
NCSS Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

Lesson plan

Memphis, Martin, and the Mountaintop: The Sanitation Strike of 1968

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Book title

Memphis, Martin, and the Mountaintop: The Sanitation Strike of 1968 (2019)

by Alice Faye Duncan.

New York, NY: Calkins Creek.

Recommended for Ages 8–12.

ISBN: 978-1629797182.

Recommended for grades preK-3.

This plan has been adapted for upper grades 4–6.

This lesson plan will require 30–45 minutes per day over the span of 2–3 days.

Book summary

Lorraine Jackson, a fictional character, tells the true story of the 1968 Memphis Sanitation Strike through a series of poetry. Each poem details not only the community struggles, but the internal struggles (loss of phone, utilities, etc.) that come as a result of power and protest. Little Lorraine struggles with the notion of losing in order to gain, but soon gains great insight into the power a people have to effect change.

NCSS standards

- III People, Places, and Environments
- V Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI Power, Authority, and Governance

Materials

- (1) *Memphis, Martin, and the Mountaintop: The Sanitation Strike of 1968*
- (2) Anchor Chart Paper
- (3) Sharpies/Markers
- (4) Children's March
- (5) Migrant Worker's Movement
- (6) Large Pieces of Cardstock or Construction Paper
- (7) Video of Dr. King's Final Speech



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- (8) Technology (discussion board, research)
- (9) Index Cards

Objectives

- (1) Students will use the text to determine the power or protest and analyze whether there is strength in numbers.
- (2) Students will discuss value of protest and weigh the pros and cons of active protest.
- (3) Students will assess current situations and analyze for potential opportunities to harness the power of their voices.

Procedures

Exploration/introduction

- (1) Ask students to discuss if they, or someone they know has/have ever been denied an opportunity or a right. Ask why do they feel they were denied.
- (2) Record students' responses **on Smart Board**, or chart paper, while engaging in whole class discussion.
- (3) Next, ask students if they have ever considered using their voice to express their displeasures or concerns of being denied; if so, what were the outcomes?
- (4) Have students do a deeper examination of the word *voice*. What does voice mean? Is it possible to voice oneself without saying a word? Explain your answers.
- (5) Record students' responses on chart paper, as having the discussion as a whole class.
- (6) Have students discuss if all protest is still necessary today. Have them discuss loss and if they are willing to encounter loss to provoke change.
- (7) Record responses on chart paper.

Development

- (1) Play Dr. King's Last Speech <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mlkingjr.html>

Provide students transcript of the speech and allow them to fully discuss what they think Dr. King is implying.

- (2) Dissect Dr. King's speech further to examine 4 or 5 major quotes from the speech (see <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/the-conversation/sd-martin-luther-king-jr-last-speech-20180403-htmlstory.html>). Have students discuss whether Dr. King's stance on nonviolence or peace protest had changed as some scholars indicate.
- (3) Discuss whether it is okay for a person's stance on an issue to change and on what occasions might an individual feel the need to change.
- (4) Using anchor chart paper **or Smart Board**, create a two Venn diagrams, one containing the word "protest" and one containing the word, "voice."
- (5) Discuss the meanings of each word with the students and within this discussion determine if there is any overlap.

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- (6) Upon completing the discussion, have students think about changes they would like to see within their local communities. Why do they feel this particular issue warrants the use of voice? Record their responses on Discussion Boards.

Closure and expansion

- (1) Students will present information to class. They will also share a plan for soliciting the help of others in an effort to further their causes.
- (2) Students will watch the Children's March.

How were children's voices respected? In what ways were the children treated like adults? Could the Civil Rights Movement have been as successful without the help of the youth? Explain your answer.

- (3) Students will discuss potential community resources needed to help facilitate the changes they wish to see.
- (4) Students will present these findings to the whole class, by drawing and labeling them on chart paper to share with the class; students will verbally identify what makes the sources primary and secondary.

Assessment

Students can be asked to identify one child who has overcome used his or her voice to evoke change. Have them list their person's adversity and the steps they chose to pursue to overcome to ensure their voice was heard. Students must use primary sources. For struggling students, the teacher could have sample primary sources available for student use. Students can be directed to <http://www.ouramericannetwork.org> to find primary source information.

Suggested extension activities

- (1) Class will invite local community leaders to school to participate in a mock, student-led forum on student issues.
- (2) If it is a mock forum, prepare guests ahead of time, by providing them with an overview of the students' concerns.
- (3) Students can also use the app Kahoot to record their dreams in an anonymous yet engaging manner.

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Additional references

- Hablin, A. (2018), "5 memorable quotes from Martin Luther King Jr.'s final speech 50 years ago", Retrieved from: <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/opinion/the-conversation/sd-martin-luther-king-jr-last-speech-20180403.htmlstory.html>.
- King, M.L. Jr (1968), "I've been to the mountaintop", Retrieved from: <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/blackspeech/mlkingjr.html>.

Additional references and web links

Teaching with primary sources. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/tps>

Using primary sources. Retrieved from <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>

Teaching with documents. Retrieved from <http://socialstudies.org/publications/>

Primary and secondary sources through video. Retrieved from <http://teachinghistory.org/digital-classroom/ask-a-digital-historian/24664>

Primary vs. secondary source material. Retrieved from http://www.learner.org/courses/amerhistory/resource_archive/primary.html

About the authors

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