



Ethnic Studies Lesson 4Q: African American Political Leaders

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
4. Social Movements and Equity

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.
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)

Analyze the origins, goals, leadership, and tactics of various civil rights movements, including those of Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos. (11.10)

Evaluate the impact of social movements and reforms on changing societal norms and policies. (11.11)

Analyze the impact of landmark Supreme Court cases and legislation, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, on the advancement of civil rights and liberties. (12.5)

Lesson Purpose

Students will research the political and cultural contributions of African American political leaders.

Essential Questions

What have been some of the political and cultural contributions of African American political leaders?

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

Materials

[PBS: Reconstruction: The 15th Amendment and African American Men in Congress](#)

[National Women's History Museum: Shirley Chisholm](#)

[National Women's History Museum: Barbara Jordan](#)

[National Archives: John Lewis](#)

[National Park Service: Mayor Shirley Franklin](#)

[The White House: Kamala Harris](#)

[The White House: Barack Obama](#)

[Office of the Historian: Condoleezza Rice](#)

[Office of the Historian: Colin Powell](#)

[Oyez: Justice Clarence Thomas](#)

[Unit 4 KWL Chart](#)

Vocabulary

mayor

Secretary of State

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs
of Staff

governor

US Congress

Lesson Steps

Step 1:

- As a class, ask students what they already know about African American political leaders. How many can they name? Can they identify their contributions to politics or culture? Students have already studied Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington, Martin Luther King Jr., and Malcolm X. There have been other notable African American political leaders since the end of the Civil

War. Have students watch [PBS: Reconstruction: The 15th Amendment and African American Men in Congress](#) (video 7 minutes, 5 seconds). As students watch, have them take notes on what they believe were some of the political and cultural contributions of these early Reconstruction politicians. As a class, when students have finished watching the video, have them share their findings.

Step 2:

- As a class, ask students to compare the speed of political change during Reconstruction with the next hundred years until the Civil Rights Act. In order to view the political and cultural contributions of African American political leaders after the Civil Rights Act, students will research one person and create a five-slide slideshow on the media platform of the teacher's choice. Students should understand that this is only a representative list; there are many more African American politicians in the United States. Students should focus on the political and cultural contributions of their person, as well as give background information. Students may choose additional websites for slideshow images and should be careful to cite their sources carefully. Students may also want to note the party affiliation of the politician. Divide the class into the following groups:
 - [National Women's History Museum: Shirley Chisholm](#)
 - [National Women's History Museum: Barbara Jordan](#)
 - [National Archives: John Lewis](#)
 - [National Park Service: Mayor Shirley Franklin](#)
 - [The White House: Kamala Harris](#)
 - [The White House: Barack Obama](#)
 - [Office of the Historian: Condoleezza Rice](#)
 - [Office of the Historian: Colin Powell](#)
 - [Oyez: Justice Clarence Thomas](#)
- When students have completed their research, have them present their slideshows to the class.

Step 3:

- As a class, ask students this lesson's questions, "What have been some of the political and cultural contributions of African American political leaders?" Also, ask students this unit's question, "How have the lives of African Americans changed over the last 250 years?" Make notes of what was learned on this unit's KWL chart.

Essential Question Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection

As time permits, and for homework, have students watch [CBS: Colin Powell: Martin Luther King Jr. "changed my life"](#) and [NBC News: Condoleezza Rice on female leadership and race](#). As students watch these videos, have them take notes on Colin Powell's and Condoleezza Rice's argument points about the effectiveness of the civil rights movement. Ask students to highlight at least three pieces of evidence that these politicians use, and ask whether the students agree with this evidence and their overall conclusions. In other words, has the African American community made progress in terms of civil rights and quality of life? Students should submit this in a long paragraph format.

Additional Readings and Resources

Loury, Glenn C. "[Clarence Thomas and Me.](#)" *City Journal*, Winter 2024.

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

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>