

The Impact of the Civil Rights Movement on American Policies, Laws, and Procedures Lesson Plan

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Intended Audience: Middle and High School Students

Overview: Prior to using this lesson in the classroom, read the [Historiography](#) and review the available primary source materials for this lesson by clicking on the button on the left side navigation labeled "[primary sources](#)." In addition to primary sources, this area includes historical documents, speeches, and worksheets that you can download and use for this lesson. The NVLP lessons are designed for both teachers who have access to the Internet and a computer with [Windows Media Player](#) (free download) and those who do not. If you do not have Internet access, you can print the materials and read the video clip transcripts.

Depending upon how much time you have to teach this lesson, choose two or more video clips and five to ten images. For this lesson, there are several historical documents also available and a worksheet so students can analyze the documents. Documents include Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, the text of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the lyrics to the song "We Shall Overcome." Print out the photographs, video transcripts and documents and organize the material into "primary source packages" for your students. The students will be working in groups, so print enough copies so that you have one "packet" for each group. If you like, you can print different images and different transcripts so that each group does not have the same exact "primary source package."

Additional Information:

USA - National Council for Social Studies: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies²

AI: Thematic Standard: Culture and Cultural Diversity Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

AII: Thematic Standard: Time, Continuity and Change Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time.

AVI: Thematic Standard: Power, Authority and Governance Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

AX: Thematic Standard: Civic Ideals and Practices Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

Objectives:

Upon completion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- identify some of the significant events that framed the Civil Rights Movement ("Movement") from 1954-1972;
- evaluate the goals and objectives of the Movement, as a whole;
- analyze the leaders of the Movement and how they influenced its direction and the focus;
- compare multiple perspectives written about the same issue so that students will learn how to effectively differentiate between historical facts, historical interpretations and historical opinions.

Essential Questions:

- What are some of the significant events that happened during the Movement from 1954-1972?
- How did these events impact upon the lives of all Americans?
- How did the three branches (Executive, Judicial and Legislative) respond to these events?
- What was the social, political and socio-economic climate during this time period?
- Who were the Black leaders and how did they influence the focus and direction of the Movement?

Procedures:

DAY ONE

Warm-Up/Motivation

1. Have each of the quotes listed below written on a chalkboard or overhead where all students can see them.

** In the name of the greatest people that ever trod the earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny... and I say... segregation now... segregation tomorrow... segregation forever.*

--George Wallace, as Governor of Alabama (1963)

** I have a dream that one day... the state of Alabama... will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.*

--Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963)

2. Once the students are seated, they should be given 1-2 minutes to read and reflect on the two quotes. Each should then pick up his or her index card and, depending upon which index card they have, write a 2-3 sentence statement outlining how either Wallace's or King's goal can be achieved.

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<http://www.visionaryproject.org/teacher/lesson1/procedures.html>

3. Invite students to share-out their responses. Ask them to speak a bit about the process of writing their statement, specifically about how easy or difficult it was to write goals for each statement. Ask them to react to each perspective and reflect on how each goal makes them feel. Explain to them the difference between Wallace, a segregationist, and King, an integrationist. (Please see [Words and Phrases](#) or the [Historiography](#), if needed.) Tell the students to keep these definitions in mind as they work their way through the next two days of discussion.

Guided Practice

4. Inform the students that they are going to spend the next two days analyzing some of the major events that happened during the Civil Rights Movement from 1954-1972 to determine whether the Movement was a success or failure. Ask the students how they would define the words "success" and "failure." Write their definitions on the board. If necessary, have two students look up each word and write the standard definition on the board. Have the students write down the agreed upon definitions so that they can refer back to them during the assignment. Ask the students:

- 1) How do you know when you have succeeded or failed?
- 2) Can an event be both a success and a failure?
- 3) Have you ever looked back at an event in your life that you thought was a failure and it turned out to be a success? Or that you thought was a success and it turned out to be a failure?
- 4) What is more important - succeeding or failing?

Tell them that their goal for the next two days is to study the Civil Rights Movement, including some of the events, leaders, goals and outcomes to attempt to answer the guiding question: Was the Civil Rights Movement a success or failure? Explain that since they are going to conduct a historical investigation, they may find that, at the end of the assignment, they cannot make or agree upon a clear cut position. This is fine as long as they are able to defend why and how they reached that conclusion.

5. Ask them to think about this 18-year period and a) name and describe any events that happened and b) name any leaders and their contributions. (Refer to the attached [timeline](#) for a scope and sequence of events). Write their responses on the board and clarify any confusion regarding dates. Encourage the students to think beyond the usual responses of Dr. King, Rosa Parks, *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

6. Once the students have finished, use the [Historiography](#) to provide a detailed overview of the Civil Rights Movement. Students should take notes and be encouraged to ask questions and make comments. Make sure that everyone understands what the Movement was and why it was important.

7. Prior to presenting the lesson, select two or more video clips from the [primary sources](#) area for this lesson and print out the transcripts for the interviews you have selected. Give each student a copy of the transcripts so they can read them silently as the clips are played (or read aloud.) Before you present the video clips in class, provide a brief introduction for each clip. Also, tell the students that they are now going to listen to (or read) two interviews from the National Visionary Leadership Project. Note that the

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interviewees are considered to be primary sources (if necessary, quickly explain the difference between a primary and a secondary source so that they can fully understand the value of the interview). As you present the clips, students should take notes and be prepared to discuss.

8. Once the clip(s) has ended, guide the students in a discussion of the following:

- A. Why is it important to learn about history from the people who experienced it? (If necessary, remind them of the differences between primary and secondary sources.)
- B. How accurate are their memories? Could time have impacted upon how they remember the event?
- C. Do they have a reason to distort the past?
- D. What would life have been like if the organizers and participants of the Civil Rights Movement had not gotten involved?

Independent Practice

9. Once the students have analyzed the clip(s) for accuracy, importance and relevance, direct their attention to the board and review the essential questions of the lesson. Tell them that now they will be working in groups of four to conduct a historical investigation to answer the essential questions. They should select a recorder to record the group's findings on chart paper (everyone else should record their notes in their notebooks); a reporter to present the group's findings to the class; a task manager to manage their group's process and a time-keeper.

10. After selecting documents from the [primary sources](#) section for this lesson, download [Worksheet 1-1](#). Create "primary source packages" for your students and hand them out with chart paper, markers and Worksheet 1-1, the *Success or Failure* handout. Tell the students they are to review each document in detail and answer the questions based only upon what they see or read in the documents. Tell them that as much as possible, they are not to draw upon prior knowledge, because they are acting as historians who are attempting to answer a question based only upon the presented evidence.

11. Tell students that they will have 45-minutes to conduct their investigation. Take time to answer any clarifying questions or clear up any confusion. If necessary, generate a short discussion to come up with a working definition of "success" and "failure." Inform them that, if they need to, they should also use their United States maps to gain a geographical perspective of where the event was taking place.

12. While they are working, circulate among the groups to make sure that they understand the assignment and are critically analyzing the sources.

13. Ten minutes before the lesson ends, tell students that they should begin organizing their notes so that they can present their findings. They should be prepared to state and defend their group's conclusion.

14. Student reporters should be given 10-15 minutes to present the group's findings and to explain how they reached their conclusion. Other groups should be encouraged to take

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notes during the presentations and to ask clarifying statements at the end. If time permits, allow other members of the group to add any additional information.

15. At the end of the presentations, ask the students to take 10-15 minutes to reflect in their journals on the following:

** How important is it to study the successes and failures of the Civil Rights Movement? Name three things that were changed as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. Could a Civil Rights Movement happen today? Explain.*

16. Tell the students that tomorrow they will be participating in a Movement simulation that directly connects to today's investigation and tonight's homework.

Homework

Tell students to log onto the National Visionary Leadership Project [Student Site](http://www.visionaryproject.org/student) (www.visionaryproject.org/student) to access documents and interviews on Freedom Summer. They should specifically be told to watch and take notes on Clip # 1-16, Robert Moses' interview about his participation in Freedom Summer and Clip # 1-12, CT Vivian's interview about his participation and arrest during the Freedom Rides. They should also be encouraged to browse through the other photos, documents and clips, as well as the [Timeline](http://www.visionaryproject.org/timeline) (www.visionaryproject.org/timeline), to get a fuller sense of the Civil Rights Movement. More advanced students should also print out and read the [Historiography](#).

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² www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/