

**The Power of Youth:
Exploring the Civil Rights Movement with “Freedom’s Children”**

Overview

Students will explore the contribution of young people to the Civil Rights Movement by reading the book “Freedom’s Children,” recognizing that any individual, regardless of age, has the power to help bring about social change. In groups, students will prepare a presentation on an assigned chapter of the book that they will teach to classmates. This lesson will culminate with students designing a stamp that honors one of the young, active citizens from “Freedom’s Children.”

Grade

8

North Carolina Essential Standards

- 8.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 8.H.1.5 - Analyze the relationship between historical context and decision-making.
- 8.H.2.1 - Explain the impact of economic, political, social, and military conflicts (e.g. war, slavery, states’ rights and citizenship and immigration policies) on the development of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.2.2 - Summarize how leadership and citizen actions (e.g. the founding fathers, the Regulators, the Greensboro Four, and participants of the Wilmington Race Riots, 1898) influenced the outcome of key conflicts in North Carolina and the United States
- 8.H.3.3 - Explain how individuals and groups have influenced economic, political and social change in North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.C&G.1.4 -Analyze access to democratic rights and freedoms among various groups in North Carolina and the United States (e.g. enslaved people, women, wage earners, landless farmers, American Indians, African Americans and other ethnic groups).
- 8.C&G.2.1 -Evaluate the effectiveness of various approaches used to effect change in North Carolina and the United States (e.g. picketing, boycotts, sit-ins, voting, marches, holding elected office and lobbying).
- 8.C&G.2.2 -Analyze issues pursued through active citizen campaigns for change (e.g. voting rights and access to education, housing and employment).
- 8.C&G.2.3- Explain the impact of human and civil rights issues throughout North Carolina and United States history.
- 8.C.1.3 -Summarize the contributions of particular groups to the development of North Carolina and the United States (e.g. women, religious groups, and ethnic minorities such as American Indians, African Americans, and European immigrants).

Essential Questions

- What power do young people have to positively affect their communities?
- In what ways were young people impacted by segregation, racism and violence during the 1950s-1960s?
- How did young people contribute to the Civil Rights Movement?

Materials

- Images-“Young Boy Protesting Segregation” and “The Children’s Crusade,” attached
- Quotes by MLK and Malcolm X, attached

- “The Children’s March,” a video by Teaching Tolerance; request a free copy and teacher’s guide at: <http://www.tolerance.org/kit/mighty-times-childrens-march> (optional)
- “Eyes on the Prize: No Easy Walk” (optional); this can typically be checked out via your local library
- Freedom’s Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories, by Ellen Levine
- Freedom’s Children Chapter Response Sheet, attached
- Freedom’s Children Presentation Note Sheet, attached
- Martin Luther King Jr. Stamp Images, attached

Duration

Two or more class periods

Procedure

Youth Power

1. As a warm-up, ask students to brainstorm a list of all the adjectives that they feel describe young people of their age. Write their answers on a piece of chart paper and discuss. Then, ask students to respond to the following question in writing, citing evidence and/or examples to back up their answer:
 - Do young people have the power to change our community? Explain.
2. Once students have had ample time to write their thoughts, allow them to discuss as a class. Ask students to expand their answers by asking follow up questions, or questions that challenge their ideas to encourage deeper thinking. As the class discusses, ask students if they can think of any specific examples though out history when young people have made a difference.

The Children’s Crusade

3. Project the attached image of a young boy protesting segregation, and ask students to comment on what they see. Prompt them to consider when they believe the photo was taken, where it took place, and what was happening before, during, and after the pictured moment. Once it comes out the image represents a protest against segregation, ask students to share what they already know regarding **segregation**.
4. Project the attached image of the Children’s Crusade, again encouraging students to share their observations. If needed, specifically prompt students to comment on the age of those pictured. Again, facilitate student inferences regarding when and where the photo was taken, as well as ideas of what was happening before, during, and after this photo. After discussing, explain that this photo is of some of the 900+ students who were held by the police in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. The students were arrested for protesting segregation. Give students some background information on what became referred to as the “**Children’s Crusade**”:
 - During segregation, adult protesters faced life altering consequences, such as losing their jobs, for participating. With the civil rights movement in Birmingham running out of adults who could take this risk in 1963, organizers noted that children has less to lose. Thus, on May 2, 1963, hundreds of students, some as young as 6-years-old, skipped school to carry signs and sing freedom songs protesting segregation. By the end of the day, over 900 youth had been sent to Birmingham jails due to their peaceful protesting, and the jails overflowed, unable to hold such numbers. With threats of suspension and expulsion from their principals, and the knowledge they would be thrown back into jail, the children still returned to the protest lines the very next day. Police tried to dissuade the young protestors by spraying them with fire hoses and releasing attack dogs. When pictures of these young protestors being attacked made front pages across the nation, society could no longer ignore what was taking place in Birmingham. Due largely to youth participation, on May 10, 1963 the desegregation of many of Birmingham’s public facilities began.

5. Project the two attached quotes, once made by **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** to the parents of the young, jailed protestors; the other made by Malcolm X in response to the jailing of the children in Birmingham. Discuss:
- How do MLK and Malcolm X's views differ regarding youth involvement in the civil rights movement?
 - What does MLK mean when he says that the children were doing a job for themselves and "all of mankind?" Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
 - What point is Malcolm X trying to make? Do you agree or disagree and why?
 - Do you think you would have joined the "children's crusade" were you living in Birmingham in 1963? Why or why not?

6. **Optional Activity 1:** Show the movie "The Children's March" (or excerpts), produced by Teaching Tolerance and available free to teachers at <http://www.tolerance.org/kit/mighty-times-childrens-march>. The teacher's edition is 40 minutes long and "tells the story of how the young people of Birmingham, Ala., braved fire hoses and police dogs in 1963 and brought segregation to its knees. Their heroism complements discussions about the ability of today's young people to be catalysts for positive social change." Teachers with time may also want to consider using some of the activities in the accompanying curriculum guide.

Optional Activity 2: Watch "Eyes on the Prize: No Easy Walk" on Birmingham and the Children's Crusade. Have students address the following questions in small groups or as a class:

- Why did the SCLC and ACMHR make the decision to use children in the campaign?
- Why were parents discouraged from posting bail for their children?
- What do you think King meant when he stated that the demonstrations allowed children to develop "a sense of their own stake in freedom and justice"?
- How might you have responded to the call to participate in the demonstrations?
- What sacrifices would you be willing to make for a cause you care about? Be specific.

- **Teacher note:** If electing not to show either movie, teacher's should move on to introduce the book Freedom's Children and allow students to get started with their reading, using the next class period to finish and teach their classmates about their chapter (process described below). Teacher's who do show the movie will introduce Freedom's Children at the beginning of the next class meeting.

Freedom's Children

7. Hold up a copy of the book Freedom's Children and tell students that "this book is about thirty young African Americans-children and teenagers-who tell in their own words of their involvement in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Uncluttered by concerns of power or fame, they had the simplest and clearest of political urges, the impulse for freedom." Teachers may also choose to read the book introduction to the class.
8. Break students up into seven groups and assign each group one of the seven chapters in the book. Explain to students that they will be responsible for reading and discussing their chapter in their group then teaching the rest of class about their chapter. Provide each student with a copy of the attached *Freedom's Children Chapter Response Sheet*, and provide a copy of the book for each individual or pair. (Teacher's should use their discretion whether to have the students complete the reading and response questions individually then discuss in their small groups, or whether to have the students read as a group (i.e. using literature circle format) and complete the questions together while discussing as a group.)

9. Once each group has read their chapter and answered/discussed the response questions for their chapter, they must work to prepare a group presentation in which they teach the remainder of class about their chapter. Give students the following presentation guidelines:

Teaching Freedom's Children

10. Based on what you read in your chapter and your answers to the response questions, your group must teach the remainder of class about the most important aspects of your chapter.
- Read the chapter carefully and answer the questions on the Chapter Response Sheet with as much detail as possible. Discuss your initial impressions of the chapter with your group. If there is any part of the chapter that is unclear to you, discuss it with your group.
 - After discussing the chapter and your answers to the provided questions, each of you should share ideas on what you think is most important to teach others about from your chapter. Consider what you felt was most interesting or striking as you read.
 - Once your group has decided what is most important to share with the class, determine how to teach them this information in an engaging, interesting way. How can you ensure your classmates learn the important information from this chapter? Presentations may be creative (i.e. a choral reading, staged interview or press conference, news cast, dramatic re-enactment, etc.)
 - Your chapter presentation must be at least 5 minutes, summarize the chapter's content, and highlight what you have deemed most important for your classmates to know.

Every member of your group must participate when presenting the information from your chapter.

11. Teachers should use their discretion as to how much time (in class and homework time) group's need to complete the reading and presentation planning. Once groups are ready to present their chapter lessons, go over class expectations for being a respectful audience member. Also, hand out the attached *Freedom's Children Presentation Notes* and instruct students that they will fill in things that they learn from their classmates during the presentation. After each of the seven presentations, facilitate a feedback session in which students comment on what they learned and ask questions of the presenters. Also, teachers should fill in any important information from the chapter that presenting groups may have left out.
12. After all groups have presented, discuss:
- Based on your chapter or those described to you today, what most surprised you from Freedom's Children and why?
 - All of the firsthand accounts in the book were from young people around your age. What compelled them to participate in the Civil Rights Movement? Why do you think they shared their stories? Do you think making the decision to participate or share their stories was an easy one? Why or why not?
 - Why did some people choose not to participate in the Civil Rights Movement?
 - Compare and contrast our society today with that of the 1950s-1960s. If you were living then, do you think you would have participated in the Civil Rights Movement? Why or why not? Do you think youth would be as involved in a modern day movement as the youth of the 50s-60s were? Explain.

Create a "Limited Edition" Stamp

13. Focus students on the concept that while Martin Luther King Jr. was undoubtedly a great source of inspiration and motivation during the struggle for civil rights, the movement was mostly fought and won by ordinary citizens exhibiting extraordinary motivation, courage, strength, and perseverance, many of whom were young people such as those in Freedom's Children.
14. Explain to students that often times the US Postal Service releases special edition stamps to honor various heroes, heroines, important events, memorable periods, etc. Project the attached examples of Martin

Luther King, Jr. stamps and facilitate a discussion of what the stamps represent and teach the public regarding MLK and the Civil Rights Movement.

15. Give students the following assignment:

- In preparation for Black History Month, the US Postal Service has commissioned you to design a new stamp celebrating a “lesser known” citizen’s contribution to the Civil Rights Movement. Choose one young citizen from Freedom’s Children who you felt most impacted by (perhaps it was their actions, their experiences, the words they shared, or something else that stuck out to you.) Design a stamp that honors this person’s experiences, contributions, legacy, etc. Your stamp must:
 - ...Be at least 8 ½ X 11 in size
 - ...Contain the person’s name
 - ...Contain a visual image representing the person and/or their contributions drawn by you
 - ...Be creative (stamps can be realistic or symbolic)
 - ...Be artistic (neatly designed, obvious effort, colored)
 - ...Be accurate (art work must exhibit time appropriateness; stamps can also contain text)

You must also write a paragraph describing your stamp, the person it is in honor of, that person’s accomplishments/contributions to the movement, and why you think the public need to know about him/her.

Culminating Activities

- Freedom’s Children contains firsthand accounts (oral histories) of people who participated in the Civil Rights Movement. Assign an oral history project such as *Living History: Local Voices of the Civil Rights Movement*, available in CEC’s Database of Civic Resources under Goal 7.
- Listen to NPR’s “Separate but Unequal,” the story of 16-year-old Virginian Barbara John, who in 1951 lead an historic walkout to protest overcrowding at her all-black school:
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1894713>

Young Boy Protesting Segregation



Source: <http://sphtc.org/timeline/1960-4.jpg>

The Children's Crusade



Source: <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/liberation-curriculum/lesson-plans/childrens-crusade-role-youth-african-american-freedom-struggle-2>

“Don’t worry about your children; they are going to be alright. Don’t hold them back if they want to go to jail, for they are not only doing a job for themselves, but for all of America and for all of mankind.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“Real men don’t put their children on the firing line.”

Malcolm X

Name: _____

Freedom's Children Chapter Response Sheet

Chapter _____ (number and title)

1. According to the chapter you read, what types of expectations and required etiquette existed during segregation?
2. What examples of unfair treatment, racism, violence, etc. did the people in this chapter discuss?
3. In what ways did the people quoted in this chapter respond to segregation?
4. Which personal account did you find most interesting, touching, angering, or surprising? Why?
5. Choose one quote from this chapter that you find particularly interesting to share with class. Describe why you chose this quote and provide your interpretation of it.
6. How do you think you would have responded to segregation if you were living in the 1950s-1960s?
7. What do you think is most important to teach your classmates about this chapter? Who else needs to know this information (meaning, if you could teach anyone else outside of this classroom, who would you teach and why)?

Name: _____

Freedom's Children – Presentation Notes

Chapter	What I learned...
Chapter 1: <i>The Color Bar: Experiences of Segregation</i>	
Chapter 2: <i>The Montgomery Bus Boycott & the Beginning of the Movement</i>	
Chapter 3: <i>Different Classrooms: Segregation & Integration in the Schools</i>	
Chapter 4: <i>Sit-ins, Freedom Rides, & Other Protests</i>	
Chapter 5: <i>The Children's Crusade</i>	
Chapter 6: <i>The Closed Society: Mississippi & Freedom Summer</i>	
Chapter 7: <i>Bloody Sunday and the Selma Movement</i>	

Martin Luther King Jr. Stamps

