

InsideART

Title

Civil Rights Activists and the Art of the Fight

Estimated Time for Completion of Lesson

Two class periods

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

This lesson introduces students to the 14th amendment to the U.S. constitution and conflicting racist and discriminatory laws and socio-political practices. Civil rights activists in the 1940s and 1950s used legal, social, cultural, and economic means to contest these laws and practices in their efforts to advance human rights for Black people. Students will engage in critical analysis and reflection of the 14th amendment and the effects of racist and discriminatory laws on Black people in the United States through the photography of Griffith J. Davis, a poem by Langston Hughes, and an excerpt from Rosa Parks' journal while in prison.

Intended Grade Levels

Grades 9-12

Infusion/Subject Areas

Visual Arts
Social Studies

Curriculum Standards**Next Generation Sunshine State Standards**

- *Visual Arts:*

VA.912.C.1.2: Use critical-thinking skills for various contexts to develop, refine, and reflect on an artistic theme.

VA.912.C.3.3: Examine relationships among social, historical, literary, and/or other references to explain how they are assimilated into artworks.

- *Social Studies:*

SS.912.A.5.7: Examine the freedom movements that advocated civil rights for African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and women.

SS.912.C.2.9: Identify the expansion of civil rights and liberties by examining the principles contained in primary documents.

National Standards for Arts Education

Anchor Standard #4: Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Anchor Standard #8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard #11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

National Council for the Social Studies

Time, Continuity, and Change: High school students use historical methods of inquiry to engage in the examination of more sophisticated sources. They develop the skills needed to locate and analyze multiple sources, and to evaluate the historical accounts made by others. They build and defend interpretations that reconstruct the past and draw on their knowledge of history to make informed choices and decisions in the present.

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: High school students must understand the paradigms and traditions that undergird social and political institutions. They should be provided opportunities to examine, use, and add to the body of knowledge offered by the behavioral sciences and social theory in relation to the ways people and groups organize themselves around common needs, beliefs, and interests.

Civic Ideals and Practices: High school students increasingly recognize the rights and responsibilities of citizens in identifying societal needs, setting directions for public policies, and working to support both individual dignity and the common good. They become familiar with methods of analyzing important public issues and evaluating different recommendations for dealing with these issues.

Power, Authority, and Governance: Through study of the dynamic relationships between individual rights and responsibilities, the needs of social groups, and concepts of a just society, learners become more effective problem-solvers and decision-makers when addressing the persistent issues and social problems encountered in public life. High school students develop their abilities to understand and apply abstract principles.

Instructional Objectives

The student will:

- Examine the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution and its significance in Black peoples' fight against racist and discriminatory laws;
- Explain ways in which Black people used legal, cultural, social, and economic means to fight political and social injustices;
- Interpret through the artistic works of Griffith J. Davis, Langston Hughes, and John Legend the effects of racist and discriminatory laws and practices on Black people in the United States.

Learning Activities Sequence

[Pre-Lesson Prep: Review the information provided in the “Notes View” of the PowerPoint and then view the PPT in “slide show” mode to become acquainted with the animations embedded.]

Hand out poetry analysis sheet, Rosa Park’s reflections primary source analysis sheet, and “Glory” lyrics.

Activate the PowerPoint presentation titled *Civil Rights Activists: The Heart of the Fight*.

Attention-Getter:

Activate the PowerPoint presentation titled *Civil Rights Activists: The Heart of the Fight*.

Advance to slide 2: Read aloud learning objectives.

Advance to slide 3:

- Inform students they are going to watch an excerpt recording of George Wallace’s inaugural speech as governor of Alabama (video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C-kBVggFrs>). Wallace delivered the speech January 14, 1963 in the state’s Capitol building in Montgomery.
- Direct students to listen to the speech and/or read the closed captions. Encourage students to use their background knowledge as they listen to the content of the speech. Ask students prior to showing video to write in their notebooks:
 1. List two things in this recording you think are important.
 2. List two things this recording tells you about life in the United States at the time it was made.
- Play video.
- Invite students to volunteer responses based on the things they noted. Discuss students’ perceptions of the video recording.

Learning Activities:

Advance to slide 4: Explain to students the 14th amendment of the U.S. constitution passed in 1866 and ratified in 1868. Ask students:

- What major event in U.S. history concluded a year prior to the passing of the 14th amendment? (Answer: The U.S. Civil War ended May 9th, 1865.)

Read section 1 of the 14th amendment (add emphasis to the underlined area). Ask students:

- What does it mean no state can “...deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law?”
- What do you perceive is the significance of “...equal protection of the laws?”

After a brief discussion centered on the questions above, remind students that Wallace delivered his inaugural speech in 1963, almost 100 years after the ratification of the 14th Amendment. Ask students:

- When Governor Wallace stated, “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever,” is he supporting a state law in violation of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution? Why or why not?

Advance to slide 5: Explain to students that Griffith J. Davis’s photography captured some of the most influential events of the Civil Rights movement. He was bold in his photography in that he attempted to capture the Black experience. His photos provide us with meaningful insight of this historical period.

Advance to slide 6: Review Davis’s biographical information. Ask students:

- What do you notice most about Davis’s life?
- How do you think these experiences shaped his world view?

Advance to slide 7: Prior to showing slide content, ask students to look closely at the picture and answer questions:

- What is going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Explain to students that in the 1940s and 1950s, Blacks in the United States increasingly used the legal system to challenge states’ segregation laws in schools.

Thurgood Marshall was a Black attorney, leading civil rights activist, and the first Black Justice in the Supreme Court of the United States. He used the legal system to challenge racist and discriminatory laws and practices. He argued 32 cases before the Supreme Court of the United States and won 29. The photo depicted in the slide captures Thurgood Marshall (back left) with Ada Lois Sipuel (front) during a court case against the University of Oklahoma School of Law in a 1948 discrimination suit. Sipuel won the case and attended law school.

Thurgood Marshall is most known for the 1954 case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. This landmark case was considered Marshall’s greatest victory as a civil-rights lawyer. A group of Black parents whose children were required to attend segregated schools filed a class-action lawsuit. The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

Ask students:

- Why was it an effective strategy to challenge segregation in schools?

Advance to slide 8: Explain to students that Langston Hughes was an American writer and poet. He used artistic expression in poetry and novels to communicate Black history and the Black experience in the United States, but he wrote for a general audience, seeking to convey his ideas in emotional, easily-understood phrases that

nevertheless had power behind them. Hughes navigated cultural forms to advocate for social justice of the Black community.

Direct students to the poetry analysis worksheet. Read “Harlem” together aloud. Ask students to reflect on what they just read and consider the content and feelings captured in the poem as they complete the worksheet.

[If time permits, discuss students’ responses as a class.]

Advance to slide 9: Direct students to look at the picture. Ask students:

- Who do you see in the picture?
- What is going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can you find?

After a discussion, inform students Martin Luther King, Jr. was the son of educated parents. He graduated from Morehouse College and studied at Crozer Theological Seminary. Social activists in Montgomery elected King as their leader for the Montgomery bus boycott, launching King into the national spotlight. His skillful rhetoric along with his inspiring personality shaped much of the Civil Rights movement.

(Bullet one) Martin Luther King Jr. used social and economic means to fight racist and discriminatory policies, laws, and practices. He became a prominent leader in the Civil Rights movement.

(Bullet two) During a celebration of Ghana’s independence in March 1957, Davis captured this photo of then–Vice President Richard Nixon speaking with Martin Luther King Jr. (Both men’s wives are also in the photo.)

(Bullet three) This meeting was not acceptable in the United States at the time. have been too volatile to have taken place in the United States, so the photo was not published there at the time.

Advance to slide 10: Explain to students that on Dec. 1, 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested when she refused to surrender her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus to a white passenger. The arrest led to the Montgomery bus boycott, a seminal event in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, and was a defining moment in Parks’ long career as an activist. We know Parks’ story well, but often overlooked are her thoughts and feelings after this event occurred. Direct students to the Rosa Parks’ reflections primary source analysis worksheet. Students should discuss questions and answers in small groups.

[Note to teacher: Read the document aloud using affective emphasis.]

Closure:

Advance to slide 11 and distribute HO3 Glory Lyrics: Inform students this is a reflection activity focused on the song “Glory” by John Legend and the rapper Common. Ask students prior to playing video:

- Consider what you learned about the 14th amendment to the Constitution and the civil rights activists (Thurgood Marshall, Langston Hughes, Rosa Parks) while

listening to the song and reading the lyrics.

- What do you perceive has changed since the Civil Rights movement? What has remained the same?

Play video (link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUZOKvYcx_o).

Evaluation

- Formative questions throughout the lesson
- HO1 Poetry analysis sheet
- HO2 Rosa Park's reflections primary source analysis sheet (both PDF and MS Word documents)
- HO3 Glory Lyrics

Optional Extension Activities

Option 1:

Assign students to watch #Black Twitter After #Ferguson

(<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000003841604/blacktwitter-after-ferguson.html>)

Direct students to write a poem no more than ten lines that represents their thoughts on the video and create an accompanying visual representation.

Option 2:

Assign students to watch #Black Twitter After #Ferguson

(<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000003841604/blacktwitter-after-ferguson.html>)

Direct students to create a two-minute TikTok video discussing social injustices Black people face in the United States and propose a possible solution.

- Students upload videos to Google Classroom.
- Direct students to view peers' videos.
- Engage class in a critical discussion of contemporary issues Black people face in the United States.

Materials and Resources

- PowerPoint Presentation
- Projector and speakers
- Internet access for videos
- HO1 Poetry analysis sheet
- HO2 Rosa Parks' Reflection primary source analysis worksheet (both MS Word and PDF documents)
- HO3 Glory Lyrics
- Paper and pens/pencils (for notetaking)

Special Learner Accommodations

- Extra time for note-taking
- Translation dictionaries for ELLs
- Visually-rich PPT
- Small group discussions/Cooperative learning

Internet Links

Griffith J. Davis Photographs and Archives. (2020, May 24). *Griff Davis took this picture of Piazza Vittorio in Turin, Italy in May 1945 and his self-portrait* [Image attached]. Facebook.

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McDonald, B. & Woo, J. (2015, August 10). *#BlackTwitter After #Ferguson*. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000003841604/blacktwitter-after-ferguson.html>

Poetry Foundation. (n.d.). *Harlem by: Langston Hughes*.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem>

TastySpaceApple. (2014, Dec 15). *George Wallace "segregation forever" speech* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C-kBVggFrS>

ThinkCommon. (2015, January 12). *Common, John Legend- Glory*. [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUZOKvYcx_o

Woman fingerprinted. Mrs. Rosa Parks, Negro seamstress, whose refusal to move to the back of a bus touched off the bus boycott in Montgomery, Ala., 1956. [Photograph] Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/94500293/>.

References

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<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Luther-King-Jr/The-Southern-Christian-Leadership-Conference>

History. (2019, November 17). *Thurgood Marshall*.
<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/thurgood-marshall>

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<https://wusfnews.wusf.usf.edu/local-state/2020-10-13/photojournalist-griffith-j-davis-honored-with-lifetime-achievement-award>

Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). *14th amendment*.
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- National Constitution Center. (n.d.). *14th amendment: Citizenship rights, equal protection, apportionment, civil war debt*.
<https://www.constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendment/amendment-xiv>
- Sommers, J. (2019, December 26). *Biography of Langston Hughes, poet, key figure in Harlem renaissance*. ThoughtCo. <https://www.thoughtco.com/biography-of-langston-hughes-4779849>
- Trainer, M. (2017, February 24). *Griff Davis: A life in photography and diplomacy*. ShareAmerica. <https://share.america.gov/griff-davis-life-in-photography-and-diplomacy/>
- Truax, G.C. (2020, January 2). *Trailblazers: Griffith J. Davis and Langston Hughes*. Alive Tampa Bay. <https://alivetampabay.com/arts/trailblazers-griffith-j-davis-and-langston-hughes/>