

10 DAYS THAT UNEXPECTEDLY CHANGED AMERICA: FREEDOM SUMMER

TEACHER'S GUIDE

The March Against Fear, June 1, 1966 in Jackson, MS.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will explore Freedom Summer in the context of the Civil Rights Movement. They will learn about the organized efforts of groups such as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) and the role of young Americans in changing American race relations, despite the persistent threat of violence. Students will also learn about the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

VOCABULARY:

Before or after watching this program, ask students to define the terms below. As they are watching, encourage students to write down additional words to define after they have viewed the program.

Conspiracy
Disenfranchised
Eulogy
Painstaking
Predominately
Reputed
Rhetoric
Segregation
Watershed

On August 4, 1964, the bodies of three Civil Rights workers, Michael Schwerner, James E. Chaney and Andrew Goodman, were found in a dam on a farm near Philadelphia, Mississippi.

The three young men had disappeared six weeks earlier, setting off a frenzied search. These murders shocked Americans as news reports of these cold-blooded killings circulated throughout the nation.

In this program, viewers learn about the origins of the Civil Rights Movement and the contributions of the brave men and women who attempted to overturn the structure of segregation in American society. The events of Freedom Summer continued the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement and helped spur Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This moving one-hour documentary explores the violence and hope of the Civil Rights era, examining the changes one summer inspired throughout the nation and the world.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Freedom Summer would be useful for classes on African American History, American History, American Studies and Legal History. It is appropriate for upper middle school and high school students. **Due to sensitive subject matter, we recommend that teachers view this program in its entirety before sharing it with students or screening it in class.**



Civil Rights activist Rosa Parks' Dexter Ave. bus stop in Montgomery, AL.



Detroit march against racism and war in honor of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Freedom Summer was part of the larger Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. What were the main issues the Civil Rights Movement addressed?
2. Why do you think activists decided to focus on registering voters during Freedom Summer? Why were many Americans not registered to vote at the time?
3. Mississippi was called the “last frontier” of the Civil Rights Movement. Why? Why do you think it was chosen as the focus of Freedom Summer?
4. One of the aims of the Civil Rights Movement was to overturn the Jim Crow system in the South. What was Jim Crow? Was segregation legal? Discuss.
5. Civil Rights workers tried to help African Americans in the South register to vote. What were some of the obstacles African Americans faced when trying to register?
6. Who was Medgar Evers? Why was he assassinated?
7. Although white students helped to bring media attention to the Civil Rights Movement, there were some complications. Discuss the pros and cons of white students going to the South to be a part of Freedom Summer.
8. The Ku Klux Klan targeted Michael Schwerner for assassination. Why?
9. Lyndon B. Johnson was president of the United States during Freedom Summer. How did Johnson respond to the events of Freedom Summer and the Civil Rights Movement in general?
10. Were you surprised by the violence the Civil Rights Movement provoked? Why do you think the KKK and others reacted so violently? Discuss.
11. Discuss the legacy of Freedom Summer. What were its consequences for American society overall?



Commemorating the 45th anniversary of the Selma-to-Montgomery Civil Rights March of 1965.

ACTIVITIES:

1. Follow this link: americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/oh_freedom to the American Radio Works website where you can listen to a three-part special on Freedom Summer and see a slideshow. Write a short response about what you learned from this site.
2. In small groups, research and review the major events of the Civil Rights Movement leading up to and including the summer of 1964. Create a timeline illustrating the events of Freedom Summer. These timelines can be in PowerPoint format, on posters or in any other format. Share these projects with the larger class or group.

PRIMARY SOURCE EXPLORATION:

EXCERPT OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT (1965)

In the wake of the tragic events of Freedom Summer, Congress signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, 1965. After reading the excerpt below, ask students to consider the questions which follow.

“AN ACT to enforce the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, and for other purposes. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act shall be known as the ‘Voting Rights Act of 1965.’

SEC. 2. No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.”



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DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTIONS:

1. What does Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act say? What kind of “qualifications” for or “prerequisites” to voting existed before this act was passed? How do you think it was enforced?
2. Why do you think the Voting Rights Act mentioned the 15th Amendment? (Bonus research: read the text of the 15th Amendment and compare/contrast with the Voting Rights Act.)

Follow this link: www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=100 to access the full text of the Voting Rights Act of 1865.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

BOOKS:

Bridges, Ruby. *Through My Eyes*. (Scholastic, Inc., 1999). Age Range: 8 to 12

Kasher, Steven. *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68*. (Abbeville Press, 1996). Age Range: Young Adult

Payne, Charles. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. (University of California Press, 1997). Age Range: Senior High School and Adult.

Turck, Mary C. *The Civil Rights Movement for Kids: A History with 21 Activities* (Chicago Review Press, 2000). Age Range: 9-12

WEB LINKS:

Learn more about the Civil Rights Movement on History.com:
www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement

www.history.com/topics/freedom-summer

Images of Freedom Summer from the Newseum:
www.newseum.org/mississippi

Additional background information from the American Memory Project of the Library of Congress:
memory.loc.gov/ammem/aohtml/exhibit/aopart9.html