

ASSIGNMENT DISCOVERY ONLINE CURRICULUM

Lesson title:

Civil Rights: An Investigation

Grade level:

9-12, with adaptation for younger students

Subject area:

U.S. History, Biography

Duration:

Three class periods

Objectives:

Students will:

1. understand the concepts of civil rights and civil liberty,
2. understand and evaluate the roles played by President Lyndon B. Johnson, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and J. Edgar Hoover during the American civil rights movement; and
3. understand the roles of these three men in the context of the times in which they lived.

Materials:

- Reference materials on the 1960s, President Lyndon B. Johnson, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover (See sources in Procedures section.)
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (<<http://www.congresslink.org/civil/esscon.html>> and <<http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/vii.html>>)
- Internet access (if possible)
- Writing materials
- Copies of the Classroom Activity Sheet: Civil Rights Profile
- Copies of the Take-Home Activity Sheet: Legacy: A Letter Home

Procedures:

- 1) Begin by asking your students to listen to the following scenario:

Two students are talking quietly, but seriously, to each other. A third student, standing at the next locker, overhears the conversation, which happens to be about an act they have committed in violation of school rules. The third student shares the conversation with two other students, one of whom reports the incident to the principal's office. The principal searches the lockers of the first two students, locates some incriminating evidence, and suspends the students in accordance with school policy.
- 2) Have your students consider and discuss whether
 - the first two students have a right to privacy;
 - the third student has a right to freedom of speech;
 - the other students are morally or legally obligated to report the incident; and
 - the locker search may be conducted without a warrant.

- 3) Now initiate a more general discussion of civil rights and liberties. Explain to students that *civil rights* are the rights to personal liberty guaranteed to all U.S. citizens by the 13th and 14th Amendments and by acts of Congress. Civil rights ensure equal opportunity to citizens regardless of race, religion, or sex. *Civil liberties* refer to the freedoms one has from arbitrary governmental interference and are guaranteed in the United States by the Bill of Rights to the Constitution. Civil liberties include freedom of speech and press and freedom to practice religion. Ask students to consider the following:
- What rights are guaranteed and protected under the Constitution?
 - What are some other laws that preserve and protect the civil liberties of individuals? (You may want to look at the Civil Rights Act of 1964, found at <http://www.usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/civilr19.htm>.)
 - Is there a constitutional right to privacy? (See what the American Civil Liberties Union says about privacy at <http://www.aclu.org/issues/privacy/isprivacy.html>.)
- 4) Remind students that as late in our nation's history as the 1960s, most communities segregated whites and blacks in schools, public transportation, and restaurants. Discrimination prevented many from receiving equal consideration for employment and education. In some areas of the country, a "poll tax" was used to discourage blacks from voting in national and state elections. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 sought to legally prohibit and punish these injustices. The 1960s also saw an increase in organized efforts to strengthen the right of individuals to freedom of speech by students in universities such as the University of California at Berkeley.

Continue to develop the context of the civil rights movement of the 1960s using your textbook or other references. A convenient resource is the Civil Rights Timeline found at <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/mlk/movement/Seatimeline.html>. In addition, you may want to have students read the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which is located at <http://www.usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/laws/majorlaw/civilr19.htm>.

- 5) Read the following scenario to the class. Ask students to consider it in light of their earlier responses concerning civil rights and civil liberties.

The year is 1963. The U.S. president has been assassinated, and the vice president, once the Senate majority leader, assumes the ***presidency***. He is determined to carry out one of the missions of the slain president, which is to expand civil rights for all people. However, he is also very concerned about his own legacy, so he tapes as many conversations as possible in order to develop a full and complete record of his presidency. He does not inform others that they are being taped.

A ***minister*** is busy trying to continue the mission of his lifetime, which is to expand and ensure the civil rights of all people, particularly those who are black. This man is both a spiritual and political leader. However, during the course of his efforts, he behaves in some morally questionable ways unrelated to his mission.

The **director** of a powerful police force is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that no federal laws are broken and that democracy is not undermined. This director often keeps individuals under surveillance, although they are not aware of this. He learns about the morally questionable behaviors of the **minister** and attempts to discredit him to the **president** and to the **minister's** wife and family, hoping, in fact, to undermine the minister's power.

The **president** is counting on the **minister** to assist him in producing and passing the most important legislation of the decade and possibly the century—a civil rights bill that would outlaw racial discrimination. The civil rights legislation is eventually passed. The **president** and the **director** continue to tape others without their knowledge. The **minister's** family is anonymously informed of his behavior. The **minister** is assassinated. The secret audiotapes the **president** has made are released 20 years later.

- 6) Tell students that the scenario described is an actual series of events in American history. The president was Lyndon Baines Johnson, who assumed office after President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November 1963. The minister was civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., himself assassinated in 1968. The director of the police force was J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI from 1924 to 1972.
- 7) Now organize the class into several groups of three to five students to research each of the historical figures mentioned above: Martin Luther King, President Lyndon Baines Johnson, and J. Edgar Hoover. Assign each group a figure or allow groups to choose which man they would like to learn more about. Tell students they will be conducting an investigation of each man's responsibilities, roles, and actions during the period from 1963 to 1969—and how they related to the Civil Rights Act. Provide students with reference material and resources related to the period, as well as suggestions for collecting biographical data. Use the following Web sites as resources for beginning the investigations:
 - Civil Rights Timeline:
<<http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/mlk/movement/Seatimeline.html>>
 - Sitting for Justice: National Museum of American History:
<<http://americanhistory.si.edu/timeline/07sitin.htm>>
 - Investigative Responsibilities of the FBI in Civil Rights:
<<http://www.fbi.gov/yourfbi/faq/civilrights.htm>>
 - Lyndon Baines Johnson Library: <<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/>>
 - The President's Daily Diaries, 1963-1969:
<<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/diary/diarycol.asp>>
 - New Release of Telephone Conversations:
<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/Dictabelt.hom/new_dicta_releas_e.asp>

- Martin Luther King Jr.: A Biographical Sketch: <<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/hum/mlk/srs218.html>>
- John Edgar Hoover: <<http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAhooverE.htm>> (a British Web site offering a distant perspective)
- A Short History of the FBI: <<http://www.fbi.gov/yourfbi/history/hist.htm>>

8) Pass out a copy of the Classroom Activity Sheet to each student. Students will use this sheet as a guide to work from in their groups, and they will complete as much of it as possible in class. Students should continue working on their activity sheets individually or for homework.

9) When the class meets again, restructure student groups so that they comprise three students each who have researched Johnson, King, and Hoover. Have students share their research with the group and discuss the roles each man played in the context of the times in which he lived.

10) Next, lead a class discussion using some of the following questions:

- Why was it important to Lyndon Johnson to have the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed by Congress?
- Why was J. Edgar Hoover interested in discrediting Martin Luther King Jr.? Why did he use the specter of communism as a reason for having Dr. King under surveillance?
- Why was Lyndon Johnson taping as many conversations as possible?
- Why didn't Dr. King realize that he could have been under surveillance?
- Why did Lyndon Johnson extend Hoover's tenure beyond the mandatory retirement age?
- What is each man's legacy?

11) For homework, pass out copies of the Take-Home Activity Sheet. Explain to students that they must use the information they have collected to compose a letter from the man they have researched to his family. Tell students that the letter they compose should explain why the individual performed important work pertaining to civil rights and how that work contributed to his legacy. Remind students that they are writing to explain this particular person's *view of himself*, not to portray a balanced historical perspective.

Adaptation for younger students:

Since younger students may have difficulty with some of the nuances of this lesson, focus their lesson on the events highlighted in the Civil Rights Timeline (<<http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/mlk/movement/Seatimeline.html>>), particularly those from 1963 to 1969.

Then explore the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (<<http://www.congresslink.org/civil/esscon.html>>), and use it as the springboard for an investigation of the roles played by Lyndon Johnson and

Martin Luther King Jr. in enacting this legislation. Have the students work in pairs to conduct research and then create a fictional dialogue between the two men about the role each played in developing and passing this historic act.

Questions:

1. What is the difference between civil liberties and civil rights?
2. When and to what extent is it acceptable for the government to place the needs of the nation over the rights of the individual? For example, during World War II, people were asked to forgo the use of certain consumer products, such as nylon, so that they would be available for defense. Would your answer change for different countries and governments—for example, a dictatorship in a remote and sparsely populated country?
3. Under what circumstances, if any, would taping conversations without the knowledge and approval of the participants be acceptable or necessary?
4. Both Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon taped White House activities extensively. Do you think future presidents should do this? Should participants be informed? What would be the difference between the audiotaping and videotaping of events? How have computers changed the landscape for recording and maintaining information?
5. What is the role of the Federal Bureau of Investigation? Is this agency permitted to violate an individual's civil rights in order to protect federal and national interests? How might this be decided?
6. What civil rights and civil liberties remain unprotected or in jeopardy today?

Evaluation:

You can evaluate your students on the completion of their classroom activity sheets, their ability to work in groups, and the letters that they compose for homework.

Three points: students were accurate and thorough in completing the questions on their classroom activity sheet, worked effectively in their groups, and were able to compose thoughtful, persuasive letters.

Two points: students completed most of the questions accurately on their classroom activity sheet, worked together somewhat effectively with their groups, and composed a thoughtful letter.

One point: students were unable to answer most of the questions on their classroom activity sheet accurately, had difficulty working effectively with their groups, and submitted an incomplete letter.

Extension Ideas:

Civil Liberties in the Future

Challenge your students to continue their study of civil liberties. What civil rights legislation has been passed since the 1960s? What other work remains to be done? What issues will affect them as they become adults? Have them work in groups as investigative reporters to prepare a 10-minute piece updating civil liberties for an evening news feature.

Reenactments: Fact or Fiction?

If it is possible to view *The Johnson Tapes*, do so, and then initiate a discussion on the potential validity and accuracy of reenactments of crimes and other events. What are the benefits of this television technique? What are the deficiencies? Create a Venn diagram as part of your discussion to illustrate the similarities and differences between the reenactment and the event it purports to show.

Discuss why television programs frequently use this tool. How does a reenactment affect the viewer differently than an illustration or narration of an event? How do viewers know and understand the difference between the event and the reenactment? At what age are viewers able to recognize that something is a reenactment?

Suggested Readings:

The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68

Steven Kasher, Abbeville Press, 1996.

The major civil rights events of the era -- including the Montgomery bus boycott, the marches on Washington and Selma, the Freedom Rides, and more -- come to life through dramatic and personal images recorded by professional photographers of the time. A detailed narrative explains the chronology and importance each event, and every photograph is captioned with thoughts about the moment by the photographer or another participant in the event.

The Last Crusade: Martin Luther King, Jr., the BI, and the Poor People's Campaign

Gerald D. McKnight, Westview Press, A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1998.

J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI's surveillance of Martin Luther King, Jr., and their attempts to discredit and disrupt the civil rights movement didn't end with the passage of the Civil Rights Act. This book is an examination of the "dirty tricks" Hoover and the FBI played on Dr. King during the last two years of his life and especially surrounding the Poor People's Campaign of 1967 and 1968.

Web Links:

Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library

Extensive archival holdings including Internet listings of governmental agencies.

<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/>

The Johnson Tapes

Scroll through a chronological timeline of audio clips with LBJ.

<http://tlc.discovery.com/tlcpages/johnsontapes/johnsontapes.html>

Your FBI

The FBI offers a wealth of information on their history including their role in Civil Rights.

<http://www.fbi.gov/yourfbi.htm>

Civil Rights Act of 1964

CivNet offers a wealth of teaching resources for you to use in your classroom including the text of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

<http://www.civnet.org/resoures/teach/basic/part6/39.htm>

Vocabulary:

civil liberties

Definition: The term *civil liberties* is used to refer to guarantees of freedom of speech, press, or religion; due process of law; and other limitations on the power of the state to restrain or dictate the actions of individuals.

Context: The FBI's online wiretapping software, "Carnivore," is considered a violation of civil liberties by the American Civil Liberties Union.

civil rights

Definition: The term *civil rights* is used to imply that the state has a role in ensuring all citizens have equal protection under the law and equal opportunity to exercise the privileges of citizenship regardless of race, religion, sex, or other characteristics unrelated to the worth of the individual.

Context: It is within a person's civil rights to have an equal opportunity to succeed in this country, regardless of race, religion, or sex.

communist

Definition: A person practicing the theory that all goods and means of production are owned by the state.

Context: During the 1960s, citizens of the United States who were thought to be communists were considered to be potential traitors.

filibuster

Definition: The use of extreme tactics, particularly extended speeches, to delay enactment of legislation.

Context: Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was threatened by congressmen who vowed to filibuster against it.

legacy

Definition: Heritage or bequest to future generations.

Context: Johnson, King, and Hoover all expected to leave a legacy yielding respect from a grateful nation.

mandatory retirement

Definition: An age at which one is required to stop working.

Context: Although the FBI had a policy of mandatory retirement at 65, Lyndon Johnson helped gain an exception for J. Edgar Hoover so that he could continue as director.

segregation

Definition: The separation or isolation of people by race, social class, or ethnic group.

Context: Southern segregation practices in the early 1960s required that blacks use separate facilities and allowed rules that denied blacks service in public places.

surveillance

Definition: A close watch over someone or something.

Context: The FBI had many people under surveillance in the 1960s as part of its efforts to be a watchdog against communism.

vendetta

Definition: A hostile and prolonged feud, often with a desire to be vindictive.

Context: In retrospect, many believed that J. Edgar Hoover had a vendetta against Martin Luther King Jr., since his efforts to discredit and damage King were so extensive.

Academic standards:**Grade level:**

9-12

Subject area:

U.S. History

Standard:

Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties.

Benchmark:

Understands how diverse groups united during the civil rights movement (e.g., the escalation from civil disobedience to more radical protest, issues that led to the development of the Asian civil rights movement and the Native American civil rights movement, the issues and goals of the farm labor movement and La Raza Unida).

Grade level:

9-12

Subject area:

Civics

Standard:

Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals.

Benchmark:

Knows historical and contemporary examples of citizen movements seeking to expand liberty, to ensure the equal rights of all citizens, or to realize other values fundamental to American constitutional democracy (e.g., the suffrage and civil rights movements).

Grade level:

9-12

Subject area:

Civics

Standard:

Understands how constitutions may limit government's power in order to protect individual rights and promote the common good.

Benchmark:

Understands the concept of a constitution, the various purposes that constitutions serve, and the conditions that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of constitutional government.

Credit:

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Civil Rights Profile

Circle the name of the man you have chosen to investigate:

- President Lyndon B. Johnson
- The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover

Born: _____ Died: _____ Cause of death: _____

Education: _____

Work history: _____

National role(s): _____

Role in the 1960s civil rights movement: _____

Key ideas and actions in fulfilling this role: _____

Impact on the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act: _____

Legacy: A Letter Home

Use the information you have gathered on your Classroom Activity Sheet to write a letter to your classmates from the person you investigated. The letter should explain why the individual performed important work pertaining to civil rights and how that work contributed to his legacy. Remember, you are writing to explain this particular person's *view of himself*, not to portray a balanced historical perspective.

