What Was the Civil Rights Movement?



Rationale

This 50-minute lesson is a stand-alone lesson that can be used to introduce the civil rights movement of the 1950's and 1960's.

Guiding Questions

What was the civil rights movement? Why is the civil rights movement so important?

Mastery Objectives

Students will be able to define "civil rights movement". Students will be able to analyze the importance of the movement.

Standards Addressed (from the National Council for the Social Studies)

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions (interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions)

<u>Power, Authority, and Governance</u> (how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance)

<u>Civic Ideas and Practices</u> (the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic)

Vocabulary

- racial segregation
- desegregation
- non-violent protest
- civil rights movement
- Civil Rights Act

Materials

Attached reading "The Civil Rights Movement"
Attached lyrics of "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free"
Audio and/or video file of "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free" as performed by Nina Simone

Procedures

Activator

Distribute the lyrics of "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free".

Ask students to read the song and then answer the question, "Why did the author wish to be free?"

2. Guided instruction:

Ask students "What was the civil rights movement?"

Preview the pictures. Ask students to predict, "What was the civil rights movement?"

Distribute and read the article "The Civil Rights Movement".

Curriculum created for The GRAMMY Museum® by Beth Shevitz, Newport Mill Middle School , Kensington, Maryland



Play an audio file of the song "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free" as performed by Nina Simone.

3. Individual Practice/Assessment

Ask students to describe why the author of the song wished to be free citing examples from the reading.

Have students share responses.

Assessment

Student writing samples making connections between the civil rights movement and the song "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free" as performed by Nina Simone.





The movement for racial equality in the United States, known as the civil rights movement, started in the late 1950s. Through nonviolent protest actions, it broke through the pattern of **racial segregation**, the practice in the South through which black Americans were not allowed to use the same schools, churches, restaurants, buses, and other facilities as white Americans. The movement also achieved the passage of equal-rights laws in the mid-1960s intended to end discrimination against people because of their race. This article provides an overview of some of the main events of the civil rights movement.

When the United States first became a country, the majority of the blacks who lived there were slaves; they were not considered citizens and so were not granted the basic rights of citizens in

the U.S. Constitution. This was changed several decades later with three amendments to the Constitution: the 13th Amendment (1865) abolished slavery, the 14th Amendment (1868) granted citizenship to former slaves, and the 15th Amendment (1870) gave blacks the same voting rights as whites. By 1870, the men could vote but the women could not. In addition, the U.S. Supreme Court sanctioned racial segregation by allowing "separate but equal" facilities for blacks and whites, in the case of Plessy *vs.* Ferguson (1896). In the South, however, new laws were passed to effectively prevent blacks from voting and to reinforce segregation practices.



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In the late 1940s and early 1950s, lawyers for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) argued a series of **desegregation** cases before the Supreme Court. They culminated in Brown *vs.* Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. In that case, the Court ruled on May 17, 1954, that having separate schools for blacks made the schools inherently unequal and was thus unconstitutional. This historic decision inspired a mass movement by blacks and sympathetic whites to end racial segregation and inequality. Many whites, however, especially in the South, strongly resisted this movement.



On Dec. 1, 1955, a black woman named Rosa Parks was arrested in Montgomery, Alabama, for refusing to give up her seat on a bus to a white man. This sparked a major protest that helped ignite the civil rights movement. Two local Baptist ministers, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ralph Abernathy, led a year long, **nonviolent boycott** of the bus system that eventually forced the bus company to desegregate its buses. Similar protest actions soon spread to other communities in the South. King became the leading voice of the **civil rights movement**.



In 1960 a group of black college students in Greensboro, N.C., insisted on being served a meal at a segregated lunch counter. This was one of the first of the movement's many prominent civil rights sit-ins, a form of nonviolent protest in which participants enter a business or public place and remain seated until they are forcibly removed or their grievances are addressed. As the movement spread across the United States, it forced the desegregation of department stores, supermarkets, libraries, and movie theaters.



In May 1961 a group within the civil rights movement began sending participants on nonviolent "freedom rides" on buses and trains throughout the South and elsewhere. The purpose of the rides was to test and break down segregation practices on interstate transportation. By September of that year, some 70,000 students, both black and white, were thought to have participated in the movement. Roughly 3,600 of the participants were arrested for their participation. All together, they traveled to more than 20 states.



The movement reached its climax on Aug. 28, 1963, in the March on Washington, a massive demonstration in Washington, D.C., to protest racial discrimination and to demonstrate support for civil rights laws then being considered in Congress. The highlight of the march, which attracted more than 200,000 black and white participants, was King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech.

In the years that followed, the civil rights movement won several important legal victories. On July 2, 1964, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the **Civil Rights Act** into law. The act outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin in public accommodations, employment, and federal programs.



In the decades that followed, many civil rights leaders sought to achieve greater direct political power by being elected to political office. They also sought to improve employment and educational opportunities for blacks through programs which give preference to minorities in job hiring and college admissions decisions.



Adapted from "civil rights movement." *Compton's by Britannica. Encyclopedia Britannica Online School Edition.* Encyclopedia Britannica, 2010. Web. 9 Jan. 2010 http://school.eb.com/comptons/article-9310706>.

Photo credits

Rosa Parks on bus. mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/.../rosaparks_on_bus.jpg

1958: White customers watch as black customers at a 'sit-in' at Brown's Basement Luncheonette in Oklahoma. Photo by Shel Hershorn/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his famed "I Have Dream" speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, August 28, 1963. cc/sp/files UPI

US President Lyndon B. Johnson shakes the hand of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. the signing of the Civil Rights Act. Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images

I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free



as performed by Nina Simone

I wish I know how It would feel to be free I wish I could break All the chains holding me I wish I could say All the things that I should say Say 'em loud say 'em clear For the whole round world to hear I wish I could share All the love that's in my heart Remove all the bars That keep us apart I wish you could know What it means to be me Then you'd see and agree That every man should be free

I wish I could give
All I'm longin' to give
I wish I could live
Like I'm longin' to live
I wish I could do
All the things that I can do
And though I'm a way over due
I'd be starting a new

Well I wish I could be Like a bird in the sky How sweet it would be If I found I could fly Oh I'd soar to the sun And I'd look down at the sea Than I'd sing cos I know—yea Than I'd sing cos I know—yea Then I'd sing cos I know I'd know how it feels Oh I know how it feels to be free Yea yea! Oh, I know how it feels Yes I know Oh, I know How it feels How it feels To be free

http://www.lyricsfreak.com/n/nina+simone/i+wish+i+knew+how+it+would+feel+to+be+free 20100712.html

to hear the song use above link OR http://www.jango.com/music/Nina+Simone?l=0

