

Lesson Plan: Two Sides of the Same Coin—
Booker T. Washington vs. W.E.B. DuBois on Education

Grades: High School

Subjects: U.S. History, English Language Arts

Time required: 2 50-minute class periods

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OVERVIEW

In the years following Reconstruction, two different viewpoints emerged regarding the education of African-Americans. The first, represented by Booker T. Washington, was that African-Americans needed to gain commercially viable skills and focus on being tradesmen and craftsmen. The second, represented by W.E.B. DuBois, was that African-Americans needed to focus on giving the most talented in their communities a classic liberal arts education, so that these most talented could improve life for African-Americans as a whole. This lesson plan explores these differences, and will give students a sense of how these differences shaped education for African-Americans.

UNDERSTANDING GOAL

Students will be able to understand the main viewpoints regarding post-Reconstruction education for African-Americans in the U.S.; students will be able to understand how these differing viewpoints shaped educational identity for African-Americans in the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th century, and beyond.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will identify, describe, and explain the goals and impacts of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois with regards to post-Reconstruction African-American education;
- Students will annotate, analyze, and compare and contrast excerpts from Washington's "Atlanta Exposition" speech and DuBois' "Talented Tenth" essay;
- Students will create commentary on both excerpts as if covering them live.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION

How did the competing educational philosophies of DuBois and Washington address the needs of African-Americans during the Jim Crow period?



[[Wood workshop at Tuskegee Institute, ca. 1902](#)]

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

U.S. History

- US.11: Using textual evidence, compare and contrast the ideas and philosophies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois

English Language Arts

- Key Ideas and Details 11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Key Ideas and Details 11-12.3: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
- Craft and Structure 11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.
- Comprehension and Collaboration 11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.
- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas 11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Resources

Primary sources:

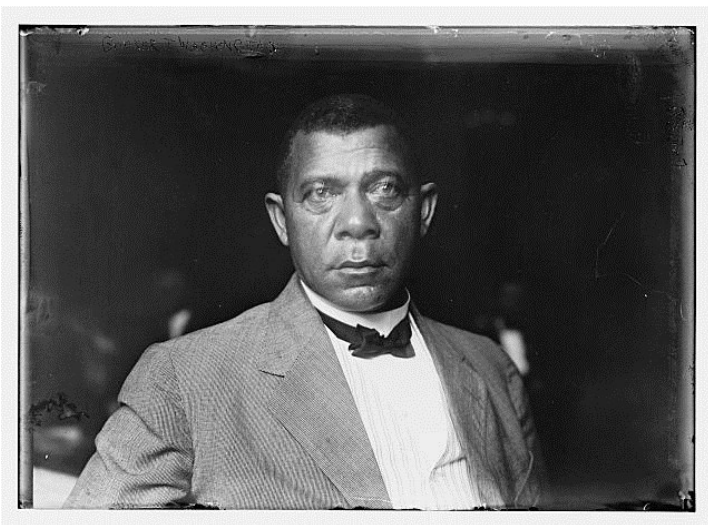
- [Atlanta Exposition speech](#)
- [The Talented Tenth](#)
- [Wood workshop at Tuskegee Institute, ca. 1902](#)
- [Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., 1900 - library interior](#)

Materials

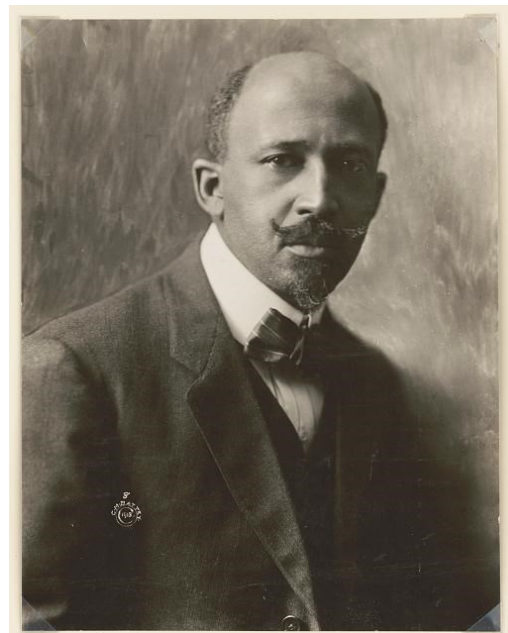
- [PowerPoint: Washington v. DuBois](#)
- [Atlanta Exposition excerpt worksheet](#)
- [The Talented Tenth excerpt worksheet](#)
- [Analysis Questions](#)
- [Twitter worksheet](#)
- [Compare/Contrast worksheet](#)

PROCEDURE

DAY 1	
Step 1	Project the image from Tuskegee Institute and Fisk University . Provide each student a copy of the compare/contrast worksheet . Have students analyze the images and complete the worksheet as a lesson opener. How do these images show different approaches to education?
Step 2	Introduce students to W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington using the introductory PowerPoint . Have students take notes for use in later portions of the lesson plan.
Step 3	Distribute copies of the Atlanta Exposition excerpt worksheet. Have students read and annotate (directions for annotations appear on PowerPoint slide 7) the excerpt. Then have a brief class discussion on the students' first impressions upon reading the excerpt.
Step 4	Distribute copies of the Talented Tenth excerpt worksheet. Have students read and annotate the excerpt. Debrief students' thoughts and understandings of the excerpt.
Step 5	Distribute copies of the analysis questions and ask your students to use their notes/annotations and the readings to answer the questions. Students can be allowed to complete their answers as homework if additional time is needed.



[Booker T. Washington](#) [n.d.]



[W.E.B. \(William Edward Burghardt\) Du Bois, 1868-1963](#) [c1919 May 31]

Day 2	
Step 6	Refresh student knowledge about DuBois and Washington with discussion of previous day's activities. If you were not able to discuss student responses to analysis questions, you may elect to start class with a brief discussion on their responses.
Step 7	Distribute blank Twitter templates . Discuss how Twitter allows for larger public debate and discourse on issues. What medium would people in the early twentieth century have used to participate in a public discourse? How has Twitter changed public debate and discourse?
Step 8	Review the investigative question for the lesson: How did the competing educational philosophies of DuBois and Washington address the needs of African-Americans during the Jim Crow period? Read each excerpt aloud for the class and have them create their own Twitter profile and tweets. Students need to create a minimum of six tweets—75 to 140 characters per tweet about each excerpt. After the reading, give students ten to fifteen minutes to finish their tweets.
Step 9	Have a verbal gallery walk where students share their tweets. Conclude with asking your students how this debate is relevant to current debates on education.

EVALUATION

- Analysis of Talented Tenth excerpt & Atlanta Exposition excerpt, along with answering questions (25 points)
- Live Tweets of each excerpts (50 points)
- Class discussion and participation including compare and contrast opening activity (25 points)

EXTENSION

- Have students compare and contrast the merits of liberal arts education versus the merits of vocational education. This can be done through a variety of activities, such as creative activities (speeches, art, campaigns, etc.) and writings (research papers, journal entries, short essays, etc.), and can add a modern twist on this lesson.
- Have students engage in the same activity as the lesson plan (annotate & analyze, Twitter activity) with excerpts from W.E.B. DuBois's [The Souls of Black Folk](#).



[Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., 1900 - library interior](#) [1900?]

Booker T. Washington: “Atlanta Compromise”

To those of my race who depend on bettering their condition in a foreign land or who underestimate the importance of cultivating friendly relations with the Southern white man, who is their next-door neighbor, I would say: “Cast down your bucket where you are”— cast it down in making friends in every manly way of the people of all races by whom we are surrounded. Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. And in this connection it is well to bear in mind that whatever other sins the South may be called to bear, when it comes to business, pure and simple, it is in the South that the Negro is given a man’s chance in the commercial world, and in nothing is this Exposition more eloquent than in emphasizing this chance. Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands, and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour, and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life...Gentlemen of the Exposition, as we present to you our humble effort at an exhibition of our progress, you must not expect overmuch. Starting thirty years ago with ownership here and there in a few quilts and pumpkins and chickens (gathered from miscellaneous sources), remember the path that has led from these to the inventions and production of agricultural implements, buggies, steam-engines, newspapers, books, statuary, carving, paintings, the management of drug stores and banks, has not been trodden without contact with thorns and thistles. While we take pride in what we exhibit as a result of our independent efforts, we do not for a moment forget that our part in this exhibition would fall far short of your expectations but for the constant help that has come to our educational life, not only from the Southern states, but especially from Northern philanthropists, who have made their gifts a constant stream of blessing and encouragement. The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremest folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing. No race that has anything to contribute to the markets of the world is long in any degree ostracized. It is important and right that all privileges of the law be ours, but it is vastly more important that we be prepared for the exercise of these privileges. The opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than the opportunity to spend a dollar in an opera-house.

W.E.B. Dubois: “The Talented Tenth”

The Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men. The problem of education, then, among Negroes must first of all deal with the Talented Tenth; it is the problem of developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races. Now the training of men is a difficult and intricate task. Its technique is a matter for educational experts, but its object is for the vision of seers. If we make money the object of man-training, we shall develop money-makers but not necessarily men; if we make technical skill the object of education, we may possess artisans but not, in nature, men. Men we shall have only as we make manhood the object of the work of the schools—intelligence, broad sympathy, knowledge of the world that was and is, and of the relation of men to it—this is the curriculum of that Higher Education which must underlie true life. On this foundation we may build bread winning, skill of hand and quickness of brain, with never a fear lest the child and man mistake the means of living for the object of life... The main question, so far as the Southern Negro is concerned, is: What under the present circumstance, must a system of education do in order to raise the Negro as quickly as possible in the scale of civilization? The answer to this question seems to me clear: It must strengthen the Negro's character, increase his knowledge and teach him to earn a living. Now it goes without saying that it is hard to do all these things simultaneously or suddenly and that at the same time it will not do to give all the attention to one and neglect the others; we could give black boys trades, but that alone will not civilize a race of ex-slaves; we might simply increase their knowledge of the world, but this would not necessarily make them wish to use this knowledge honestly; we might seek to strengthen character and purpose, but to what end if this people have nothing to eat or to wear? A system of education is not one thing, nor does it have a single definite object, nor is it a mere matter of schools. Education is that whole system of human training within and without the school house walls, which molds and develops men. If then we start out to train an ignorant and unskilled people with a heritage of bad habits, our system of training must set before itself two great aims—the one dealing with knowledge and character, the other part seeking to give the child the technical knowledge necessary for him to earn a living under the present circumstances.

Analysis Questions

1. Reading Washington's words, how would you describe Washington's attitude toward the American South and its people? How would you describe Washington's attitude toward other parts of the nation?
2. How would you describe DuBois's attitude towards "the Negro race" in general? How would you describe his attitude toward "the Southern Negro"? What, if any differences are there, and why would there be a difference?
3. Compare and contrast the words of both Washington and DuBois. What are the differences and similarities?
4. Compare and contrast the issues of education that occurred when these words were written (late 19th/early 20th century) and today. In your opinion, how would both men respond to today's educational system?



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