



The VIRGIN MARY and the CHILDCHRIST.
Could the Child Christ possibly be of the same flesh as the Negro?

Carroll, Chas. The VIRGIN MARY and the CHILDCHRIST, Could the Child Christ possibly be of the same flesh as the Negro?, *The Negro A Beast or In the Image of God?* St. Louis, Missouri: American Book and Bible House, 1900.

Title of Lesson: Socio-cultural Constructions of Race in the early 20th Century

This lesson was created as an introduction to discussing the Long Civil Rights Movement and to serve as a blue print for discussing the role played by political and economic institutions in creating and reinforcing ideas about racial superiority and inferiority in the Jim Crow Era. This blue print can also be of use when focusing on how these institutions have had to be changed over time and the methods used to do so.

As teachers we are tasked with having to explain what motivates and rationalizes inhumane treatment of other humans and not just by the few, but by the many. There is an opportunity to tie this to your study of the Holocaust and to the methods of authoritarian control. The Nazi's through the manipulation of socio-cultural beliefs, by their use of propaganda, were able to construct the Jews as the "other." These practices allowed long-held prejudices to become normalized and the expression of such was encouraged by their leaders. We see similar practices happening here in the early 20th century throughout the country, but without authoritarian manipulation. If there is opportunity or interest, there is also a link provided to the Pew Research Center's 2019 report, *Race in America* which can encourage a conversation about the forces shaping society currently.

The sources that the activities are based on were chosen to reflect the wide range of socio-cultural institutions that were constructing and reinforcing ideas of African American inferiority in the early 20th Century. *The Army War College Study*, on the fitness of African Americans to serve and hold leadership positions in the military and argues for the necessity of strict segregation, shows the mindset and beliefs of both our military and our Federal Government. *The Negro A Beast or In the Image of God...* was read by Rosa Parks as a child and argues there is both significant religious and “scientific” evidence that Negroes are beasts and not human. Also included are opinion pieces published in the New York Times, written by the Governor of Alabama Hilary A. Hebert and Andrew Carnegie, powerful men both in and outside of the South that discuss their perspectives on, “The Negro.” Finally, excerpts from *Birth of a Nation* is also included as a source. Woodrow Wilson screened this film in the White House in 1915 and it was viewed throughout the country by millions.

This lesson can also be a launch point to discussing lynching as many of the sources both discuss and argue for the practice. Lynching is also a bridge between social institutions and political ones. It should also provoke a discussion of the importance of questioning, confronting, and changing pernicious and pervasive narratives.

Lesson Essential Question: How do socio-cultural institutions construct ideas of superiority and inferiority?

Guiding questions:

- How was religion used to justify racism in the early 20th century?
- How was “science”/social darwinism used to justify racism in the early 20th century?
- Were ideas of African American racial inferiority only being constructed and reinforced in the South?
- To what extent was it possible to avoid interacting with these messages and ideas for the average person of any race?

Concept: Institutions

Subject: History 10-12

Class Periods: 2-3

National College and Career Ready Standards:

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.11.9-12. Critique the usefulness of historical sources for a specific historical inquiry based on their maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose

D4.4.9-12. Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

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D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

Learning Objectives:

Students will analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced perspectives on race in the early 20th century as well as now.

Students will critique the value and limitations of historical sources using the strategy of OPCVL.

Students will write an essay that integrates evidence from multiple sources and perspectives.

Opening:

What messages were given to the Germans about racial superiority and inferiority by social institutions?

Religious institutions

Media

Leaders of communities and country

Family

Educational Institutions

AND/OR

What messages are currently being transmitted from these institutions about race/ethnicity/nationality compares to others? Pew Research on Race, 2019

Religious Institutions

Media

Leaders of communities and country

Family

Educational Institutions

Activities: In Jigsaw Groups

- Read discussion questions.
- 20 minutes reading/viewing time.
- Discuss and individually answer and collect evidence in order to write assessment.
- Complete OPCVL document
- Report back in original group

This can be done individually as homework, in class or in a group format.

Assessment: Using evidence from the sources provided and your own knowledge, discuss the role social institutions played in the early 20th century in the U.S. in constructing ideas of white superiority and black inferiority.

Closing: Which of the ideas from the 20th century are still prevalent today? In your opinion, have they been passed down inside families or cultural and community groups or are they coming from external sources like the media and leadership?

Essay Rubric:

Level 1-3: The response lacks focus on the question References to the sources are made, but at this level these references are likely to consist of descriptions of the content of the sources rather than the sources being used as evidence to support the analysis No own knowledge is demonstrated, or where it is demonstrated, it is inaccurate or irrelevant.	Level 4-6: The response is generally focused on the question References are made to the sources, and these references are used as evidence to support the analysis. Where own knowledge is demonstrated, this lacks relevance or accuracy. There is little or no attempt to synthesize own knowledge and source material.	Level 7-9: The response is focused on the question Clear references are made to the source, and these references are used effectively as evidence to support the analysis. Accurate and relevant own knowledge is demonstrated. There is effective synthesis of own knowledge and source material.
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Links to Additional Resources:

[NY Times Article discussing the Son of Ham justification for slavery](#)

[2019 Report on Race in America by the Pew Research Center](#)

[LA Times interview with Rosa Parks where she discusses reading, as a child " The Negro A Beast or In the Image of God"](#)

[Commentary on Birth of a Nation, PBS Learning Media](#)

Discussion/worksheet Questions:

1. Identify the main points the creator of this source is trying to make. (No less than 5.)
2. Copy/describe the evidence they are citing for each main point. (No less than 3 for each point.)
3. How are African American's characterized in this source? They are shown to be.....
4. What can you infer about what Whites are afraid of when it comes to equality for African Americans, because of what is discussed/shown in this document?
5. If you were/are African American how would you feel about reading/watching these perspectives on who you are?
6. What evidence would you present to counter this argument/narrative?

Readings:

#1 The Negro A Beast or in the Image of God,

Chapter 2

Quote from Rosa Parks:

I remember that one of the first books I read, back when I was 8 years old, was called “Is the Negro a Beast?” That was the kind of attitude that white people had in Alabama in those days. It was so different from what we were reading about in our American history and civics lessons, with all the positive messages about life in this country, and I could see that what we were being taught wasn’t so, at least as far as black people were concerned.

Rosa Parks Interview, LA Times (referencing "A Negro the Beast or Image of God"

#2 Birth of a Nation (available on Amazon Prime)

Watch minutes: 1:30-1:43:20; 1:51-2:00:30; 2:02:50-2:04:20; 2:26:19-2:28:04; 2:45:35-2:47:09 (last 9 minutes show KKK saving the day and rescuing the white woman from the mulatto man)

The Birth of a Nation was a 1915 silent film, directed by D.W. Griffith, fictionalizing the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction. At the time of its release, it was considered a pioneering artistic achievement in the history of cinema. But, in reality, it was a racist piece of “Lost Cause” propaganda, seeking to transform the Ku Klux Klan from terrorists into heroic vigilantes who rescued the South from uncivilized blacks.

This film rewrote the history of Reconstruction, seeking to redeem the South and erase the positive contributions and progress that African Americans had made. African American men are vilified and shown as vengeful former slaves, while the Ku Klux Klan is celebrated as protecting the country from the perils of racial equality. Not only was this portrayal untrue, it was the opposite of what actually happened. During Reconstruction, the Klan terrorized and assaulted

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countless numbers of African Americans in order to intimidate them from exercising their basic rights, including voting.

The NAACP, founded in 1909, strongly opposed the film and even sought to have it banned. But their protests were not successful. The film screened widely, even at the White House for President Woodrow Wilson. Not long after the film's release, the KKK was reborn.

During the 20th century, many Americans learned about Reconstruction through the distorted viewpoint in films like *The Birth of a Nation*. The film is considered the greatest blockbuster of the silent film era. Thomas Dixon, who wrote the book *The Clansman*, on which *The Birth of a Nation* was based, reveled in its success. "The real purpose of my film was to revolutionize Northern audiences that would transform every man into a Southern partisan for life."

Rewriting History Through Propaganda, PBS Learning Media

Additional Questions: How is the KKK characterized? Women? What can you use as evidence to support your assertions? (Use concrete examples and descriptions.)

#3 Army War College Medical Study, 1925

In 1925, seven years after the end of World War I, the Army War College undertook a study to evaluate the fitness of black soldiers for service in a future war. The study's recommendations emphasized the importance of white officers and strict segregation of black troops; it was generally dubious about the prospects of black soldiers serving successfully in combat roles. Black combat soldiers during World War II, including the Tuskegee Airmen, thoroughly disproved these racist assumptions about their abilities, but it was not until the U.S. war against Korea in 1951 that the military made active moves to desegregate its units.

#4 "Negro Suffrage is a Failure" By Hilary A. Herbert, NY Times

Additional questions: What is Governor Herbert's arguing for regarding lynching? What is the role of women in the discussion of lynching?

#5 "Andrew Carnegie on the Negro's Progress" By Andrew Carnegie, NY Times

Additional questions: Carnegie is attempting to address stereotypes of Negroes by giving evidence. In what ways does his argument also reinforce those stereotypes?

What is Carnegie's opinion of lynching and how do you know this? What is the role of women in the discussion of lynching?

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