



The Modern Civil Rights Movement

UNIT ADDENDUM

5th Grade Social Studies
Unit 5
Suggested Duration: 21 days

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UNIT SYNOPSIS



Students at sit-in at Woolworth in Durham, NC, taken from Wikipedia

Purpose: Why study the modern Civil Rights Movement?

“Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.” These immortal words, spoken by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the March on Washington in 1963, have lived on for generations, inspiring the spirit of the modern Civil Rights Movement long past Dr. King’s assassination. For much of American history, Black Americans lived in slavery or under Jim Crow laws that made them second-class citizens. Though Black Americans had fought for full civil rights since emancipation in 1865, it was not until the 1950s that a modern movement for civil rights gained momentum, catalyzed by the Supreme Court’s decision in Brown v. Board of Education. Leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and John Lewis marched, protested, sat-in, and boycotted until the United States could no longer ignore its racial caste system. With the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, Black Americans won equal civil rights under

the law for them and their posterity. The Civil Rights Movement fundamentally changed social, political, and democratic systems in the United States, though its full promise has yet to be fulfilled. Activists from the 1970s through the present continue to challenge systemic racism in the United States, standing on the shoulders of the activists before them, in an effort to finally make Reverend King’s words a reality.

The National Standards for History call for elementary students to understand “how democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events, and symbols.” In this unit, you will introduce your students to the Black Americans who fought to make our nation live up to its revolutionary democratic promise and the legacy of their movement for civil rights today. Your students will first study Jim Crow society and the events that led to the modern Civil Rights Movement. Then, students will explore the lives and activism of key civil rights leaders to understand how these leaders used various forms of protest to fight for change. Finally, students will end the unit by considering the enduring legacy of the Civil Rights Movements—its achievements, as well as the work that remains in the struggle for Black freedom and equality in the United States.

The study of the Civil Rights Movement outlined in this unit will ensure your students understand an essential part of U.S. history that is foundational to the study of our nation and American democracy. In doing so, students will leave this unit with a thorough understanding of how Americans have fought for a more just nation since our founding. This unit is also designed to dispel narratives that often vilify Black activists—particularly those who did not align fully with the nonviolent philosophy of social change. Most history books to this day present Malcolm X, for example, as the radical counterpart to Martin Luther King Jr., describing him as a violent militant and black supremacist. Creating these extreme dichotomies between the two leaders and using alarmist language grossly misrepresents and oversimplifies the complicated relationship between Malcolm X’s “by any means necessary” philosophy and King’s

nonviolence. Similarly, the Black Panther Party was cast as a terrorist organization by the federal government in the 1970s, despite the group's explicit goals of achieving justice for Black Americans and providing aid to poor Black communities. Though this unit does not go into detail about Malcolm X or the Black Panthers, throughout this unit, it is essential to avoid characterizing one philosophy or one movement as better than the other and to avoid language that dismisses the contributions of Malcolm X or the Black Panthers as overly violent. You will introduce and reinforce key information about the Civil Rights Movement through rich whole class Read Aloud and Close Reading text selections. Students will convey their knowledge of the Civil Rights Movement through project work—including creating memorials for the leaders of the movement!

CONTENT STANDARDS

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<p>History</p> <p>5.5A: explain the significance of issues and events of the 20th century such as industrialization, urbanization, the Great Depression, the world wars, the civil rights movement, and military actions.</p> <p>5.5C: identify the accomplishments and contributions of individuals and groups such as Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, the Tuskegee Airmen, and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in the areas of civil rights, women's rights, military actions, and politics.</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>5.21B: summarize the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our national identity.</p>	<p>Social Studies Processing Skills</p> <p>5.23 The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including technology.</p> <p>(B) analyze information by applying absolute and relative chronology through sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.</p> <p>(D) identify different points of view about an issue, topic, historical event, or current event.</p> <p>(E) identify the historical context of an event.</p> <p>5.24 The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze, and interpret data.</p> <p>(B) interpret geographic data, population distribution, and natural resources into a variety of formats such as graphs and maps.</p> <p>5.25 Social Studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.</p> <p>(D) create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies.</p> <p>5.26 Social Studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others.</p>

VERTICAL STANDARDS

4th Grade Social Studies	5 th Grade Social Studies	6th Grade Social Studies
Students will engage in a course about Texas history and how the communities have changed over the history of Texas.	Students will engage in a course about US history and how the United States was colonized and the change over the course of time.	Students will engage in a course about geography, government, and culture throughout the world.