

## **Broad-Based Theme: Place as Text in the Most Southern Place on Earth**

**Group Members:** Jane Shipman, Marc Murdock, Mike Sifter

**Grade Level:** Secondary School – Social Studies, American Studies

**Lesson Topic:** Civil Rights Movement – Ordinary people can change the world

**Length of Lesson:** Two ninety minute block periods or 4 55 minute periods

### **Generalizations:**

- 1) Mass movements of political and social change begins with individual acts of justice
- 2) Civil Rights for one group is civil rights for all
- 3) Political and social change is not haphazard but thoughtfully planned and executed
- 4) African-Americans in the South demanded the right to vote through organizational non-violence

### **Guiding Questions:**

- 1) What is Freedom Summer?
- 2) What challenges did African-Americans face when attempting to register to vote in Mississippi in the 1960s?
- 3) How can the actions of one or a few create movement and change on a larger scale?

### **Lesson Plans Objectives:**

Part of a larger civil rights unit, this exercise is directed at the experience of voting registration and role-playing for reinforcement of the central controversies. Further, this lesson is directed to educate the students on the events that surrounded the struggle for equal rights and voting privileges of African-Americans in the South. Content, chronological sequencing and names, places and events will be supplied by traditional textbook reading – this activity is focusing more on the experience and choices people made during this event.

Understanding of place will be reinforced with small map reading exercises prior to the role-playing event

### **Procedures:**

As a class, watch the video clip of "Freedom Summer," during which civil rights activists — many of them students — traveled to Mississippi to register African Americans to vote. Discuss with the class the problems African Americans faced when trying to register to vote, such as physical threats, economic punishment, and bias literacy tests (copies provided) Organize a class skit to explore the different kinds of encounters those activists might have had with local residents.

Prior to the role-playing exercise, Students will be provided a map of the Mississippi region. Each student will be asked to chart out a travel itinerary for selected small towns to county seats.

Upon completion of the video, two groups of students will create a visual backdrop for our role-playing exercise.

- 1) One group will sketch, draw and paint a county courthouse scene
- 2) The second group will sketch, draw and paint a rural Mississippi Delta farm area

### **Role Playing Exercise**

Ask for three volunteers to play the part of activists as they visit African American homes and talk to residents, and have these volunteers figure out ahead of time what they will say to residents to try to convince them to register.

- 1) Divide the rest of the class into groups of two or three to play the part of African Americans the activists encounter, and have each of these groups likewise decide what its attitude will be toward the activists. (Remind students that African American residents — and the activists themselves — had good reason to fear violence at the hands of racist whites if they asserted their rights.)
- 2) When the groups are ready, position the different groups representing African Americans around the room and have the three activists visit each group in turn to speak with them. Were the activists successful in convincing any reluctant residents to register to vote?
- 3) Prior to the actual role-play, each group must create a script with questions and responses. Written work will be turned in at the end of the exercise
- 4) After the scenes have been played out – we will reconfigure the class to have one group of students represent activists, a second group represent African American residents, and a third group represent city workers (registrars, police, etc.) on hand at the local courthouse when the residents come in to register. Particular attention will be paid to the city worker group -What kinds of methods might be used to keep the residents from registering?

Finally, ask for a show of hands by students who plan to register to vote once they turn 18. Why do these students plan to register? Why do the other students not plan to register? Were any students influenced by the fact that during the Civil Rights Movement, people risked their lives to register and to help others register?

### **Materials/Resources:**

- 1) Map of Mississippi
- 2) Student Textbook
- 3) Video Clip – “Eyes on the Prize”
- 4) Large White Butcher Paper to create scene/backdrop
- 5) Mississippi Literacy Test
- 6) Script Writing Template

### **Evaluation Related To Objectives**

- 1) Assessment will be applied to each student generate script
- 2) Role-playing exercise will be filmed and shown back to the class as a feedback tool
- 3) Authenticity and thoughtfulness of travel itinerary will be examined
- 4) Informal assessment from the last guided questions on the procedures – Why register to vote? Who will and why?