

African American Experience in Utah

Summary

This lesson plan introduces students to a variety of perspectives on the African-American experience in the United States, and specifically Utah. This plan explores the connections (similarities and differences) between the experience of African-Americans and other ethnic groups. Students will draw upon their own experiences to relate to the material in this lesson.

Time Frame

5 class periods of 70 minutes each

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Character, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

VCR
Television

Background for Teachers

Teachers should have an understanding of the history of African-Americans in the United States (pre and post Civil War) and how this history has effected their contemporary experiences in the United States. Specifically, teachers should have an understanding of the experiences of African-Americans in Utah.

Student Prior Knowledge

Students should be aware of the history of slavery in the United States, the Civil Rights Movement and other struggles faced by African-Americans in the United States. This lesson plan is designed to enhance their knowledge and relate these national events to Utah (history and contemporary state).

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will gain an understanding of the experiences of many African-American in the United States.

Students will gain an understanding of the experience of African Americans (and other ethnic minority groups) living in Utah.

Students will be exposed to some of the most important political documents and legislation of the Civil Rights Movement.

Students will study the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement as well as prominent contemporary African-American leaders.

Instructional Procedures

Day One

Discuss the historical background of slavery. Begin by showing students *Civil War* Episode Three, by Ken Burns. Use Episode Three ("Forever Free") with Morgan Freeman as Frederick Douglas.

Discuss this section of the film with the class and what they learned about Frederick Douglas and slavery.

Assign the following vocabulary terms/concepts for students to research for the next class meeting:

Jim Crow Laws
separate but equal

inherently unequal
Plessey vs. Ferguson
Brown vs. Board of Education
Thurgood Marshall
Civil Rights Act of 1964
Rosa Parks
Birmingham, AL
Little Rock Ark.
Freedom March
Affirmative Action
NAACP

Remind students that these terms will be discussed in the following class period.

Day Two

Begin class by reviewing the vocabulary terms from the previous class. Answer any questions, and make sure students have an accurate understanding of each term.

Read (to or with the class) the Emancipation Proclamation (attached) and discuss the content of Lincoln's vision of a nation that did not support slavery.

End class by playing *Lincoln Portrait* (see website--"NPR Music Page")

Day Three

Introduction to *Missing Stories*

Distribute to the students excerpts from [Missing Stories](#). Each excerpt is from a member of the African-American community in Utah. Discuss the students' impressions of their experiences. Discuss each of the segments as a class.

Have each student write about a time they were treated unfairly or were subject to prejudice, or a time when they might have judged someone unfairly. Each student should write about the incident and how it made them feel.

If there is time at the end of the writing activity, discuss some of the experiences (if students want to share their stories).

Homework

Have each student find an article in a Utah newspaper that addresses issues of race/ethnicity, discrimination, or prejudice (toward any community, not only African-American). Students should read the article and be prepared to discuss it in class, in the following class period.

Day Four

As a class (out loud or silently) read [Terry Lee Williams story](#) in *Missing Stories*. Write the following questions on the board:

Are you glad that the Martin Luther King, Jr., holiday passed here in Utah? Why or why not?

Is it important for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to be a federal holiday? Why or why not?

Discuss the student responses as a class. Encourage each student to share one thought/idea.

Day Five

Watch the final episode of Ken Burns "Civil War." The episode "The Better Angels of Our Nature" begins with the surrender of General Lee, followed by the events of the Lincoln assassination, Lincoln's funeral and the aftermath of these events. This segment can be used to review the significance of this lesson plan.

Bibliography

Kelen, L.G, & Stone, E.H. (2000). *Missing Stories: An Oral History of Ethnic Minority Groups in Utah*. Utah State University Press. Logan, UT.

Authors

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