

Civil Rights Unit
United States History: Grades 9-12

Introduction:

This unit's content is the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955. It involves the reading of five primary sources and viewing the film "Mighty Times". The products created are three essays. Two operate as formative assessments and discuss perspectives and theories of History as applied to the events in the documents. The final essay is a textbook section where students demonstrate their understanding of what is important to know about this series of events and use their critical thinking skills to give their perspective of these events.

Goals and Aims:

This Unit has five Goals:

To facilitate an in depth study of the US Civil Rights Movement using primary sources.

To introduce students to the many voices of history and to initiate their understanding that History is about perspective and that perspective is shaped by many elements such as time, class, race, age, ethnicity, education, gender and experience.

To provide an opportunity for students to arrive at their own understanding that History is interpretive.

To explore several Historical theories: "The Great Man/Woman", "Tipping points", and "Coalescence of Events". Students will be aware that there are many other possible theories of History and that they can evaluate whether or not a theory fits the evidence.

To give the students an opportunity to practice "Historical Writing".

Rational:

These lessons engage the students in asking and finding their own answers for questions about history. These include the understandings that history is interpretive and based on multiple perspectives. They will also discuss questions about several historical theories and explore the effect of place and the specific time on historical events.

The era of the Montgomery Bus Boycott is the posthole for the Civil Rights Movement as well as a vehicle for exploring how to view and interpret Historical evidence.

In terms of content it goes into depth about Martin Luther King's blending of his spiritual views with a form of political action that allows for non violent, but effective protest. This lesson teaches student to question why. They are presented with three possible theories of historical change and asked to give their opinion about which one fits this particular set of events, based on the information they receive and what ever they wish to add in terms of their own research.

Curriculum Framework

The overarching goal of this unit is to understand how things change and how people participate in and facilitate change.

Standards of Instruction and Assessment:

National Standards for History:

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

The student comprehends a variety of historical sources:

- A. Identify the author or source of the historical document or narrative and assess its credibility.
- B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.
- C. Identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it was constructed.
- D. Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations but acknowledge that the two are related; that the facts the historian reports are selected and reflect therefore the historian's judgment of what is most significant about the past.
- E. Read historical narratives imaginatively, taking into account what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals involved-their probable values, outlook, motives, hopes, fears, strengths, and weaknesses.
- F. Appreciate historical perspectives-the ability (a) to describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts and the like; (b) the historical context in which the event unfolded-the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place...

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The student engages in historical analysis and interpretation:

Therefore the student is able to:

- A. Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, Behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.

- B. Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interest, hopes, and fears.
- C. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships bearing in mind multiple causation including (a) the importance of the individual in history; (b) the influence of ideas, human interests, and beliefs: and (c) the role of chance, the accidental and the irrational.
- F. Compare competing historical narratives.
- H. Hold interpretations of history as tentative, subject to changes as new information is uncovered, new voices heard and new interpretations broached.

Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities

The student conducts historical research:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Formulate historical questions from encounters with historical documents, eyewitness accounts, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, historical sites, art, architecture, and other records from the past.
- B. Interrogate historical data by uncovering the social, political, economic context in which it was created; testing the data source for its credibility, authority, authenticity, internal consistency and completeness; and detecting and evaluating bias, distortion, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of facts.
- C. Support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

The student engages in historical issues-analysis and decision-making:

Therefore, the student is able to:

- A. Identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.
- B. Evaluate the implementation of a decision by analyzing the interests it served; estimating the position, power, and priority of each player involved; assessing the ethical dimensions of the decision; and evaluating its costs and benefits from a variety of perspectives.

Alaska Content History Standards:

- A. A student should understand that history is a record of Human experience that links the past to the present and the future:

- 2) Know that the interpretation of history may change as new evidence is discovered.
- 3) Recognize different theories....
- 4) Understand that history relies on interpretation of evidence.
- 5) Understand that history is a narrative told in many voices and expresses various perspectives of historical experience.
- 7) Understand that history is dynamic and composed of key turning points.

B: A student should understand historical themes through factual knowledge of time, place, ideas, institutions, cultures, people and events.

A student will be able to:

- 1) Comprehend the forces of change and continuity that shape human history through the following persistent themes:
 - a. The development of culture, the emergence of civilizations, and the accomplishments and mistakes of social organizations;
 - c. The origin and impact of ideologies, religions, and institutions upon human societies;
 - d. The consequences of peace and violent conflict to societies and their cultures;
 - e. The major developments in societies as well as changing patterns related to class, ethnicity, race, and gender.
- 3) Recognize that historical understanding is relevant and valuable in the student's life and for participating in local, state, national, and global communities:
- 4) Recognize the importance of time, ideas, institutions, people, places, cultures, and events in understanding large historical patterns; and
- 5) Evaluate the influence of context upon historical understanding.

Alaska Performance Standards for Reading:

- 2) Summarize information or ideas from a text and make connections between summarized information or sets of ideas and related topics or information;
- 3) b.critique the power, logic, reasonableness and audience appeal of arguments advanced in public documents;
- 9) analyze the effects of cultural and historical influence on texts.

Alaska Performance Standards for Writing:

- 1) Write a coherent composition with a thesis statement that is supported with evidence, well-developed paragraphs, transitions, and a conclusion

Instructional Framework

The **enduring understandings** that are the teaching and learning goals of this unit are:

***History is Interpretive**

- *There are different perspectives of the same historical event
- *There are many different theories used to explain historical events

The **essential question** that frames this unit is:

“What are the tensions inherent in American Culture and how does change occur?”

Learning Outcomes and objectives for students are:

Under Construction of Knowledge:

Require students to interpret, synthesize and evaluate complex information, and provide an opportunity for students to consider divergent perspectives. During instruction, students will be led to manipulate information by synthesizing, generalizing (both orally and in writing), hypothesizing (about the content itself and what it teaches us in general about history), and they will (I hope) arrive at conclusions that produce new understandings.

Disciplined Inquiry:

Within the areas of content and concepts, students will be asked to show understanding, rather than mere awareness, of core ideas in the subject.

Instruction will address ideas central to the discipline with enough thoroughness so that conceptual relationships can be explored and complex understandings produced.

In terms of elaborated communication, students will be required to present explanations and conclusions through extended forms of oral (class discussion), and written language (three essays).

Instruction will engage the students in extended conversation with teacher and peers in a way that builds shared understanding.

Social Studies Content and Skills

Core Concepts and Content

- Continuity/Change
- Broad Statements
- Presuppositions
- World View

Social Studies Skills and Dispositions

Data Gathering Skills

- *Compile, organize and evaluate information

Intellectual Skills

- *Classify and Group items into categories
- *Compare things on the basis of similarities and differences
- *Draw conclusions or inferences from reasoning and analysis
- *Be aware of the possibility of more than one “right” answer

Interpersonal Skills

- *See things from the point of view of others
- *Understand one’s own perspective
- *Understand that differing perspectives can all be right
- *Respect for minority opinion
- *Work effectively with others as a group member
- *Participate in a “process” discussion

Value beyond the School

Students will be asked to direct performances to someone other than the teacher. (Last, summative essay is a textbook section which helps students make a connection between the content and the real world. What would you like the rest of the high school students in America to know and understand?)

Instructional Design Summary

This unit is comprised of four lessons exploring aspects of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and generalizing to the Civil Rights Movement. It is also an experience with using primary and secondary sources for building an interpretation of events. Each of the four lessons could stand alone,

The unit begins with a brief pre assessment asking students to complete a fast write that answers three questions:

What do you know about the Civil Rights Movement in general and specifically about the Montgomery Bus Boycott?

What do you know about Martin Luther King?

What do you know about Rosa Parks?

Lesson One: Introduction. After students complete the preassessment, they will be shown the film, “Mighty Times”. This lesson includes a study guide for the film. Discussion may follow the film.

Lesson Two: The excerpt from Coretta Scott King’s autobiography is distributed. Students will be asked to look at this document closely. They will examine the factors surrounding it’s writing, the situation of the writer and compare it to “Mighty Times”. Then they will be introduced to the three theories of history and asked which if any seems to fit this view of the events. They will be asked to write a short essay on this topic. This essay is a formative assignment and helps scaffold the students for future requirements in the unit, it captures their thoughts in that moment (before they are aware of the other documents) and offers the teacher an opportunity to check their work for understanding so far.

Lesson Three: Is another document, Martin Luther King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”. In this document Dr. King examines what the movement would be like with a different leader. Students are asked to reflect on this as well as the other aspects of this piece. Again they have some questions to reflect on and to use as the topic for another short essay. At any point the teacher may decide to have more classroom discussion. This might depend on the apparent understanding the students are exhibiting so far and/or their enthusiasm.

Lesson Four: This lesson probably requires some discussion about the theories of history, the various perspectives displayed so far and to introduce the final three documents (writings from interviews with E. D. Nixon, Joann Robinson and Rosa Parks herself.) The final assessment is a summative essay wherein students write a textbook section for the Montgomery Bus boycott.

Bibliography

Resources

Film:

“Mighty Times” can be obtained free by teachers through the Teaching Tolerance Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama, 36104 or (www.teachingtolerance.org)

Documents

Letter from a Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King

Excerpt entitled “Montgomery Boycott” from the Autobiography of Coretta Scott King, My Life with Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Now is Your Time”, Jo Ann Robinson, From the book, Ordinary Americans/U.S. History Through the Eyes of Everyday People, Edited by Linda R. Monk, A Close Up Foundation Publication, Page 225

E.D. Nixon, “Perspectives on the Montgomery Bus Boycott”, Center for Learning/Primary sources, the 1950’s, pages 51-52 and 54-59; From a speech of E.D. Nixon at Madison Square Garden, Documented in the book My Soul is Rested (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1977) by Howell Raines

Rosa Parks “Perspectives on the Montgomery Bus Boycott”, Center for Learning/Primary sources, the 1950’s, pages 53-54; Documented in the book My Soul is Rested (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1977) by Howell Raines

Student Handouts

Pre-assessment ‘Admission Ticket’

“Mighty Times” Study Guide

Three Document reading guides and assignment sheets for lessons two, three and four.

Rubric for Historical Writing to be used with final assessment