



Remembering Emmett Till

The Early Struggles Against Jim Crow and Racism



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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	Time Frame	90 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	1-2 period(s)
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

How can one individual influence a movement?

Summary

In this lesson, students are introduced to the life and legacy of Emmett Louis Till. Jim Crow laws had enforced segregation throughout the South for decades, and numerous African-Americans had fallen victim to violent lynchings. Till's brutal murder was for many Americans the last straw, and it served as the spark that ignited the Civil Rights Movement for many. In this lesson, students assess the impact lynching and Jim Crow laws had in America and the role they played in Till's murder.

Snapshot

Engage

Students read the poem "Playground Elegy" and participate in a group discussion.

Explore

Students work in small groups to summarize a document set and complete an H-Chart.

Explain

Students watch a video about Emmett Till that is paired with Window Notes.

Extend

Students analyze recently passed legislation.

Evaluate

Students complete an Exit Ticket to evaluate their learning.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States History (9th through 12th grade))

USH.1.2: Analyze the post-Reconstruction civil rights struggles.

USH.1.2C: Assess the impact of the Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, and the actions of the Ku Klux Klan.

Attachments

- [Document Set- Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Document Set- Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Document Set- Remembering Emmett Till.docx](#)
- [Document Set- Remembering Emmett Till.pdf](#)
- [H-Chart- Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.docx](#)
- [H-Chart- Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [H-Chart- Remembering Emmett Till .docx](#)
- [H-Chart- Remembering Emmett Till .pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—Remembering Emmett Till.pptx](#)
- [Playground Elegy-Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Playground Elegy-Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Playground Elegy-Remembering Emmett Till.docx](#)
- [Playground Elegy-Remembering Emmett Till.pdf](#)
- [Public Law 117-007-Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Public Law 117-007-Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Public Law 117-007-Remembering Emmett Till.docx](#)
- [Public Law 117-007-Remembering Emmett Till.pdf](#)
- [Window Notes - Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Window Notes - Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Window Notes - Remembering Emmett Till.docx](#)
- [Window Notes - Remembering Emmett Till.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Playground Elegy handout (attached, class set, one per student)
- Document Set (attached, class set, one per student)
- H-Chart handout (attached, one per student)
- Window Notes handout (attached, one per student)
- Public Law 117-107 handout (attached, class set, one per pair)
- Pens/pencils
- Computers, tablets, or smartphones with internet access

15 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Poem Reading

To begin this lesson, students will read a poem and answer questions as they go. Students can respond to the questions aloud as a class, or if you wish to have written responses, communicate to them where this can be done.

Slides 2-3 contain the lesson title and objectives. Distribute copies of the attached **Playground Elegy** handout to each student. This can be printed as a class set.

Explain to students that as a class, they will read a poem by Clint Smith called "Playground Elegy." Read the poem once aloud to the class and have students follow along with their copy. Give students a few moments to reflect on how they feel now that they have read the poem. Display **slide 4** with discussion questions.

Begin by asking the following question: *What words from the poem stuck out to you the most?*

Have a few students share their responses and lead the discussion based on their responses. Once they have shared, ask the students the next question: *What do you think this poem is about?*

Have a few students share their responses. Tell students that they will be reading the poem one more time and should consider whether their answer to the last question changes after they have reread the poem. Before students read the poem a second time, pose the question on **slide 5** to the class: *What do you think the word elegy means?*

Invite a few students to share what they think the word means. Once you have gotten a few responses, display **slide 6** with the definition of *elegy*. Explain to students that the term is used to describe a poem or song that expresses sorrow, especially for someone who has passed.

Have students read the poem one final time. Based on your preference, this can be done independently or with an [Elbow Partner](#). Once students have reread the poem, have them reflect on their new understanding and pose the next questions on **slide 7**.

After reading the poem again and knowing the definition of elegy, does this change your understanding of the poem? If so, how?

What do you think the author's purpose was for writing this poem?

Invite students to share out a few responses. After their responses, display **slide 8** with the Essential Question to guide the lesson: *How can one individual influence a movement?*

35 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 9** and have students assemble into small groups of 2-3. Have students use the [Paired Texts H-Chart](#) strategy to read and analyze two of the attached documents: **Jim Crow Laws in Mississippi** and **Lynching in America**. Distribute the attached **Document Set**, which contains these two articles. Also distribute the attached **H-Chart** handout. The Document Set can be provided as a class set; however, each student should have their own H-Chart to complete.

Together, the group will read both readings and provide a response for the questions on the H-Chart. Instruct students to first read *Jim Crow Laws in Mississippi*, (Page 1 of Document Set), and complete the left-hand side of the H-Chart. Once they complete this step, they should move to the second reading, *Lynching in America*, (Page 2 of Document Set), and complete the right-hand side of the H-Chart.

- **Left side of H-Chart:** Have students summarize with their group how Jim Crow laws were used as a method of social control.
- **Right side of H-Chart:** Have students summarize how lynching was used as a method of establishing social control.

Once students have completed both sides of the H-Chart, instruct them to use their knowledge from both documents to answer the final question in the middle section of the H-Chart.

Facilitate a whole-group discussion by having students share their responses from the chart and thoughts on the readings.

30 minutes

Explain

Teacher's Note: Small Groups

Students can remain in their small groups that they are already assembled into for the remainder of the lesson. Inform students that during the parts when a video is playing, they should be working independently until instructed to discuss with the group.

Display **slide 10** with background about Emmett Till to introduce his story to your students. Explain to students that Emmett Louis Till was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1941. In August of 1955, Emmett traveled to Money, Mississippi, to visit family and stay with his great uncle Moses Wright. At 14 years old, Emmett Till was kidnapped and brutally murdered in Mississippi by two men, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam. Explain to students that they will be learning about Emmett Till's story and how his tragic death sparked a movement and mobilization of many Black Americans in the pursuit of civil rights.

Distribute the attached **Window Notes Handout** to each student. Use **slide 11** to review the instructions for a modified version of the [Window Notes strategy](#) and walk students through each category.

Teacher's Note: Window Notes Categories

- **Facts:** What facts from the video stood out to you the most?
- **Feelings:** What feelings are you experiencing now that you have learned these facts?
- **Questions:** Now that you have watched the video, what questions do you have that need to be answered?
- **Lasting Impact:** How did this event have a lasting impact?

Explain that they will be watching a Crash Course video narrated by Clint Smith, the author of the poem "Playground Elegy." As students watch the video, they can take notes in the handout. Provide some time for students to finish working on the handout following the video.

Slide 12 contains the video "[Emmett Till: Crash Course Black American History #34.](#)"

Embedded video

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=4HljsKwvp3g>

After students have had independent time to complete the chart, instruct them to turn to their small groups to discuss their responses to each question in the handout. If they gain new information through the discussion, it should be added to the Facts box. For the Questions box, students should try and come up with a response within their group before bringing it to the whole group.

After groups have completed the chart and discussion, call on different groups to share their answers for the different prompts. As student groups share, be sure to correct, clarify, and add any missing information.

10 minutes

Extend

Continue to **slide 13**. Have students watch the following short video: "[Emmett Till's Mother Speaks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DE22TfEMeg)."

Embedded video

[https://youtube.com/watch?v=4DE22TfEMeg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4DE22TfEMeg)

Display **slide 14** with the strategy [Point of Most Significance \(POMS\)](#) and have students turn to their group and discuss their POMS. Invite a few to share out their POMS.

Explain to students that Emmett Till's murder led to the activism and resistance we know now as the Civil Rights Movement. For decades, African-Americans fought for equality and continue to fight today.

Distribute the attached **Public Law 117-107** handout. Groups can share this handout. Explain to students that this law is often referred to as the "Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act," and it was passed on March 29, 2022. With their groups, students will use the strategy [S-I-T](#), found on **slide 15**, to analyze the law. Students will identify the following:

- A **surprising** fact or idea
- An **interesting** fact or idea
- A **troubling** fact or idea

Students can record their answers on sticky notes or on the back of their Window Notes handout. Once students have had enough time to record their responses, bring students back together to share their thoughts.

Conclude the discussion by noting that the Equal Justice Initiative recorded more than 4,400 lynchings from the end of Reconstruction (1877) to 1950. For the first time in history, the Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Law has made lynching a federal hate crime in America.

5 minutes

Evaluate

Teacher's Note: Time-Saving Measures

If you wish to save time, you may skip the Exit Ticket and have students turn in their completed H-Charts or their Window Notes to serve as the Evaluate.

Display **slide 16**. Ask students to return to the Essential Question posed at the beginning of the lesson: *How can one individual influence a movement?*

Ask students to respond to this question as an [Exit Ticket](#). Students can turn in their written responses. If you choose to ask for a written response, be sure to communicate your expectations of this response in terms of using complete sentences, number of sentences, structure, etc.

Resources

- American Experience | PBS. (2020, September 3). Emmett Till's mother speaks | The murder of Emmett Till | American experience | PBS [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/4DE22TfEMeG>
- Bradley, M. T. (1954, December 25). Emmett Till, 13-years-old, on Christmas Day, 1954. [Photo]. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Emmett_Till.jpg
- CrashCourse. (2022, March 12). Emmett Till: Crash course Black American history #34. [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/4HljsKwvp3g>
- Equal Justice Initiative. (2017). Lynching in America: Confronting the legacy of racial terror. 3rd edition. <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/>
- K20 Center. (2020, September 16). Bell ringers and exit tickets. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/125>
- K20 Center. (2020, September 16). Elbow partners. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116>
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- K20 Center. (2020, September 16). POMS: Point of most significance. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/101>
- K20 Center. (2021, February 12). S-I-T (Surprising, interesting, troubling). Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/926>
- K20 Center. (2020, September 16). Window notes. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/189>
- PBS. (n.d.). Who was Emmett Till? American experience. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography-emmett-till/>