

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

The Basics

Time Required

2-3 class periods

Subject Areas

Middle School US History and Language Arts

Emergence of Modern America, 1968-present

Common Core Standards Addressed:

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

Writing Standards English Language Arts Studies 6-12

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The Lesson

Introduction

Following the Civil War, the nation faced a new challenge – integrating African Americans within the whole of society, while *at the same time* regaining order of the Southern states. This period of time known as the Reconstruction proved to be a second war. On the one hand, it was a war fought within the courts, with the federal government left to ensure that certain amendments and regulations be carried out in the segregated, shattered south. This was a task that proved to be beyond daunting - filled with violent and brutal rejections to comply. Racism that had so long fueled a society intent on justifying actions that began centuries ago would not be something easily left behind. Therefore, we find mobs (not just in the south) taking “justice” into their own hands. Resistance in the form of Black Codes, Jim Crow Laws, the Ku Klux Klan, miscegenation laws, sharecropping, etc... developed in the South to keep a permanent class of 2nd hand citizens despite the passage of such legislation as the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. The law was an inconsistent thing, as seen with Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896. How could you on one hand be considered a legal citizen of the United States, yet on the other, be forced to have separate facilities? It was not until 1954 that separate but equal was ruled to be inherently unequal. That is almost 100 years after the Civil War, and that decision of Board v. Board of Education was only the beginning of the 20th century Civil Rights Movement. The end of the Civil War was only the beginning a long, slow, painful process of emancipation.

Guiding Questions

How were African Americans treated in the early part of the 20th Century?

Learning Objectives

- Students will read “Emancipation” by Paul Laurence Dunbar and listen to the sound recording to get a sense of the pride and determination of African Americans
- Students will analyze Thomas Nast’s wood carving “Emancipation” to see what some envisioned as life after slavery
- Students will listen to “Lift Every Voice and Sing” to compare and contrast the first verse to the second and third
- Students will analyze reasons for the failure of Reconstruction
- Students will analyze “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” to contrast the different use of old spirituals (Blow Your Trumpet Gabriel)

Preparation Instructions

Literature

“Emancipation” by Paul Laurence Dunbar

<http://www.dunbarsite.org/gallery/Emancipation.asp>

Artwork

Thomas Nast’s wood carving, *Emancipation*

Alfred R. Waud’s *The First Vote*

Both found at <http://rs6.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aointro.html>

Music

“Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing”

“Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen”

Lesson Activities

1. Students will read “Emancipation” by Paul Laurence Dunbar and listen to the recording. Discussion questions to follow.
<http://www.dunbarsite.org/gallery/Emancipation.asp>
2. Students will examine Thomas Nast’s wood carving, *Emancipation* and Alfred R. Waud’s *The First Vote* to analyze what the images say about expectations of Reconstruction
3. Listen to the first verse of “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing.”
Question: How does the mood of this reflect the sentiments of Dunbar’s poem?
4. Students will have a PowerPoint Lecture on the following:
 - President Johnson’s pardons of the Southern planters
 - Dissolution of the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1871
 - Black Codes
 - Jim Crow Laws
 - Development of the Ku Klux Klan
5. Students will listen to the 2nd and 3rd verses of “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing”
Question: How does the song reflect what was going on after the failure of Reconstruction?

6. Students will look at a slideshow of images of Black codes, Jim Crow laws, the KKK, and other various forms of injustice during this time period while listening to “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen.”

Assessment

1. Choose an instrumental song to be played to the reading of “Emancipation.” Explain your reasoning behind the song choice.
2. Create a PowerPoint that is an illustrated version of “Emancipation.” Choose any song that you feel captures the theme of the work. Explain your reasoning.
3. Analyze the song “Chocolate City” by Parliament. How does this song capture the message of America “failing” African Americans?

Resources

“Emancipation”

Fling out your banners, your honors be bringing,
Raise to the ether your paeans of praise.
Strike every chord and let music be ringing!
Celebrate freely this day of all days.

Few are the years since that notable blessing,
Raised you from slaves to the powers of men.
Each year has seen you my brothers progressing,
Never to sink to that level again.

Perched on your shoulders sits Liberty smiling,
Perched where the eyes of the nations can see.
Keep from her pinions all contact defiling;
Show by your deeds what you're destined to be.

Press boldly forward nor waver, nor falter.
Blood has been freely poured out in your cause,
Lives sacrificed upon Liberty's alter.
Press to the front, it were craven to pause.

Look to the heights that are worth your attaining
Keep your feet firm in the path to the goal.
Toward noble deeds every effort be straining.
Worthy ambition is food for the soul!

Up! Men and brothers, be noble, be earnest!
Ripe is the time and success is assured;
Know that your fate was the hardest and sternest
When through those lash-ringing days you endured.

Never again shall the manacles gall you

Never again shall the whip stroke defame!
Nobles and Freemen, your destinies call you
Onward to honor, to glory and fame.

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Lift every voice and sing, till earth and Heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise, high as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat, have not our weary feet,
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered;
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou Who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou Who hast by Thy might, led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee.
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee.
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our native land.

“Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen”

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows but Jesus
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Glory, Hallelujah

Sometimes I'm up
And sometimes I'm down
Yes, Lord, you know sometimes I'm almost to the ground
Oh, yes, Lord, still

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen

Nobody knows but Jesus
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Glory, Hallelujah

If you get there before I do
Oh, yes, Lord, don't forget to
Tell all my friends I'm coming too
Oh, yes, Lord, still

Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Nobody knows but Jesus
Nobody knows the trouble I've seen
Glory, Hallelujah

Although you see me
Goin' on so, oh, yes
I have my trials here below
Oh, yes, Lord