



Ethnic Studies Lesson 4L: African Americans, Lynching, and the NAACP

TOPIC:

AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

GRADE LEVELS:

11-12

TIME:

1½ HOURS

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

Themes:

2. History and Movement
3. Systems of Power
4. Social Movements and Equity

Values and Principles:

5. Challenge racist, bigoted, discriminatory, and imperialist/colonial beliefs and practices on multiple levels.
6. Connect ourselves to past and contemporary social movements that struggle for social justice and an equitable and democratic society, and conceptualize, imagine, and build new possibilities for a post-racist, post-systemic-racism society that promotes collective narratives of transformative resistance, critical hope, and radical healing.

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)**

Examine the impact of social movements and reforms, including the NAACP and its efforts to combat racial violence, on changing societal norms and policies. (11.5)

Lesson Purpose

Students will investigate racial violence and the practice of lynching during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Students will also discover how members of the NAACP used democratic free speech and aspects of the legal system to combat racial violence.

Essential Questions

How did the NAACP and its members use aspects of democratic free speech and the legal system to combat racial violence and lynching?

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

Materials

[FEE Stories: The Tulsa Race Massacre](#)

[Equal Justice Initiative: Terror Lynching in America](#)

[Library of Congress: Ida B. Wells](#)

[Time: The Surprising Story of Walter White and the NAACP](#)

[NAACP: Thurgood Marshall](#)

[NAACP: History of *The Crisis*](#)

[Unit 4 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

lynching

NAACP

racial violence

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- (If the previous lesson's assignment on the Tulsa Race Massacre was not completed as homework, take a few minutes with the class as a whole to watch the last lesson's video: [History: How the Tulsa Race Massacre Began](#) (video 7 minutes, 24 seconds). If the previous lesson's homework was completed, as a class, ask students to debrief their answers. How might they have responded differently to one of the events in the timeline? As a class, read out loud by popcorn, round robin, or other group method the article [FEE Stories: The Tulsa Race Massacre](#). As students listen, ask them to identify why the act of lynching was used by white supremacist groups. What unique characteristics does lynching have in terms of punishment and control? When students have finished the reading, as a class, ask students to share about why the fear of lynching sparked outrage among African Americans in Tulsa. (Help students see the brutality of lynching and its public and intimidating nature in terms of control. Also, help them see that whites were stirred by economic competition and the perceived threat to their existing social order, and Blacks responded due to their empowerment in serving during World War I and their success on Black Wall Street.)
- As a class, ask students what they already know about the practice of lynching from the end of the Civil War until the 1950s. Ask students if they know what the records say about the number of lynchings across the country, what types of people were lynched, and whether it was always about doling out

justice for a crime. Ask students to watch [Equal Justice Initiative: Terror Lynching in America](#) (video 5 minutes, 17 seconds). As students watch, ask them to answer the questions above. When the video is complete, as a class, ask students to share their perspective with a classmate. When students are done sharing in pairs, ask them to share as a class.

Step 2:

- Ask students what they already know about the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. They may note that the language of self-description for African Americans has changed over time, and “colored” is rarely used now. Students will become experts in different aspects of the NAACP and how it worked to fight against segregation and lynching. Have students watch [NAACP: Our History](#) (video 4 minutes, 36 seconds, in the middle of the page). Ask students to make notes of the who, what, where, when, and why of the origin of the NAACP for an event card. Also, ask students what elements of democratic free speech and the legal system the NAACP used to promote civil rights. Stop the video frequently for students to take notes.
- When students have completed their charts, have students walk around the room gallery style and put sticky notes with additional questions on the posters. Ask student groups to present their posters and answer additional questions.

Step 3:

- Let students know that they will be completing their own T-charts on aspects of free speech and the law that were used to promote civil rights for each of their research areas. Students should be careful to cite the origin of their information, but they may also consult other educational websites to round out their knowledge. Break the class into the following groups:
 - [Library of Congress: Ida B. Wells](#) (Students must also read at least two other primary-source documents, as chronicled in the “Read More About It!” link.)
 - [Time: The Surprising Story of Walter White and the NAACP](#)
 - [NAACP: Thurgood Marshall](#) (Help students remember that Thurgood Marshall was also the lawyer who represented Sylvia Mendez in *Mendez v. Westminster* from our previous unit on Latino American education rights). The NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund, which Marshall led, took on many segregation cases, including those for lynching.
 - [NAACP: History of The Crisis](#)
- When students have completed their charts, have students walk the room gallery style and put sticky notes with additional questions on the posters. Ask student groups to present their posters and answer additional questions.

Step 4:

- As a whole class, ask students to answer this lesson’s question, “How did the NAACP and its members use aspects of democratic free speech and the legal system to combat racial violence and lynching?” Also, ask this unit’s question, “How has life changed for African Americans in the last 250 years?” Record what was learned on this unit’s KWL chart.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits and for homework, ask students to watch [PBS: The Murder of Emmett Till](#) (video 5 minutes, 59 seconds), [Courthouse News: Emmett Till’s funeral site in Chicago deemed national monument](#), and [Library of Congress: The Murder of Emmett Till](#). As students watch the video and read the articles, they should take notes in order to answer the following question, “What aspects of Emmett Till’s 1955 murder made it a turning point

in the fight for African American civil rights?” Students should be careful to cite their sources and should include the following elements in their long paragraph. Teachers may need to present an example of a long paragraph.

1. Make a claim
2. Cite significant evidence
3. Bridge to additional evidence
4. Create a counterclaim and rebuttal
5. Conclusion (or warrant)

Additional Readings and Resources

Peron, James. “Moorfield Storey: the Unknown Libertarian.” Medium, October 17, 2018. <https://medium.com/the-radical-center/moorfield-storey-the-unknown-libertarian-3ffc0f98d2f6> (Storey was the first president of the NAACP.)

Root, Damon. “The Party of Jefferson,” *Reason*, December 2007. <https://reason.com/2007/11/27/the-party-of-jefferson/>

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

Wells, Ida B. *The Light of Truth: Writings of an Anti-Lynching Crusade*. Penguin Classics, 2014.

Witcher, Marcus. “Mightier Than the Sword: Ida B. Wells and Her Crusade for Equality and Justice.” Libertarianism.org, June 11, 2021. <https://www.libertarianism.org/articles/mightier-sword-ida-b-wells-and-her-crusade-equality-and-justice>

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>