



Ethnic Studies Lesson 4K: African American Business Innovators

TOPIC:

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

California Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Themes, Values, and Principles Alignment

Themes:

1. Identity
2. History and Movement

Values and Principles:

1. Cultivate empathy, community actualization, cultural perpetuity, self-worth, self-determination, and the holistic well-being of all participants, especially Native People/s and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).
2. Celebrate and honor Native People/s of the land and communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color by providing a space to share their stories of success, community collaboration, and solidarity, along with their intellectual and cultural wealth.

California English and Social Science Standards Alignment

English Language Arts Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**Reading—Informational Text (RI.11-12)**

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
(RI.11-12.2)

Social Sciences Standards (11th and 12th Grade):**History—Social Science Content Standards—(Grades 9-12)**

Lesson Purpose

Students will research the people, places, and events of African American business innovation in order to understand resilience.

Essential Questions

How have African American business innovators highlighted resilience?

How has life changed for African Americans in the last 250 years?

Materials

[History: Black Wall Street Established in Tulsa, Oklahoma | Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre](#)

[Smithsonian: Meet the First Self-Made Female Millionaire](#)

[National Women's History Museum: Maggie Lena Walker \(1864-1934\)](#)

[The History Makers, John H. Johnson](#)

[The History Makers, Ursula Burns](#)

[The History Makers, Daymond John](#)

[NPR: Mount Bayou, Mississippi](#)

[Blackpast: Dr. T.R.M. Howard](#)

[Black Entrepreneur Profile: Robert L. Johnson](#)

[Blackpast: The History of Allensworth, CA](#)

[Blackpast: Charles Clinton Spaulding](#)

[Unit 4 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

Black Wall Street

resilience
innovation

Greenwood District

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, ask students to help define the term *innovation*. What are some modern innovations? Why would a bank for Blacks be innovative in the early 20th century? A working definition for innovation might be: “putting ideas into action to introduce a new product or service.”
- Have students watch the first 4 minutes and 27 seconds of [History: Black Wall Street Established in Tulsa, Oklahoma | Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre](#) (video 6 minutes, 40 seconds). As students watch, ask them to take notes on how the Greenwood District showed elements of innovation. When students have finished watching, have them share their notes as a class.
- Ask students what resilience means to them. Help students see the aspects of toughness, recovering quickly from difficulties, and the ability to cope mentally and emotionally. Another way to say this, according to the [DRIVEN app](#) that helps people in high-stress jobs, is “advancing despite adversity.”
- Have students watch through the end of [History: Black Wall Street Established in Tulsa, Oklahoma | Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre](#) (video 6 minutes, 40 seconds). While students watch, they should pay attention to how the people of the Greenwood District had to overcome adversity in both large and small, everyday ways. Students should also take notes on the who, what, when, where, and

why of the riots. When students have completed the video, have them share their notes with one other person. Then have the class share as a whole. As the class shares, help them create an event card for the timeline. Also, help students create a mind-map wall chart that shows Black Wall Street's innovations, adversities, and elements of resilience.

Step 2:

- Let students know that there were many areas of the country during the early 20th century that had segregated areas of Black innovation. Some of those included: Jackson Ward (Richmond, Virginia); Little Rock, Arkansas; Jackson, Mississippi; etc. There were Black men and women innovators all over the country. Students will be creating innovation and resilience mind-map charts similar to what was modeled for their area of study. Break students into the following groups:
 - [Smithsonian: Meet the First Self-Made Female Millionaire](#) (video 4 minutes, 37 seconds). (Make sure students understand that she is often mislabeled as the first Black female millionaire, when in fact she is the first female millionaire of any color.)
 - [National Women's History Museum: Maggie Lena Walker \(1864-1934\)](#)
 - [The History Makers, John H. Johnson](#)
 - [The History Makers, Ursula Burns](#)
 - [The History Makers, Daymond John](#)
 - [NPR: Mount Bayou, Mississippi](#)
 - [Blackpast: Dr. T.R.M. Howard](#)
 - [Black Entrepreneur Profile: Robert L. Johnson](#)
 - [Blackpast: The History of Allensworth, CA](#)
 - [Blackpast: Charles Clinton Spaulding](#)
- When students have completed their mind-map charts, have students walk around the room gallery style and leave questions on sticky notes on the posters. Let student groups present their person and answer the posted questions. Make sure students understand that there are many more African American innovators. This is just a selected sample.

Step 3:

- When the presentations are complete, ask students to answer this lesson's question, "How do African American business innovators highlight resilience?" Also, ask this unit's question, "How has life changed for African Americans in the last 250 years?" Add what was learned to this unit's KWL chart.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits and for homework, ask students to watch [History: How the Tulsa Race Massacre Began: Tulsa Burning: The 1921 Race Massacre](#) (video 7 minutes, 23 seconds). As students watch, they should take notes on what the events were leading to the race riots. Students can start with the model below. Students should put an asterisk next to timeline events that escalated the violence rather than de-escalated. Students should pick one starred event and write about how they might have handled that part of the incident if they were there. Students will also listen to firsthand narratives to see diverse points of view from [Tulsa Historical Society and Museum: Audio Recordings from Survivors and Contemporaries](#) and comment on how the recording is the same as or differs from their own perspective. Students should carefully cite where their information comes from. Make sure to debrief this assignment in the next lesson.

Example:

1. Policy that Dick Rowland must go to another building to use the bathroom. *
2. Dick Rowland takes the elevator alone with a white female on the 4th floor.
3. Sarah Page screams. *
4. Dick Rowland runs. *
5. Students continue from here.

Additional Readings and Resources

[The economic legacy of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre](#)

Green, Shelley, and Paul Pryde. *Black Entrepreneurship in America*. Transaction, 1990.

[Greenwood Cultural Center](#)

Madigan, Tim. *The Burning: The Tulsa Race Massacre of 1921*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2001.

[New York Post: Juneteenth is a perfect day to cheer black success in America](#)

[PBS NewsHour: The 'Self Made' story of American millionaire Madam C.J. Walker](#) (video 5 minutes, 53 minutes)

Sowell, Thomas. *Ethnic America: A History*. Basic Books, 1981, 183-224.

Time. "The Overlooked Stories of America's Black Wall Streets | The History You Didn't Learn." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUCv8NVgnfc>

Williams, Walter E. *A Usable Black History*. In *Liberty Versus the Tyranny of Socialism*. Hoover Institution Press, 2008, 350-351.

NOTE TO EDUCATORS REGARDING ADDITIONAL READINGS AND RESOURCES: America is a pluralistic country, ethnically. It is also a pluralistic country politically—left, right, and center. Ethnic studies educators have ready access to resources from the left-of-center in the [2021 California Model Curriculum](#) and in the [Liberated Model Curriculum](#). This Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum favors teachers exposing students to views from across the political spectrum. Educators often lack guidance to materials from outside the left-of-center. Therefore, in the sections on Additional Readings and Resources, the Comparative Cultures Ethnic Studies curriculum alerts educators to credible resources that provide an alternative to the other Model Curricula. In doing so, this curriculum encourages educators to acquaint students with evidence-based views from left, right, and center.

Ethnic Studies 4A: KWL Chart

KNOW	WONDER	LEARNED
<i>What do we think we already know about this topic?</i>	<i>What do we wonder about this topic? Write your questions below.</i>	<i>After the research is completed, what did we learn? Make sure to cite your source.</i>