

Remembering Emmett Till

The Early Struggles Against Jim Crow

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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

This lesson introduces students to Emmett Louis Till's life and his lasting impact on American history. For decades, Jim Crow laws had enforced racial segregation across the South, during which time countless African Americans were killed in violent lynchings. Till's brutal murder became a turning point that many Americans could no longer tolerate, serving as a catalyst for the Civil Rights Movement. Students will examine how lynching and Jim Crow laws affected America and contributed to the circumstances that led to Till's death.

Snapshot

Engage

Students read Clint Smith's "Playground Elegy" aloud and discuss initial reactions, focusing on target words and meaning before learning the definition of "elegy."

Explore

Small groups use H-Chart strategy to analyze paired texts on Jim Crow laws and lynching, summarizing how each served as social control methods.

Explain

Students watch a video about Emmett Till while completing Window Notes, then discuss findings in groups to build understanding.

Extend

Students watch Emmett Till's mother's video and identify Point of Most Significance (POMS), then analyze the 2022 Anti-Lynching Act using S-I-T strategy (Surprising, Interesting, Troubling).

Evaluate

Students respond to the essential question "How can one individual influence a movement?" as an exit ticket assessment.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

SYN501: Draw logical conclusions using information from two informational texts

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
- LEARN Slides—Remembering Emmett Till.pptx
- Paired Texts H-Chart—Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.docx
- Paired Texts H-Chart—Remembering Emmett Till - Spanish.pdf
- Paired Texts H-Chart—Remembering Emmett Till.docx
- Paired Texts H-Chart—Remembering Emmett Till.pdf
- 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)
- Paired Text 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

20 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.

Use the attached Lesson Slides to guide the lesson. Display **slides 2-3** to introduce the lesson title and lesson 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** and pose 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, move to **slide 5** and pose the next question: *What do you think this poem is about?* Invite students to share their thoughts.

Explain to students that they will be reading the poem one more time independently and should consider whether their answer to the last question changes after they have reread the poem. Move to **slide 6**. Before students read the poem a second time, pose the question 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 7** 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. Once students have reread the poem, display **slide 8** and pose the following questions:

After reading the poem again and knowing the definition of elegy, does your understanding of the poem change? 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 9** with the Essential Question to guide the lesson: *How can one individual influence a movement?*

35 minutes

Explore

Move students into small groups of 2-3. Display **slide 10** and introduce the Paired Texts H-Chart instructional strategy. Explain to students that they are going 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 the two articles and the attached **Paired Texts H-Chart** handout. The Document Set can be provided as a class set; however, each student should have their own H-Chart to complete.

Display **slide 11**. 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.

25 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 12** 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 13** to review the instructions for a modified version of the Window Notes strategy and walk students through each category.

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 14 contains the video "Emmett Till: Crash Course Black American History #34."

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=4HljsKwpv3g

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.

Once 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 15**. Have students watch the following short video: "Emmett Till's Mother Speaks."

Embedded video
https://youtube.com/watch?v=4DE22TfEMEg

Display **slide 16** 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 equal rights 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. Transition to **slide 17** and introduce the instructional strategy S-I-T.

With their groups, 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

Display **slide 18.** 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

- 117th Congress (2022). Public law 117-107. https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ107/PLAW-117publ107.pdf
- 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/4HljsKwpv3g
- Equal Justice Initiative. (2017). Lynching in America: Confronting the legacy of racial terror. 3rd edition. https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Bell ringers and exit tickets. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/125
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Paired texts H-chart. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/132
- K20 Center. (n.d.). POMS: Point of most significance. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/101
- K20 Center. (n.d.). S-I-T (Surprising, interesting, troubling). Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/926
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Window notes. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/189
- NAACP. (n.d.) History of lynching in America. https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/history-lynching-america
- PBS. (n.d.). Lynching in America. Report. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/emmett-lynching-america/
- PBS. (n.d.). Who was Emmett Till? American experience. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/biography-emmett-till/
- Smith, C. (n.d.). Playground elegy. https://www.stilljournal.net/clint-smith-poetry.php