

Delta State University

NEH Landmarks Workshop

The Most Southern Place on Earth

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Subject/Topic/Unit : A Sociological Analysis of the Emmett Till Case, Modern U.S. History or Sociology

Grade Level: 9-12th grade

I. Essential Questions

- A. What sociological factors contributed to the death of Emmett Till and the outcome of his murder trial?
- B. What did the Emmett Till case symbolize for African Americans and whites?
- C. Was the Emmett Till case a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement?

II. Specific Objectives

- A. Students will learn how to view a historical event from a sociological perspective.
- B. Students will understand multiple viewpoints on the Emmett Till case.
- C. Students will identify sociological issues that led to the death of Emmett Till and the outcome of his murder trial.
- D. Remedial objective- Students will connect five specific sociological terms to the Emmett Till case (suggestions are conflict perspective, symbol, taboo, deviant and prejudice).
- E. Enrichment objective- Students will use three primary sources to make sociological connections to the Emmett Till case.
- F. Students will discuss the impact of the Emmett Till case.
- G. Students will form an opinion about the role of the Emmett Till case in the Civil Rights Movement.
- H. Students will write a formal essay with a thesis statement, clinchers and historical evidence about Emmett Till case.

III. Procedures

A. Introduction/Motivation

This lesson is useful after the basics of the Emmett Till case have been covered. Begin with class discussion about using the sociological perspective to explain the causes and effects of historical events.

B. Study/Learning

- 1. Hand out “A Sociological Analysis of Emmett Till Case” handout. Explain the sociological terms on the sheet as needed.
- 2. Have students work in small groups on the handout. Each group should be prepared to share two examples of using the sociological perspective with the class.

C. Culmination

Lead a class discussion on the impact of Emmett Till case. Discuss the student generated answers on the handout. Follow with a discussion on the essential questions pursuing multiple perspectives.

D. Follow-up

Use the essential questions as formal essay questions. They should pick one of the questions to answer in a formal essay. Students should fill out an essay guideline to prepare- developing a thesis statement, clinchers, and using historical evidence to support the thesis.

IV. Materials/Resources

- A. “ A Sociological Analysis of Emmett Till Case” handout
- B. Essay guideline and rubric (not provided- teacher should use their own)

V. Evaluation related to objectives

- A. Informal
 - 1. Completion of “A Sociological Analysis of Emmett Till Case” handout
 - 2. Participation in class discussion
 - 3. Essay guideline
- B. Formal
 - 1. Formal essay on essential questions (can stand alone or as an essay on the unit test)

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

A Sociological Analysis of the Emmett Till Case

Please examine the Emmett Till case using the sociological perspective. Here are some key sociological terms and concepts to help you do this:

Sociology- the study of human behavior in groups.

Sociological perspective-a view that looks at the behavior of groups, not individuals

A Sociological Perspective: Functionalism

1. Emphasizes the *contributions* made by each part of society.
2. A change in one part of society leads to change in other parts.
3. Changes in society will eventually lead to *stability* and then leave society similar to what it was before.

Examples from Till Case:

A Sociological Perspective: Conflict Perspective

1. Emphasizes the role of *conflict*, *competition* and *constraint* w/in a society.
2. Focuses on *disagreements* among various groups in a society or between societies.
3. Groups compete as they attempt to preserve and promote their own special values and interests.
4. Social living is a contest-a fight for power (the ability to control others)
5. As a balance of power amongst groups shift, change occurs.

Examples from Till Case:

A Sociological Perspective: Symbolic Interactionism

1. Approach that focuses on the interactions among people based on mutually understood symbols.
2. Symbol-anything that stands for something else and has an agreed upon meaning attached to it.
 - a. We learn the meaning of a symbol from the way we see others react to it.
 - b. Once we learn this, we base our behavior on them.
 - c. We use the meaning of symbols to imagine how others will respond to our behavior.

Examples from Till Case:

Culture: knowledge, values, customs, and physical objects that are shared by members of a society.

Dimensions of Culture

Values: Socially shared abstract ideas about what is important / right

Norms: Specific rules guiding group behavior, based on societal values. Anything can be normal if accepted

Types of Norms

Folkways: Informal rules lacking moral significance. Conformity = personal choice. Violations draws mild reactions. Generally tolerated

Mores: Morally based rules. Conformity = vital to society & required. Violation brings strong social disapproval.

Most Serious Mores = Taboo (Unthinkable violations)

Laws: Formally defined and supposed to be enforced by government. Conformity = Social Requirement

Consciously created. Can contain moral connections

Ethnocentrism: Judging others in terms of one's own cultural standards. Results from being strongly committed to one's own culture.

Examples of culture from Till Case:

Conformity Vs. Deviance

1. All groups encourage conformity.
2. Members of a group think, feel and behave in similar ways.
3. Members have been taught to value the group's ways.
4. Those who do not conform are labeled as deviant-a person who breaks significant societal or group norms.
5. Attempts are often made to change or control deviant behavior.

Social control-ways to encourage conformity to society's norms. There are two types of social control:

Internal-Lies w/in the individual. A person knows the difference between right and wrong and bases their actions upon that.

External

Social sanctions-rewards or punishments that encourage conformity to social norms. They can be positive, negative, formal or informal.

Examples from Till Case:

Minority-a group of people with physical or cultural traits different from those of the dominant group in the society. A minority population is defined by something more than size or number.

Characteristics of a Minority

1. A minority has distinctive physical or cultural characteristics which can be used to separate it from the majority.
2. The minority is dominated by the majority.
3. Minority traits are often believed by the dominant majority to be inferior.
4. Members of the minority have a common sense of identity w/ strong group loyalty.
5. The majority determines who belongs to the minority through ascribed status.

Race-people sharing certain inherited physical characteristics that are considered important w/in a society.

Prejudice-widely held negative attitudes toward a group and its individual members.

Racism-an extreme form of prejudice that assumes superiority of one group over others.

Discrimination-treating people differently based on ethnicity, race, religion or culture.

Hate crimes- a criminal act motivated by prejudice.

Examples from Till Case: