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Plymouth North High School  
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A More Perfect Union: The Origins and Development of the US Constitution  
Cape Code Collaborative

The Civil Rights Movement  
Lesson Plan

**Title:** “The Civil Rights Movement and the Power of Civil Disobedience”

**Unit of Study:** Civil Rights

**Connection to Massachusetts Frameworks:**

USII.25 Analyze the origins, goals and key events of the Civil Rights movement (H)

People:

- A. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- B. Malcolm X

Events:

- A. *Brown v. Board of Education*
- B. Sit-ins and freedom rides of early 1960’s
- C. The civil rights protest in Birmingham
- D. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Primary Documents:

- A. Selected images from the civil rights movement
- B. “Is Violence Necessary to Combat Injustice?” Robert Williams
- C. “The Social Organization of Non-Violence”, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Secondary Documents:

- A. Klarmen, Michael. *Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement.*

USII.9 Analyze the post-Civil War struggles of African Americans and Women to gain basic civil rights (H)

**National Standards:**

NSS-USH.5-12.9 ERA 9: Postwar United States (1945 to Early 1970’s)

\*Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and the extension of civil liberties.

NSS-USH.9-12.10 ERA 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)

\*Understands economic, social and cultural developments in contemporary United States

**Objectives:**

- Students will define the Civil Rights Amendments
- Students will define *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board*
- Students will understand the historical events that played a role in the development of Civil Rights
- Students will be introduced to judicial interpretation and procedures
- Students will recognize the reaction to *Brown v. Board*
- Students will understand the reasons for the difficulty of enforcing the *Brown v. Board* decision.
- Students will recognize what Klarman means by “counterbacklash” and the significance it played in the development of the Civil Rights movement.
- Students will apply a variety of reading and observation skills to analyze primary source documents
- Students will use primary source documents to create a thesis statement
- Students will recognize the different ways to resist injustices often carried out by the state.
- Students will write with an informed clarity and authority to express their point of view
- Students will comprehend the meaning of primary source documents
- Students will evaluate impact of author’s point of view on the reader’s understanding and perspective
- Students will visualize the injustices people have endured and the ways in which they were able to rise above these injustices
- Students will understand the importance of two great civil rights leaders and compare the ways in which they led the fight against state sponsored racism.
- Students will observe civil rights photos and be able to identify the ways (humiliation and terror, dogs and water, guns and explosions, public hangings) in which protestors were punished
- Students will observe that most of the photos depict a state sponsored (police, national guard) carried out form of punishment
- Students will notice the public places in which most of these punishments took place

- Students observe the philosophy of “civil disobedience” as exhibited in the photos
- Students will identify two of the primary civil rights leaders as shown in the photos (Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X)
- Students will observe in the photos that both of these figures died for their cause
- Students will hear the arguments for using violence and non-violence as a means of resistance.
- Students will use the primary sources to come up with an opinion of the effectiveness of violence or non-violence as a means of making change

### Supporting Materials

- Klarman, Michael. *Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement.*
- Williams, Robert. “Is Violence Necessary to Combat Injustice? For the Positive: Williams Says ‘We Must Fight Back’”
- King, Martin Luther Jr. “The Social Organization of Non-Violence”
- Malcolm-X Quotes. [www.malcolm-x.org/quotes.htm](http://www.malcolm-x.org/quotes.htm)
- Kasher, Steven. *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68.*

Lesson One: Assign students to read the conclusion of Michael Klarman’s, *Brown v. Board of Education*.

**Day One:** Have the students read Klarman’s conclusion to his *Brown v. Board of Education*. In class the next day assign the following questions and have the Students get into pairs and answer them as completely as possible. The Amendments and the court decisions can be defined using their text books.

Questions: Michael Klarman

Part One:

Define the following using your text books:

13<sup>th</sup> amendment

14<sup>th</sup> amendment

15<sup>th</sup> amendment

*Plessy v. Ferguson*

*Brown v. Board of Education*

Part Two:

Answer questions using Klarman’s conclusion:

1. What major historical events played a role in the loosening of Jim Crow during the “Plessy”era?

2. What types of civil rights were moderate southern whites willing to accept during the era before the *Brown* decision?
3. What is meant by text, original intent and precedent?
4. How much of the Supreme Court decision was based on text, original intent and precedent? How much was based on the judge's opinion, values and/or political pressure?
5. According to Michael Klarman was the *Brown* decision the ultimate Supreme Court victory for civil rights?
6. What happened in the south as a direct result of the *Brown* decision?
7. What were some of the reasons why *Brown v. Board* was hard to enforce as opposed to *Roe v. Wade*?
8. What does Klarman mean by a "counterbacklash"? What form of media played a large role in allowing for this "counterbacklash" to happen?

After students have completed the questions the teacher should spend the class period discussing the questions and summarizing the main points of Klarman and its relevance to the Civil Rights movement. As an extra credit project or an excellent research paper topic the teacher should encourage students to look at landmark supreme court decisions and examine the way in which the decisions were made and its impact on America and the American people.

## Lesson Two: **Images of the Civil Rights Movement: A Power Point Demonstration**

**Day Two:** Instruct the students to watch silently the images of the power point demonstration. Explain to them that this first exercise is to just sit quietly and internalize the photos. They should be looking at the entire photograph. For each photo they should be asking themselves where?, when?, why?, who?, what? and how? They should be looking common themes among the group of photographs. The second two slides give them the directions and assignment for after the show. Click through the slides slowly giving them time to process everything. After the show keep the last slide up which reminds them of the assignment. They should write for ten minutes about what they saw and felt during the slide show and the common themes among the slides. They should then come up with their own thesis which utilizes these photographs and one or some of their common themes constructed earlier.

The teacher should be walking around the classroom asking them key questions.

- Who were the victims?
- What types of people were committing the violence?
- What groups of people were not violent?
- Where were these events taking place?
- What types of terror was being used?
- What types of humiliation was being used?

- What emotions were seen in the images?
- What types of emotions did the images bring out in you?

**Day Three:** Begin the class by talking about the slide show. Put the questions that the were asked orally on day two up on the board and have the students respond to them as a class. Have students get up to the board and write down some of the responses. For example: **victims**-Blacks-young adults-some whites; **People committing violence**-White-authority figures; **Where**-public places; **Methods**-humiliation, water, hanging, dogs etc.

Next have the students read some of their thesis statements. Make sure that they are constructed in a way that the students could use the photo documents to argue it. Explain that this could be the beginning of a larger paper on an aspect of civil rights. **\*\*Teacher may want to carry out this longer assignment. If so teacher should encourage students to find other supporting documents to enhance their papers. Would also be a good time to talk about writing a five paragraph essay if not yet done to date.**

**Day Four:** Bring up again the last three slides on the show that depict Malcolm-X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The first of the three shows them together and the last two show them dead. Read in class the Williams, Martin Luther King, Jr and Malcolm-X quotes. Have a discussion with the students about the arguments for and against violence as a means of resistance. Highlight the reasons for and against on the board. Incorporate some contemporary discussion about terrorist and fighting terrorism. Ask them what they would do if someone hung your brother or poured ketchup over your head at a lunch counter. Ask them if it is different if the violence is carried out by police and national guard. Encourage the students to discuss and debate each other on the merits of using violence and/or non-violence as a means of resistance. See if students can come up with other historical or current occurrences of using violence or non-violence to solve issues. Maybe some students have personally been faced with this decision?

**Final Assignment:** Give the students an opportunity to express themselves in a creative way at home. Have them either write an editorial or a speech that articulates their pro violence or non violence stance. They are to put themselves back into the 1960's, into the photographs observed in class. They choose what age, gender and race they want represent. The editorials should be written as if they were to be published in the local paper. The speeches written so as to be delivered to a crowd on the streets. The length should be about a page, typed, single spaced. The students should be prepared to share their editorials and/or speeches with the class on day five.

**Day Five:** Share speeches and/or editorials and collect at end of period. Teacher can use attached persuasive essay rubric or make up own.

