



Get Up! Stand Up!

The Civil Rights Movement and Television

In the years between 1954 and 1965, more legislation was passed, more court decisions were rendered, and more social change was effected in the name of civil rights than ever before. The rise of the Civil Rights Movement paralleled the growing use of television in the United States. In 1950 television was still in its infancy, but by 1960, televisions were present in 90 percent of American homes. Television provided the American public with a means to witness the struggle for civil rights nearly in real time and led a more informed society to enact social change.

Pre-Visit Activities:

Included are suggested activities to prepare your students for the class. We will begin the class by sharing some of the students' findings.

Part 1: Vocabulary

Go over the vocabulary list provided. Before the class, students should become familiar with these words and concepts because they will be referenced in the footage screened.

Civil disobedience: The use of nonviolent resistance to challenge laws considered unjust

Civil rights: The nonpolitical rights of a citizen; the rights of personal liberty guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution and by acts of Congress

Discrimination: Unfair treatment of a person or group resulting from prejudice

Jim Crow: Laws that separated blacks and whites in the South after the Civil War

NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People): An organization formed in 1909 to protect the rights of blacks

Prejudice: Unfair opinions against a group formed without facts to support them

Segregation: The policy or practice of separating people of different races, classes, or ethnicities in schools, housing, and public or commercial facilities, especially as a form of discrimination



Part 2: Civil Rights Timeline

Give each student a copy of the civil rights timeline (see attached). As a class, go over the information about the people, events, and major political reforms of the Civil Rights Movement.

Part 3: Synthesize

Have students work with a partner to define the words “separate” and “equal” (use attached worksheet). Based upon these definitions, ask them to define the concept “separate but equal.” Finally, bring the class together to share their thoughts.

Part 4: Analyze

Break students into three groups. Give each group a copy of one of the photographs to study (see the following pages). Students should use the attached worksheet to analyze the photograph. After each group has completed the worksheet, bring the class together to share their thoughts and observations.

Provide background information about the photographs only after students complete this activity.

Photograph Credits:

Photograph 1: March on Washington in Washington, DC, 1963

Photograph 2: Little Rock Central High School students being escorted into school by federal troops, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957

Photograph 3: Striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, 1968



The Civil Rights Timeline

- 1863** President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, beginning the process that resulted in freedom for all African-American slaves.
- 1896** The Supreme Court declares segregation legal in Plessy v. Ferguson. “Separate but Equal” or “Jim Crow” laws are enforced throughout the nation.
- 1909** The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is organized to fight for civil rights in the United States.
- 1954** In Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, the Supreme Court bans segregation in public schools, overturning Plessy v. Ferguson. This begins what is known as the modern Civil Rights Movement.
- 1955** The Montgomery, Alabama, Bus Boycott begins on December 1 when Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white person.
- 1956** After a year of boycotts, Montgomery, Alabama, buses desegregate.
- 1957** President Eisenhower sends federal troops into Little Rock, Arkansas, to protect black students integrating Central High School.
- 1960** In order to integrate restaurants, in February a sit-in protest movement begins at a Woolworth’s lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and spreads across the nation.
- 1961** Interracial teams of Freedom Riders challenge segregated buses and terminals by riding in and sitting together in areas designated only for white people.
- 1963**
- A quarter of a million people attend the March on Washington, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivers the “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC.
 - Medgar Evers, a NAACP leader, is murdered on June 12 in Jackson, Mississippi.
- 1964**
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wins the Nobel Peace Prize.
 - The Twenty-fourth Amendment to the Constitution outlaws the poll tax in federal elections. Southern states can no longer impose taxes to prevent poor blacks from voting.
 - Malcolm X emerges as the most forceful spokesman of the Nation of Islam by stressing self-reliance and independence for African-Americans.
 - President Johnson signs the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting segregation in public accommodations or in the workplace.



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- 1965**
 - Malcolm X is murdered in February at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem.
 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., leads the march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, to push for African-American voting rights.
 - Congress passes the Voting Rights Act of 1965, authorizing federal examiners to register qualified voters and outlawing such measures as literacy tests that were used to prevent African-Americans from voting.
 - President Johnson signs the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
 - Fueled by charges of police brutality, violence rips through the Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts for six days, leaving thirty-four dead.
- 1966**
 - The March on Mississippi takes place to protest the lack of equal voting rights for African-Americans.
 - The Black Panther Party is organized.
- 1968**
 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., is murdered while organizing sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee.



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Name: _____

Using a dictionary, define and record the following words in the spaces below:

Separate: _____

Equal: _____

Using the definitions as a reference, define the phrase "separate but equal" in the space below:



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Photograph 1



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Photograph 2



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Photograph 3



(Photograph Analysis worksheet continued)

Inference

Based on what you recorded in the above chart, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Questions

What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?



Part 5: Register to Vote

Using the Louisiana voter application form from the 1920s (see attached), ask students to read and fill out the form to the best of their ability. Distribute the form to students without providing them with any directions, and see what they say or do.

After they have filled it out, discuss their reactions as a group. Use the following questions and topics to help fuel your discussion:

What was your experience like filling out this form?

Which questions were you unable to answer and why?

How did it make you feel to be unable to answer the questions?

Did any of the questions seem unrelated to your ability to vote?

If so, which ones and why?

In the twenties, African-Americans were discouraged from registering to vote by being given mandatory literacy tests and applications similar to the ones you filled out. If you were unable to read or write, you were not allowed to register. If you were unable to fully complete this form, you were not allowed to vote.

Why is it important to have the right to vote?

Have you ever voted for anything before? What? Why?

How would you feel if there were obstacles imposed to deter you from voting?

Or if this right was taken away altogether?

On the timeline, find the actual year the Voting Rights Act was passed.



APPENDIX E LOUISIANA VOTER APPLICATION

I am a citizen of the United States and of the State of Louisiana.

My name is Mr.—Mrs.—Miss _____. I was born in the State (country) of _____, Parish (or county) of _____, on the _____ day of _____, in the year _____. I am now _____ years, _____ months and _____ days of age. I have resided in this State since _____, in this Parish since _____, and in Precinct No. _____, in Ward No. _____ of this Parish continuously since _____. I am not disfranchised by any provisions of the Constitution of this State. The name of the householder at my present address is _____. I am not now registered as a voter in any other Ward or Precinct of this State, except _____. My last registration was in Ward _____ Precinct _____ Parish _____. My occupation is _____. My color is _____. My sex is _____. I am now affiliated with the _____ Party.

In each of the following items the applicant shall mark through the word "have" or the words "have not" so that each item will show a true statement about the applicant.

I have (have not) been convicted of a felony without receiving a full pardon and restoration of franchise.

I have (have not) been convicted of more than one misdemeanor and sentenced to a term of ninety (90) days or more in jail for each such conviction, other than traffic and/or game law violations, within five years before the date of making this application for registration as an elector.

I have (have not) been convicted of any misdemeanor and sentenced to a term of six (6) months or more in jail, other than traffic and/or game violations, within one year before the date of making this application for registration as an elector.

I have (have not) lived with another in "common law" marriage within five years before the date of making this application for registration as an elector.

I have (have not) given birth to an illegitimate child within five years before the date of making this application for registration as an elector. (The provisions hereof shall not apply to the birth of any illegitimate child conceived as a consequence of rape or forced carnal knowledge.)

I have (have not) acknowledged myself to be the father of an illegitimate child within five years before the date of making this application for registration as an elector.

Signature _____

Sworn to and subscribed before me: _____
(Deputy) Registrar

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Post-Visit Activity:

Discuss

In order to extend the conversation on civil rights begun during our class, bring students together to answer the following questions.

What does the term “civil rights” mean to you today?

Where today do you see examples of inequality—for example, in your school, in your neighborhood, or in the media?

Document

Ask students to document this inequality either by taking a photograph, making a video, or selecting an illustrative still or moving image from the newspaper or Internet.

Write

Each student should write a one-page rationale explaining how the image selected illustrates inequality and the issue it reflects. Ask students to address the following questions in their rationale:

What is the inequality? Why do you care about it?

What details of the image convey the situation?

If you could, how would you go about changing the situation?

Realistically, how could you raise awareness about it?

Reflect

In order to reflect on contemporary inequalities, come together as a group to share and discuss the material selected.

As a culminating activity, students may:

- Create a community bulletin board in your school or neighborhood
- Design a webpage
- Produce a PowerPoint slide show
- Curate a classroom exhibition
- Present their findings to another class or to a school assembly



Read

Have students read an autobiography or biography of an African-American individual who lived between 1950–70.

While there are many books to choose from, here are some suggested titles:

Ali, Muhammed. *The Greatest: My Own Story*, 1975.

Autobiography of the famous sports figure up to the 1970s.

Bates, Daisy. *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir*, 1962.

A memoir by Daisy Bates detailing her involvement in the integration of the Little Rock public schools.

Cleaver, Eldrige. *Soul on Ice*, 1968.

Essays on race, society, and identity written by Cleaver while he served a nine-year prison term in California.

Davis, Angela. *Angela Davis: A Biography*, 1974.

Stories and reflections on her life and struggles.

Hampton, Henry, and Steve Fayer (with Sarah Flynn). *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*, 1990.

A collection of remembrances of key civil rights heroines and heroes based on the archive of the Eyes on the Prize television series.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Edited by James M. Washington, 1986.

A collection of essays, speeches, sermons, interviews, and excerpts from some of King's books.

King, Mary. *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement*, 1987.

Autobiography of Mary King, a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), detailing her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.

Malcolm X (with Alex Haley). *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 1965.

Memoir recounting Malcolm X's transformation from criminal to political and religious leader.

Robinson, Jo Ann Gibson. *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It: The Memoir of Jo Ann Gibson Robinson*, 1987.

A memoir about the Montgomery Bus Boycott from the perspective of members of the Women's Political Council (WPA).

Williams, Juan. *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary*, 2000.

A comprehensive biography detailing Justice Marshall's work as a lawyer, activist, and Supreme Court justice.