, television to music and bring it to class to discuss also have students discuss the song (if I were White) What does this mean to you? The song has often been described as satirization of French Fashion for sunbathing, which rose in popularity with the country's newfound passion for all things black and African in Paris during the height of the career of the famous black Josephine Baker.

### **Student Assessment/Reflections**

There will be a brief exam given at the conclusion of the lesson. The assessment will require students to write a brief paragraph, summarizing what they have learned. They will be required to reference, specific dates, people etc. An overall assessment will be based upon the mural. Their journals will be submitted and a portion of their grade shall be derived from the amount of research reflected in the student's journal.

### **IRA/NCTE Standards**

1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves and of the cultures of the United States and the World; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classical and contemporary works.
2. Students adjust their use of spoken written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
3. Students enjoy a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

4. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

## References

Letter from a Birmingham Jail ~ King Research & Education Institute at Stanford Univ.

Bass, S. Jonathan (2001) *Blessed Are The Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail"*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press. ISBN 0-8071-2655-1

Standing In the Schoolhouse Door ~ Civil Rights Movement Veterans

"Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights," June 11, 1963, transcript from the JFK library.

Medgar Evers, a worthwhile article, on *The Mississippi Writers Page*, a website of the University of Mississippi English Department.

Medgar Evers Assassination ~ Civil Rights Movement Veterans

Civil Rights bill submitted, and date of JFK murder, plus graphic events of the March on Washington. This is an Abbeville Press website, a large informative article apparently from the book *The Civil Rights Movement* (ISBN 0-7892-0123-2).

Rosenberg, Jonathan; Karabell, Zachary (2003). *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Quest for Justice: The Civil Rights Tapes*. WW Norton & Co. p. 130. ISBN 0-393-05122-6.

Schlesinger, Jr., Arthur M. (2002) [1978]. *Robert Kennedy and His Times*. Houghton Mifflin Books. pp. 350, 351. ISBN 0-618-21928-5.

"Television News and the Civil Rights Struggle: The Views in Virginia and Mississippi". Southern Spaces. 2004-11-03. Retrieved 2012-11-08.

McAdam, Doug (1988). *Freedom Summer*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-504367-7.

Carson, Clayborne (1981). *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. Harvard University Press.