

We Survived the 1960s, Now What?

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CURRICULUM UNIT DESCRIPTION

This unit aims to introduce and enlighten students as to some of the events and changes that transpired during the 1960s in the United States over a four week period. More specifically, my aim is to introduce and inform students about people and events of the 1960s by using my own personal experiences.

INTRODUCTION

While some of the more popular songs were being played out on the stage of real life, the 1960s were in a constant state of change. The stage was set. While Chuck Berry was chasing “Maybelline,” Little Richard was trying to catch up with “Long Tall Sally.” Instead of school, Chuck Berry was more interested in the/his “Ding-a-ling” (the bell).

The Temptations were concerned with name calling, “Don’t call me nigga, whitey... Don’t call me whitey, nigga,” and Nina Simone just showed her total exasperation in “Mississippi Goddamn.” Everything and everyone was under protest. During the time of social injustice, racial hatred, political indecision, and educational inequalities... the 1960s’ beat went on.

“Everybody’s talking about a revolution” became as much of an outcry as “We shall overcome.”

The era of the 1960s was in constant turmoil. I too was in turmoil. I was a student, who became an activist and a leader (under protest). If you’ve ever heard the phrase, “I don’t know what hit me...” I don’t know what hit me.... Let me tell you about my 1960’s in the U.S.A.... And the beat goes on...

In May of 1959, I graduated from high school in Greenwood, South Carolina, and in September, I headed off to college in Orangeburg, South Carolina, (my dad didn’t think I needed an education, and as a result I was 21 days late reporting to school) my freshmen year was quiet uneventful for that first semester. It ended peacefully enough. The beginning of my upper freshman year (second semester) was when everything changed... it was now the 1960s. There were some visitors to our campus in late February. Their names were: Gordon Carey, Marvin Rich, James Farmer, Reverend McCollugh, Reverend I. Dequincy Newman, and many others. These individuals became as close to us as some of our own family members. Mrs. Ruby Hurley, Medgar Evers, Bob Saunders, Herbert Wright, Floyd Mckissick, Roy Wilkins, and many others became everyday household names to us. These individuals were some to the ones who would

become our friends, protectors, lawyers, liberators, and providers for the next three to four years.

About eleven o'clock one morning, I was told that someone wanted to speak to me in the music studio. I was sent to room 11. Upon my arrival, I saw no one who looked similar to me, and none, at that time, who was of my ethnic persuasion. This meant nothing since my campus had always been integrated.

We were introduced and awaited the arrival of some of the other students. During the meeting, we were told about the protests in other parts of the country (most notably in Greensboro, North Carolina). We were given the option of choosing not to participate. If we chose to go forward, we were to be trained by these individuals as leaders. We chose to go forth. After our training, each person in a leadership role had a designated title and function. My lowly function was that of "Contact Person". I was never to be arrested as the safety and freedom of all the protesters under my umbrella depended on my being able to contact the lawyers and proper authorities. Now, I very much wanted to be among the those who wore the badge of courage... to be arrested. But I was reluctantly obedient. Thoroughly indoctrinated in the teaching of nonviolence and thoroughly trained in protest procedure, we started our marching. We were very careful to plan our marches for the days we had our lightest class loads. Failures, of any kind, were totally unacceptable.

Thus, we began.

Come with me.

WEEK 1

OBJECTIVES THE KENNEDY ERA

1. The students will be able to analyze the cultural factors impacted by the activities of the 1960s.
2. Students will be able to define the "Kennedy Era."
3. Students will be able to define the contribution of JFK, RFK and Lyndon Johnson.

Material need.

VCR, Videos, and TV

Pencils, Paper and Maps

Handouts.

KENNEDY'S DILEMMA

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected President of the United States. This race was one of the closest races in history. Kennedy won only 49.7% of the popular votes, Nixon won 49.5% -- only 0.2% less than Kennedy.

If 12,000 people in five states - Illinois, Missouri, Nevada, New Mexico and Hawaii -- had voted for Richard Nixon instead of voting for Kennedy, Nixon would have been elected President in 1960. (ouch).

Aside from Kennedy's religion, the most interesting fact of the 1960 Presidential election was the contest for votes in the South. Kennedy's aggressive campaigning for civil rights lost him white votes in the South, but won him many black votes.

Black voters were probably essential for Kennedy's victory here in Texas and in two other Southern states: North Carolina and my home state of South Carolina. Without these three states, he would not have won. Overall, Kennedy won about 70% of the total black vote in 1960. Blacks, therefore, could fairly claim that they were as responsible as any other group for electing him President. Understandably, it was expected of him to reward them for their crucial support by supporting their demands for civil rights.

But for the first two year of his presidency-- 1961-1962 -- civil rights leaders would be very disappointed.

There were two main reasons: One reason was because of the Congress Kennedy had to deal with in 1961 and 1962. The Congressional elections of 1960 left Congress under the control of the powerful conservative coalition of Southern Democrats and Republicans, which as a group, certainly did not support civil rights reforms. The second reason civil rights leaders would be disappointed was because of the essentially moderate disposition of the new President. Simply stated, John F. Kennedy was not by nature a liberal reformer.

So Kennedy's early attitude toward civil rights was characterized by caution. Because he was worried about the conservative nature of the new Congress, he decided well before his inauguration that he would not ask Congress to enact any civil rights legislation during his first year.

When word of this leaked out, angry civil rights leader met with the President elect to argue against his decision. He listened politely but did not give in. President Kennedy promised only to issue a series of executive orders to eliminate discrimination in specific areas of federal responsibility, but he didn't even honor that promise... at least not right away. Meanwhile back in Greensboro, North Carolina, Orangeburg, Charleston and Bowman, South Carolina, in Mobile, Montgomery Selma, and Birmingham, Alabama, as well as in Nashville, Tennessee, and many other parts of the country, the drummer kept playing and the marches kept time to the beat.

In Greensboro North Carolina, a group of young people grew tired of the governments promises and procrastination, started out, on their own, to make some changes. Their decision: to start with the lunch counters. Thus, they began their protests. They let the world know, "we are tired of empty governmental promises." Their aim, to make a difference.

This protest mode quickly spread to other parts of the South. Bombings in Birmingham, marches in Montgomery and Mobile, shouting and sit-ins in Selma, arrangements in Atlanta and the beat continued.

The echoes were heard in large and small cities all across the South. Orations in Orangeburg, South Carolina quickly grew in number, and the marches became more and more dangerous. It was decided that we would target their major areas (Bus stations, churches and lunch counters)... specifically, S&H Kres.

Our primary target was S&H Kress - 5&10 (Five and Dime).

We decided to use the sit-ins along with a boycott to reach our goal. It took some time to convince the residents of Orangeburg to stop spending money in stores where only their money was welcome. If we can't sit and eat, we can't and won't spend our monies. On a very cold spring day in Orangeburg, South Carolina, a group of young marchers started on a very ill fated journey. These young people gathered at the gate of Claflin College. We were going to march down Highway 301 to the traffic light, turn right, cross the railroad and proceed downtown. I was only able to accompany the group as far as the Traffic light. I had to return to campus to await the outcome of the march. Our lawyers and all other persons involved in various aspects of our endeavor had been notified as to the route, intended destination and the magnitude of the march.

Since the weather was so cold, we were almost hoping that no one would be arrested. It just so happened that the state of South Carolina had gotten quite tired of our being such a thorn in their side. On this day, the State Law Enforcement Division (S.L.E.D.) decided to use not only dogs, but tear gas and water hoses as well. No one was injured during the attacks, just cold, wet, and arrested.

WEEK 2

MALCOLM X

OBJECTIVE

1. The student will be able to determine if non-violence is a viable tool for social change.
2. The student will be able to express an opinion on violence or non-violence.
3. If the student embraces violence for social change, what can the student learn?
4. If the student embraces non-violence, what can he or she learn?

THE RHETORIC OF MALCOLM X

During his last year in office, Kennedy remained cautious, but became much more involved in the civil rights struggle, largely in response to events beyond his control. Blacks, impatient with cautions white leadership (or no leadership at all), moved to aggressively take to charge of the movement. They stepped up their public pressure to

end racial segregation and discrimination and pushed for more direct action.

A few black militants even began to turn away from American society and the “middle-class way of life.” They talked about “revolutionary” changes in the social structure. Some even called for retaliatory violence. One of the most prominent black activists was the charismatic black Muslim leader, Malcolm X, who preached a form of racial separation he called “black nationalism.”

Listen to Malcolm X:

“Civil Rights, for those of us whose philosophy is black nationalism means ‘give it to us now. Don’t wait for next year. Give it to us yesterday and that’s not fast enough!’ Black people are fed up with the dilly dallying, pussyfooting, compromising approach that we’ve been suing toward getting our freedom. We want freedom now, but we’re not going to get it saying ‘We Shall Overcome.’ We’ve got to fight until we overcome.... I don’t mean go out and get violent; but at the same time you should never be nonviolent unless you run into some nonviolence... Anytime you know you’re within the law, within your legal rights. Within your moral rights, in accord with justice, then die for what you believe in. But don’t die alone. Let your dying be reciprocal...what’s good for the goose is good for the gander.”

Most Americans had never heard blacks talk that way before, especially not in public, and for many, it was a scary thing. Malcolm exercised his unique rhetoric when he talked to a Harlem audience about black nationalism. Malcolm X’s statements were vividly publicized in the media. To many whites as well as blacks, they were harsh, offensive, and frightening. Many whites feared that Malcolm X was saying in public what millions of blacks really thought privately, but were not willing to say out loud. There can be no doubt that in some ways Malcolm X helped raise the racial pride of blacks in being black (e.g. the “black is beautiful” campaign).

But in some other important ways, he was out of step with the majority of American blacks, who still favored equality through integration...not through segregation. Malcolm X argued instead for equality with whites, but through segregation, through black nationalism, not through integration. Equality, yes: integration No! His views, often flamboyantly expressed, were not popular among most Americans black or white. Very few blacks, relatively speaking, choose to follow him in his lifetime. Only a small number of blacks joined the Muslims. Most preferred to follow other black leaders who championed nonviolence and integration, the leaders of such groups as the:

- National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
- Urban League
- Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (in its early days)
- Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

Malcolm X and other black activists operated in Northern cities. But most of the civil rights activism the late 1950s and early 1960s occurred in the South. Naturally enough because most of the nearly 19 million American blacks lived in the South where racial segregation was still protected by law.

WEEK 3

JAMES MEREDITH

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out about James Meredith
2. To examine the events that lead up to the riots

MATERIALS

Video - Great American Speeches Tape II: "While Down in Mississippi"

The James Meredith Affair. (Sept./Oct. 1962)

THE JAMES MEREDITH AFFAIR

This event, which eventually embroiled the Kennedy Administration, was the attempt of a black Air Force veteran, James Meredith to enroll in the All-white University of Mississippi. Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett, an unreconstructed racist, declared that, despite a federal court order, he would not allow Meredith to enroll at Ole Miss and asserted on TV that he "would not surrender to the evil and illegal forces of tyranny" [The National Government]. Most white Mississippians agreed with him and supported his defense of the "Southern way of Life."

Reluctantly, President Kennedy and his brother, Robert, who was the Attorney General, became involved because they could not ignore the fact that a state governor was refusing to obey a federal court order. At first, they tried behind the scenes mediation, but without success. Finally, the frustrated president decided to act and do so in public (critics said over-act).

He:

- sent the Deputy Attorney General and about 500 U.S. Marshals to Ole Miss to assist Meredith in registering for his classes
- decided to make a TV address calling on the governor and the people of Mississippi to obey the federal court order
- called the Mississippi National Guard to federal service
- dispatched regular Army troop to nearby Memphis (65 miles away) in case trouble broke out at Ole Miss

Kennedy's appeal was ineffective, and trouble did break out. The scene that followed was quite ugly.

James Meredith: The Riot at Ole Miss

Groups of Ole Miss students and sympathetic supporters turned into a mob and attempted to force the marshals out of the universities' administration building, where they were held up. Rioters threw bricks and Molotov Cocktails at the marshals. Others in the mob shot at them. One attempted to ram a bulldozer through the main door of the administration building. Still other set fire to vehicles that had brought the U.S. Marshals to campus. Sadly some 200 Mississippi state troopers stood idly by while the riot developed and eventually withdrew completely from the scene. The U.S. Marshals, trapped in the administration building, retaliated by firing tear gas in to the mob.

The campus chaos lasted fifteen hours before 5000 soldiers and federalized National Guardsmen finally arrived at 2 a.m. to restore order. By then, two observers had been killed by gunfire, 35 U.S. marshals had been wounded, and hundreds of others had been injured. Meredith enrolled in Ole Miss and eventually graduated, but many Southern whites--and not just white extremists--bitterly resented the presidents' handling of the "Meredith Affair". They thought he had gone too far when he sent in the troops.

By early 1963, Kennedy was becoming more and more unpopular among Southern whites. But civil rights pressures continued to mount on him to abandon his cautious, reactive behavior and do something positive.

By late February 1963, their pressure caused Kennedy to decide it was time to ask Congress for a new civil rights law. The measure he initially presented, however, was exceedingly modest in scope. Caution was still the order of the day.

It mainly:

- provided for a speed-up in the voting case
- and authorized federal funds for school districts that had begun to desegregate

Nina Simone, as well as Bob Dylan, reminds us, "but the times, they are a' changin'," and Kennedy soon discovered he had to change too. What happened in the South, especially in Alabama, over the next few months finally pulled Kennedy more and more into the mainstream of the civil rights movement. Let's look at Alabama, which in the spring of 1963 replaced Mississippi as the center of racial controversy in the United States.

WEEK 4

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

OBJECTIVES

1. To inform students about the success of the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama
2. To inform students about the actions and beliefs of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.
3. To inform students about the city and the people involved

THE NON-VIOLENT CAMPAIGN OF MARTIN LUTHER KING

In late 1955, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had led a highly successful non-violent bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, to protest discrimination in seating practices. Having seen what massive non-violent protests could accomplish, black activists, first in 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina, and then throughout the South, began a series of “sit-ins”, and “kneel-ins”, and “wade-ins”, and “pray-ins”, and “freedom rides” to try to force an end to racial segregation all over the South (as aforementioned).

In April 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C.) decided to concentrate their campaign in Birmingham, Alabama which some said was the most segregated city in the South. King joined the local civil rights leader, The Reverend Mr. Fred Shuttlesworth, to mount a series of massive, public, non-violent demonstrations. Their purpose was to achieve what now seems to have been the most modest of goals: to eliminate racial discrimination in employment and public accommodations in Birmingham. But Birmingham officials--all white--did not intend to bow to King’s demand... the law, after all, was on their side. Hmmmmm, that’s worth remembering.

In 1963, there were no local laws or state or national laws guaranteeing blacks the right to eat at segregated lunch counters, to work in stores, or even to demonstrate peacefully in the streets without a permit. So Birmingham officials, with the law on their side, refused to capitulate to King.

Instead they countered his non-violent demonstration...first with arrests, and finally, after the jails were full and overflowing, with violence (which is what King and his advisors had hoped for all along). Here, briefly, is what happened...

King, along with hundreds of other demonstrators, was arrested early on and spent a week in jail. It was there he wrote his “Letter from Birmingham Jail”, which, because of its powerful logic and passionate eloquence, became an instant classic. From his jail cell, King wrote that those whites who counseled patience and asked him to wait awhile foiled to understand that for blacks the word “wait” almost always mean “never”.

Black Americans, he said, could no longer wait. “We must come to see, with on of our distinguished jurists that ‘justice too long delayed is justice denied.’” In his long, moving letter, he expressed his disappointment in moderates--a category that certainly included the President and the attorney general--for placing law and order above justice. And finally, in response to the charge that he was a “rabble-rouser”, King offered this prophetic warning:

“I stand in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community. One is a force of complacency... the other is a force of bitterness and hatred... I have tried to stand between these two forces... for there is the more excellent way of love and non-violent protest... I am... convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as ‘rabble-rouser’ and ‘outside agitators’ those of us who employ non-violent direct action, and if they reuse to

support our non-violent efforts, millions of Negroes will, out of frustration and despair, seek solace and security in the black nationalist ideologies—a development that would inevitably lead to a frightening racial nightmare. Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever.”

Before the 1960s were over, America would see in Newark, New York, Detroit, Watts, and elsewhere just how perceptive King had been.

EXAMPLE OF KING’S NON-VIOLENT TECHNIQUES

There were many activities planned under King’s leadership. They included a number of non-violent efforts designed to affect a change in America’s attitude. In the summer of 1962, a bus left Charleston, South Carolina bound for St. Paul Minnesota for just that purpose (there was never a thought in our minds, the minds of the riders, that we would not arrive safely). The purpose of this ride was two-fold: One was to attend the N.A.A.C.P convention; the second, to integrate each lunch counter on the route, this was the most important task.

The bus stopped in Greenville, South Carolina to pick up more passengers, it was the last pickup stop the bus would make on the way to our destination.

We rode all night. The next stop was at a station in Corbin, Kentucky. We were allowed to purchase food to go, but were not allowed to physically be seated and eat.

We traveled from Kentucky through the mountains and a pouring rainstorm. It was a dangerous, almost disastrous night. Almost everyone was asleep when a mudslide nearly sent the bus careening down the side of the mountain. In retrospect, I wish I had been asleep also, but I was too nosy. The bus driver was sweating, and my knuckles were white with fear from holding on.

By seven o’clock the next morning, we reached Cincinnati, Ohio. I was never so glad to see that river in my life, it separated the segregated South from the non-segregated North. The Ohio River was the most beautiful river in the world that morning.

We were allowed all the privileges of any traveler that morning in Ohio. The bus left and proceeded to our next stop in Indianapolis, Indiana.

We had an uneventful layover in Indianapolis and proceeded to our next stop in Chicago, Illinois. Chicago led to Augusta and Madison, Wisconsin. Then, after all our successful attempts, we reached St. Paul. We had succeeded in eating at almost all of the lunch counters we encountered, with the exception of the one in Corbin, Kentucky, and returned with our full complement of riders, unscathed, unharmed, and unarrested.

Our trip, also known as a “freedom ride”, was in the spirit of non-violent protest. There were no weapons used, or ill-words spoken. The only purpose of the trip was to affect a change in a situation, without the use of un-necessary force. We believed

through the use of peaceful protest that our goal was obtainable. We did not carry negativity in our hearts, thus negativity was not our goal. It was exactly as King was preaching, and it was a turning point in the civil-rights movement.

Objectives

- Identify key persons involved in civil rights movement
- Describe non-violent techniques
- Explain factors that led to demonstrations
- Compare civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, AL with other areas of the USA
- Develop a timeline of events
- Write a short newspaper article
- Identify rhetoric of key individuals in the civil rights movement
- Identify key points in their speeches
- Compose speeches in the rhetorical style of key civil rights individuals with modern-day implications
- Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or host of a talk show
- Evaluate personal reactions to viewing videos
- Identify how the attitudes of demonstrators differed from the attitudes of politicians

Teaching the Video

Listed here are a few questions directed towards the viewing of the video by students in a classroom situation. These questions are to prepare the student for viewing the video and for examinations on them.

- Who are the key individuals in the video?
- Why is it important to understand the message of the speakers?
- What were the effects of the speaker's message?
- What were the positive and negative aspects of their speeches?

Viewing the video

- Where did the events in the video take place?
- Who were the people involved?
- What roles did they play in helping to achieve the goals?
- What were the causes of their actions?
- What was the direction of their actions?
- What were the effects of their actions?

After viewing the video

- **Debate**
With the entire class, design a debate on key points of the video. Be sure to encourage students to include both sides of the argument and use material from the video to support their arguments.
- **News Article**
Have students to write a short newspaper article using headlines from the video.
- **Editorial**
Have students to write an editorial that will convince readers that either non-violent or violent demonstration is the best. The editorial is to be argumentative, clearly persuasive and well supported.

Visual-Aids

Listed are some visual-aids that will help the student to identify key places and events of the civil rights movement.

- **Create a web**
Use a web to depict a variety of strategies used to achieve civil rights goals.
Example: See Attached
- **Develop a timeline of the events of the civil rights movements.** Visual presentations such as a timeline help give a clearer picture of the people, places, and events studied.
- **Geography/Mapping**
Create maps of important historical places, sites and birthplaces. Be sure to include the principal cities of the civil rights movement, location of speeches and cities where major change took place.

Video Reference List

Malcolm X: Easter Speech on Washington, March 1964
Great American Speeches

Riot on Ole Miss Campus, Sept 1962
Eyes on the Prize, Part 2
“Fighting Back (1957-1962)”

Birmingham Bombings, May 1963
Eyes on the Prize, Part 4
“No Easy Walk (1961-1963)”

John F. Kennedy: June 11, 1963 Speech
Speech on Civil Rights
Eyes on the Prize, Part 4
“No Easy Walk (1961-1963)”

Wallace in the Schoolhouse Door
PBS- American Experience
“Kennedy vs. Wallace: A Crisis Up Close”

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.- August 1963
20th Century Civil Rights Movement
“I Have a Dream”

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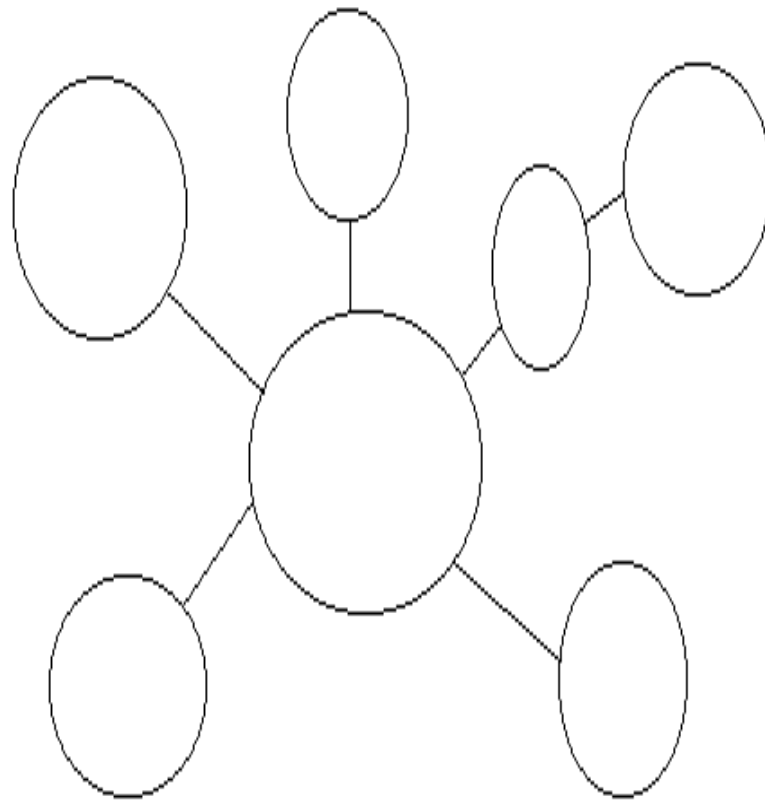
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Visual Aid Sheet

(See the following page)

This is a map exercise designed to help students create a connection between the various parts of the civil rights movement. It is a visual exercise and is exceptional in aiding students in developing the critical thinking skills that are necessary for the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills test, and other standardized tests.



Bubble Mapping Visual Aid: Bubble Mapping is a good way to show the relationship between certain key cities, key people, and key events of the civil rights movement.