

Brick by Brick: A Civil Rights Story

Classroom Activities for Grades 9-12

Subjects

American History, Civics, Media Studies, Social Studies

Lesson Plan Units

American History - Civil Rights

Civics - American Government

Media Studies - Film Analysis

Social Studies - Race in America

Overview

Through these activities, students will explore the realities of segregation in modern American cities by viewing *Brick by Brick: A Civil Rights Story* and examining the demographics of their own cities and neighborhoods.

Materials

- pens/pencils
- paper
- students journals
- classroom board
- star stickers
- map of the United States
- American history textbook
- access to the video of *Brick by Brick: A Civil Rights Story*

Activities/Procedures

Possible Pre-Viewing Activities:

1. Have students respond to the following prompt in their journals (written on the board prior to class): "Describe the racial and/or ethnic make-up of your neighborhood? Is one race or ethnicity in the majority? How do the demographics of your neighborhood compare to the rest of your city?" Once students have had a chance to respond, ask them to share what they have written. Do students think that their city is diverse? Why or why not? If students disagree about how diverse their city is, what might account for this? Are races and ethnicities separated into different neighborhoods within the city? If so, why might this be? Are there any areas that are more diverse than others? If so, what might account for the diversity in those areas? How do students think their city could change for the better when it comes to diversity and integration?
2. Introduce students to the concept of *de facto* and *de jure* segregation. Ask students if they can think of examples from their study of American History of *de jure* segregation. Does *de jure* segregation still exist today? Does *de facto* segregation still exist today? Can students recount any times that they have seen *de facto* segregation in action? You may wish to bring up schools, neighborhoods, nightclubs, churches, etc... What factors do students think leads to *de facto* segregation? You may wish to bring up racism of individuals and/or businesses, individuals or groups seeking out people who share their culture, fear, tradition or history, economic differences, etc... Is *de facto* segregation always a bad thing? If not, when is it acceptable and when does it need to be changed?
3. Ask students if they think that segregation occurs today because of government policies or solely because of private choices. Ask what kinds of policies encourage segregation or diversity. Make a list from students' responses.
4. Provide each student with three star stickers and show them a map of the United States. Ask students to put their stickers on three cities where they believe racial segregation has been a serious problem. Once students have placed their stickers on the map, view the map as a class. What do students notice about where they chose to put their stickers? Are the stickers concentrated in one geographical area? If so, why? After a short discussion, point out Yonkers, New York. Ask students if they think that segregation was ever a major problem in Yonkers? Why or why not? After students provide their answers, give them a brief overview of the battles over segregation that occurred in Yonkers and ask them when they think these battles occurred? After they have provided their guesses, let them know that this battle is ongoing and much of it has occurred within their lifetime.

Viewing Activities:

1. While students view the film, instruct them to write down any quotations that stick with them in either a positive or a negative way, quotations that inspire or outrage them, or even lines that they find particularly thought provoking. They should also make note of characters in the film (their name and role in the Yonkers story) that they have strong impressions of, either positive or negative. Also, students should note why segregation occurred in Yonkers, specifically.

Possible Post-Viewing Activities:

1. Create a chart on the board with two columns and two rows. Title one column "Hopes" and the other "Fears." Title the two rows "Adrean Owens" and "Mary Dorman." Have students conduct a brainstorming session fill in the hopes and fears of both Ms. Owens and Ms. Dorman. Once the class has completed the chart, have students work in pairs to write a possible dialogue between Ms. Owens and Ms. Dorman in which they discuss their hopes and fears with each other. Let them know that they can use quotations that they wrote down while viewing the film in their dialogue.
2. Have students write a sidebar to be included in the segregation section of their textbook that informs students about the Yonkers case. Their sidebar should make connections with the information that is included in their textbook and inform readers about how the issue of segregation continues today.
3. Have students write a paper or create a poster that compares and contrasts the Yonkers case to a historical desegregation case that they have been studying in class. What comparisons can be drawn between the historical struggle for integration and modern-day desegregation battles. How did earlier struggles pave the way for desegregation cases like the Yonkers Case? What still needs to be done to address housing inequalities?

Vocabulary

segregation, desegregation, integration, de facto, de jure, "contempt of court", zoning, appeal, plaintiff, defendant, settlement, institutional, subsidize, market-rate

National Standards

- **United States History Standard 29:** Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties. Benchmarks: 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)
- **United States History Standard 31:** Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States. Benchmarks: Understands major contemporary social issues and the groups involved (e.g., the current debate over affirmative action and to what degree affirmative action policies have reached their goals; the evolution of government support for the rights of the disabled; the emergence of the Gay Liberation Movement and civil rights of gay Americans; continuing debates over multiculturalism, bilingual education, and group identity and rights vs. individual rights and identity; successes and failures of the modern feminist movement)
- **Behavioral Studies Standard 4:** Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions. Benchmarks: Understands that conflict between people or groups may arise from competition over ideas, resources, power, and/or status; Understands that social change, or the prospect of it, promotes conflict because social, economic, and political changes usually benefit some groups more than others (which is also true of the status quo); Understands that conflicts are especially difficult to resolve in situations in which there are few choices and little room for compromise
- **Civics Standard 11:** Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society. Benchmarks: Knows how the racial, religious, socioeconomic, regional, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of American society has influenced American politics through time; Knows different viewpoints regarding the role and value of diversity in American life; Knows examples of conflicts stemming from diversity, and understands how some conflicts have been managed and why some of them have not yet been successfully resolved; Knows why constitutional values and principles must be adhered to when managing conflicts over diversity
- **Civics Standard 18:** Understands the role and importance of law in the American constitutional system and issues regarding the judicial protection of individual rights. Benchmarks: Knows historical and contemporary practices that illustrate the central place of the rule of law; Knows historical and contemporary illustrations of the idea of equal protection of the laws for all persons

- **Civics Standard 21:** Understands the formation and implementation of public policy. Benchmarks: Knows a public policy issue at the local, state, or national level well enough to identify the major groups interested in that issue and explain their respective positions; Understands the processes by which public policy concerning a local, state, or national issue is formed and carried out; Knows the points at which citizens can monitor or influence the process of public policy formation; Understands why agreement may be difficult or impossible on issues such as abortion because of conflicts about values, principles, and interests
- **Language Arts Standard 1:** Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process. Benchmark: Uses strategies to adapt writing for different purposes (e.g., to explain, inform, analyze, entertain, reflect, persuade)