

Lesson Plan by: Cliff Hannon

Lesson: “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

Length: Two Periods

Grade: U.S. History

Academic Standard(s):

USH.7.2 Read Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech (1963) and “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963) and summarize the main ideas in each. (Government, Economics)

Performance Objectives:

Using an abbreviated copy of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” students will work in groups to create 5 note-cards with the purpose of different quotes from the piece with 100% accuracy identifying the main purposes of the piece on an Exit Quiz.

Assessment:

Students will create note cards through a Reading Apprenticeship Strategy called “Say the Last Word” that summarizes different key points of Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”. Students will be assessed throughout the two-day activity through continuous teacher evaluation by walking through out the classroom. Students will create 5 note-cards with an important quote on one side and the summary/importance of that quote on the other. Students will be evaluated by their ability to accurately identify the two main purposes of the piece on an Exit Quiz assigned at the end of the period. Students should hit 100% accuracy on their Exit Quiz, and 80% of students should be able to accurately summarize the main ideas of the text on the unit assessment.

Advanced Preparation by Teacher:

1. Abbreviated Version of “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
2. Introductory PowerPoint
3. PBS Freedom Rides Video
4. Note Cards
5. Highlighter
6. Exit Quiz

Procedure:

Introduction/Motivation: Yesterday, we discussed the use of non-violence, defined civil disobedience, and looked at the Greensboro Sit-ins and Freedom Rides as examples of civil disobedience. I want to start off with a video from the PBS documentary over the Freedom Rides. This clip features primary accounts of people who participated in the Freedom Rides as they discuss the nonviolent, civil disobedience technique. After students have watched the clip, ask them to define civil disobedience in their own words? (Blooms – Knowledge)

Step-by-Step Plan:

1. Go through students' responses to the definition of civil disobedience in their own words.
2. Have students take notes in their notebook while the teacher lectures through the introductory PowerPoint slides. Students should only write down the material on the slides that are underlined. The PowerPoint covers details of why MLK targeted Birmingham, T Eugene "Bull" Connor, and primary source pictures of demonstrators being attacked by dogs and water hoses.
3. Hand out MLK's "Letter from Birmingham" Jail.
4. Have students go through the steps below while the teacher walks the room, keeping students on task, and assist as needed.
5. Students will partner up for these steps in order without moving on to the next step until the entire class is ready for the next step.
 - a. Take turns between partners reading through the text
 - b. Hand out highlighters
 - c. Students work in pairs to highlight 5-10 quotes from the text that they feel are important
 - d. Hand out note cards
 - e. On the blank side of the note card, students should write 5 of the most important quotes
 - f. On the lined side of the note card, students should write why they picked the quote on the other side
6. The pairs of students will then get in groups of 6 with other pairs
 - a. Groups of pairs will compare the quotes they selected with the other pairs that form their group
 - b. The group then must select the 1 quote that they think is the most important from the piece
 - c. The group should also think of the purpose of MLK writing "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
 - d. Each group will then tape their selected note card to the front chalk board.
7. Read each quote out loud and have a person from each group defend the quote they selected.
8. Ask each group what they thought the purpose of "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
9. After discussion, offer that the two main purposes of the piece were to defend civil disobedience and define unjust laws.
10. Create a "Defend Civil Disobedience" column and a "Define Unjust Laws" column on the top of the chalk board.
11. Reread each quote and have students select which purpose their quote falls under. Have important quotes ready that the students may have missed to add to the columns as well.

Closure: End with an Exit Quiz that asks the students to name the two purposes of MLK's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and a knowledge question over T. Eugene "Bull" Connor. Have students turn in the exit quiz on their way out. Tomorrow we'll be discussing the March on

Washington, MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech, and the accomplishments of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Adaptations/Enrichment:

Students with Learning Disabilities: Reading in pairs of their own choice should allow students to read with confidence in front of a peer that they have a rapport with. This should reduce anxiety associated with reading outlined. This lesson is focused on helping students with literacy and reading comprehension difficulties to break down the text into manageable quotes to discover the purpose of a piece.

Results:

20% of students were able to accurately summarize the main ideas of the piece on the pre-assessment.

90% of students were able to accurately summarize the main ideas of the piece on the Exit Ticket.

96% of students were able to accurately summarize the main ideas of the piece on the end of unit assessment.