

# Sixteenth Street Unit Plan

Grade Level: 6-8

## At a Glance:

**Subject:** American History

**Topics:** Civil Rights Movement

**Higher-Order Thinking Skills:** Inferring, Reasoning, Evaluation

**Key Learnings:** Racism, Discrimination, Points of View

## Unit Summary

Students learn about the history of segregated America by studying events of the civil rights movement. They construct a working definition of discrimination, prejudice, and racism, and work in groups to present the personal stories of ordinary men and women who became instrumental in the American civil rights movement. Using *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, by Christopher Paul Curtis, as a launching pad, students study varied accounts of the 1963 Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama; create a newspaper; and conduct a mock trial of Thomas Blanton Jr., one of the men accused in the bombing.

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| <p><b>English/Language Arts Iowa Core:</b></p> <p>CC.8.W.7 Research to Build &amp; Present Knowledge: Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.</p> | <p><b>Social Studies Iowa Core:</b></p> <p>Political Science/Civic Literacy:</p> <p>(Gr. 6-8) Understand the rights and responsibilities of each citizen and demonstrate the value of lifelong civic action.</p> <p>(Gr. 6-8) Understand how the government established by the Constitution embodies the principles of democracy and republicanism.</p> <p>History:</p> <p>(Gr. 6-8) Understand the role of individuals and groups within a society as promoters of change or the status quo.</p> <p>Understand cause and effect relationships and other historical thinking skills in order to interpret events and issues.</p> <p>“Other Historical Thinking Skills”:</p> <p><a href="http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/historical-thinking-standards-1/overview">http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/historical-thinking-standards-1/overview</a></p> |
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| <p><b>Iowa Core 21st Century Skills:</b><br/> <b>Technology Literacy</b><br/>         Concept 3: Research and Information Fluency<br/>         Grades 6-8: Plan strategies utilizing <b>digital tools</b> to gather, evaluate, and use information.</p>  | <p><b>Iowa Core Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies</b><br/>         RH.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.</p> |
| <p><b>AASL Common Beliefs</b><br/>         Inquiry Provides a Framework for Learning.</p>  |   |
| <p><b>AASL Standards:</b><br/>         2.1.1.<br/>         Continue an <b>inquiry-based research process</b> by applying critical-thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation, organization) to information and knowledge in order to construct new understandings, draw conclusions, and create new knowledge.</p> | <p>2.1.6<br/>         Use the <b>writing process</b>, media and visual literacy, and technology skills to <b>create products</b> that express new understandings.</p>   |

### Curriculum-Framing Questions

#### Essential Question

What are your basic human rights?

#### Unit Questions

How have African-Americans in the United States struggled for social justice?

What can the civil rights movement teach us about addressing current social justice issues?

#### Content Questions

What are racism, prejudice, and discrimination?

What factors helped set the stage for the civil rights movement?

### Assessment Processes

Ask students to self-assess and peer-assess their personal stories assignment using the [group and self-assessment](#) form.

Assess the newspaper project with the [newspaper rubric](#).

Have students self-assess their preparation for and participation in the mock trial using the [mock trial reflection](#) sheet. Use this same sheet to assess these skills as well.

As a final assessment of learning to see what students now know that they did not know before, read excerpts from the [Civil Rights Act of 1964\\*](#), and ask students to respond to the following:

*Are the rights guaranteed in the Civil Rights Act upheld today? If so, in what ways?*

*What problems remain?*

*What additional statements can you add to the Civil Rights Act to address problems that persist today?*

## Instructional Procedures

### Introduction

Introduce the topic by providing students with a firsthand experience of injustice. Invite everyone who is left-handed to the front of the class and give each left-handed person a piece of candy.

Afterward, have all students write for five minutes about what just occurred. Invite students to read their papers aloud, and record key words that arise from their own writing. Their own language anchors the students' ideas to the topic and helps set the stage for learning.

Discuss the issues that come up. Ask probing questions about the experience for students who are left-handed and those who are right-handed.

Discuss human rights and what this means to students. Ask them what they consider to be their basic human rights. Ask for examples, both historic and recent, when basic human rights have been denied to certain groups of people.

### The Civil Rights Movement

Set the stage for a study of the civil rights movement with the video, *Stand Up For Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement in America* (available in Learn 360). Prior to showing the film, access the students' knowledge with a K-W-L group discussion.

As part of the K-W-L, develop the concepts around the following terms:

- Discrimination
- Racism
- Prejudice
- Stereotype
- Intolerance

During the film have students record major events, dates, locations, and key individuals. After viewing the film, discuss the events portrayed in the film, and together create a civil rights timeline to hang in the room for future reference.

Use a variety of resources and methods to teach about seminal topics, such as [Jim Crow laws](#)\*, the Montgomery bus boycott, the march on Washington, Little Rock, and the Freedom Riders.

Introduce the idea that history happens to ordinary people (sons, daughters, brothers, and grandparents). People did not get involved in the civil rights movement because it was glamorous or because they wanted to be heroes; they did it because they were tired of discrimination and prejudice and, in some instances, were initially just innocent bystanders.

Have student groups study these individuals with the purpose of relating an individual's story to the rest of the class through the personal stories project. In this assignment, each group selects one person and researches the person's life, the challenges that the person faced, and the person's involvement in the civil rights movement. Then, with this information, the group presents their findings to the class using one of the following methods:

Short skit that illustrates a crucial moment in the work and life of the individual  
Speech by the individual that focuses on what they wanted to accomplish and why  
Interview with questions and answers from the audience  
News report that includes interviews with different members of the community in which this person was trying to make changes  
Panel discussion in which panel members discuss and debate the individual's significance and how successful the individual was in improving the lives of people in the community

Have students complete the [group and self-assessment](#) form.

### **History Doesn't Happen to Strangers**

In this next part, students learn more about the history of racism in the United States and gain empathy by reading *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, by Christopher Paul Curtis. Ask the students to read the front and back cover, the dedication, the information about the author, and the title of chapter one. Ask them to predict what the themes will be in the book and through whose eyes they will witness the events of the early 1960s.

Read the first chapter aloud and compare students' predictions about themes with the events in the beginning of the book.

Set the students to reading *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* in literature circles. (To learn more about implementing literature circles, purchase [Literature Circles\\*](#), by Harvey Daniels or visit Seattle University's [Literature Circles Resource Center\\*](#).)

After reading the book, help students integrate their earlier studies with their reading by making a multimedia slideshow, [newspaper](#), or book titled *What America Was Like When the Watsons Went to Birmingham in 1963*. This can be done in small groups. Provide the [newspaper rubric](#) to groups and review to help ensure students understand the assessment criteria. Newspapers should include articles that address the following:

- Reactions to the book, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*
- How African-Americans have struggled for social justice
- The factors that set the stage for the civil rights movement
- What the civil rights movement can teach us about addressing current social justice issues

As students work on this project, schedule conferences to assess their understanding and the writing process, and to allow for giving feedback, clarifying misunderstandings, or providing additional lessons if necessary.

### **Birmingham—The Past Meets the Present**

Stage a mock trial of the last living defendant accused in the Baptist Church bombing, Thomas Blanton Jr. (Note that this case has been concluded; therefore, you can share the real outcome with students following the mock trial.)

Select mock trial methods that work best for you from the following Web resources: [American Bar Association Mock Trial Resources\\*](#), [Titanic Model Trial Site\\*](#), and [Illinois 19th Circuit Court mock trial tutorial\\*](#). Consider inviting a local trial lawyer to the classroom to discuss trial roles and trial

procedures.

Have students take on roles that reflect different points of view, such as witnesses, prosecution and defense attorneys, families of the girls, reporters, and different citizens of the town (old, young, white, black, and so on).

Have students research their roles and write interpretations of the events from the points of view of their characters.

Get help from the local trial lawyer association in staging the mock trial in a real courtroom or practice courtroom at a local law school.

When finished, have students complete the mock trial reflection sheet.

Have students complete final reflective activity with Civil Rights Act of 1964. (See Assessment Summary)

## **Differentiated Instruction**

### **Resource Student**

- Make modifications as dictated in the student's IEP

- Shorten assignments to core features

- Deliver instruction in a variety of ways, using models of acceptable work when possible

- Provide extra time for completing assignments

- Provide intermediary checkpoints throughout the duration of the unit.

### **Gifted Student**

- Support deeper and more extensive study and outcomes

- Allow the student to pursue related topics such as affirmative action and quota-based hiring

### **English Language Learner**

- Encourage support from common language speakers with greater English proficiency

- Consider having students research civil rights campaigns from their culture of origin

- Provide extra time for completing assignments

- Enlist support from parent helpers or teacher's aide

## **Credits**

Anne Shroeder participated in the Intel® Teach Program, which resulted in this idea for a classroom project. A team of teachers expanded the plan into the example you see here.

## **Intel® Teach Program**

### **Essentials Course**

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**IAO resources featured:** (*An Iowa AEA Online login is required in order to access these resources*)

Stand Up For Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement in America. Mazzarella Media  
2008 Retrieved November 29, 2011, from Learn360:  
<http://www.learn360.com/ShowVideo.aspx?ID=129300>

*Britannica School Edition*

"**Parks, Rosa L.**" *Compton's* by Britannica. *Encyclopædia Britannica Online School Edition*.  
Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2011. Web. 29 Nov. 2011.  
<<http://www.school.eb.com/comptons/article-9312903>>.

BookFLIX:

"Rosa Parks". *BookFlix*, Scholastic Inc., 2011. Web. 29 November 2011.

Gale

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. "The Legacy of Malcolm X." *The Atlantic* May 2011. *Junior Edition*. Web. 29 Nov. 2011.

SIRS

"Civil Rights Timeline." *Leading Issues Timelines*. 08 Jun 2011: n.p. *SIRS Issues Researcher*. Web. 29 Nov 2011.

AP Images

*Civil Rights March*. Photograph. *AP Images*. Web. 29 Nov. 2011.

Soundzabound

*60's Rock* / Soundzabound / Soundzabound Royalty Free Music, [www.soundzabound.com](http://www.soundzabound.com). Web. 29 Nov. 2011.

Gale

"KLANSMAN ON TRIAL IN '63 FATAL BOMBING." *Cincinnati Post* [Cincinnati, OH] 16 May 2002: 2A. *Infotrac Newsstand*. Web. 29 Nov. 2011.