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Group Concept: Resilience, resistance, and freedom

US History / Civil Rights Movement

Grade: 8

Class Periods: 3-4, 45 minute class periods

### Beyond Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks: Getting to Know the Activists



Picture from: <https://www.blackenterprise.com/a-closer-look-at-dr-martin-luther-king-jr-s-march-on-washington/>

As Julian Bond once retorted, ““Rosa sat down, Martin stood up, then the white folks saw the light and saved the day.” Unfortunately, this oversimplification of the Civil Rights Movement is still taught in many classrooms across America, particularly in elementary school. Though teachers give much attention to major leaders and events of the Civil Rights Movement—as they should—the work of many of the less commonly known activists is overlooked. This lesson focuses on some of these activists in an

attempt to introduce junior high students to some of these more obscure men and women of the Civil Rights Movement.

In this lesson, students will do in-depth research and analysis of one of the less commonly known activists from the Civil Rights Movement and create a project intended to inform about that person's place in history. Then, students will review the projects of their classmates and reflect on the activism and resilience of these individuals. Finally, students will reflect on their own resilience in standing up for what they believe in.

**Guiding Questions:**

1. What influenced participants in the Civil Rights Movement to take a stand against injustice and inequality?
2. What did participants in the Civil Rights Movement do to protest injustice and inequality?
3. How were participants in the Civil Rights Movement able to remain resilient?
4. How can I remain resilient and stand up for what I believe in even when it's hard?

**Learning Objectives:**

- Realize that movements are made up of individuals and every individual has a unique story.
- Research and analyze the life and activism of a participant in the Civil Rights Movement.
- Create a visual representation of research.
- Review the projects of several classmates.
- Reflect on students' own resilience and ability to stand up for their own beliefs.

## **Lesson Plan Details**

**College and Career Readiness Standards:**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.10 By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

**Materials:**

Personal computers for each student  
Printed or electronic access to Activist Sign-Up Sheet  
Printed or electronic access to Part One, Part Two, and Part Three questions  
Teacher created shared google document for students to post projects

**Preparation:**

**Day One:** As students enter the classroom, project Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream speech" on the board. Instruct them to listen to it as well as answer the Bellwork question on the board: "What role do soldiers in an army play? What role do generals play? How do the roles of soldiers and general differ?" When the bell rings, have students discuss their answers to the question with their partner. Discuss the answer to the last Bellwork question as a class.

Transition to introducing concept for the next couple days by reminding students what has previously been discussed. Review Jim Crow laws and key Civil Rights Movement events previously discussed. Say: "This past week we have been discussing Jim Crow laws in the South and the effect these laws had in making individuals feel inferior. Yesterday, we introduced the Civil Rights Movement and talked about several key events. If we study key events in history, we will more than likely read about a

handful of leaders that perpetuated that event. Unfortunately, sometimes this means that we overlook the followers that those leaders have and their role in creating that event. You've all heard Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech. As you look at the picture (shown above) do you know who is in the audience? If there was no people who marched with Dr. King, he would have had no one to give his speech to! Just as we have discussed, while generals play an important organizational roles as leaders in an army, there would be no army if soldiers did not agree to follow the general! In the Civil Rights Movement, many people followed the Civil Rights leaders like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King who fought for freedom and each of them has a particular set of experiences and background. So let's identify some of these people in the crowd; some of the soldiers who fought with Dr. King and Rosa Parks. In order to become more familiar with these soldiers who are not as well known, we are going to do a project that allows you to learn about these individuals and become familiar with their stories."

### Lesson Activities:

**Day One Continued:** Explain project part one requirements to the students. Students will begin by signing up for an individual of their choosing from the list provided. After instruction, students will have the opportunity to view this list on a google document and type their name by the name of the individual they have chosen to claim him or her as their own. An example of this sign up sheet, including the names and pictures of each activist, can be found by clicking on the icon below.



Civil Rights Activists  
Sign up.pptx

Students will have the rest of day one and all of day two to finishing researching and answer the assigned questions.

Please see the icon below for part one project instructions.



Part One.docx

**Day Two:** Workday; remind students of project requirements and give them this class period to work.

**Day Three:** Part one of the projects are due today. Instruct students to attach a link to their projects on a google document. This google doc should be changed so that students can view and edit. Allow five minutes for each student to make sure they correctly attached a link to their presentation on the shared google document according to the instructions on the part one worksheet.

Once all students have correctly attached the link to their presentation, introduce part two of the project. In part two, students will view the projects of their peers in an effort to become familiar with more civil rights activists. Students will choose four of their classmate's projects to view. As they do so, they will answer the questions for part two—located by clicking on the icon below—to help them assess their classmate's projects.



Part Two.docx

Allow students the rest of day three to view their classmate's projects and answer the corresponding questions.

Assign part three questions for homework and/or pass out part three to students who are finished early. Part three questions are located below.



### **Assessment:**

The effort students put into their projects and the questions for part two assess how well students are able to follow directions, summarize research, and how thoroughly they examine one another's projects.

Additionally, the questions for part three of this project are intended to help students understand the resilience of civil rights activists and relate their experiences to their own lives. These questions enable students to summarize what they learned and connect the material to their own situation.

### **Lesson Extensions:**

- 23 Lesser Known Civil Rights Figures You Need to Know: <https://bestlifeonline.com/civil-rights-leaders/>
- Seven Civil Rights Heroes to Teach Your Kids About: <https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-life-and-religion/221994/seven-civil-rights-heroes>
- Civil Rights Activists: <https://www.biography.com/people/groups/civil-rights-activists>
- Impact of Civil Rights 'Foot Soldiers' Recognized: <https://www.voanews.com/archive/impact-civil-rights-foot-soldiers-recognized>
- The Foot Soldiers of Justice: <https://www.voanews.com/archive/impact-civil-rights-foot-soldiers-recognized>
- Use Historical Empathy to Help Students Process the World Today: <http://facingtoday.facinghistory.org/use-historical-empathy-to-help-students-process-the-world-today>

**Reference Websites:** None.