TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU

Lesson Plan: Civil Rights Movement Strategies—Non-Violent Direct Action

Grade: 5th grade
Subjects: Social Studies, English Language Arts
Time Required: One 45-50 minute class period
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OVERVIEW

The modern Civil Rights Movement did not take place in a vacuum, nor was it a spontaneous movement. Rather, the Movement represented the culmination and execution of decades of planning and strategy. Activists in the Civil Rights Movement emphasized the importance of non-violent direct action in achieving their goals for equality. These non-violent actions included boycotts, sit-ins, and freedom rides and targeted the economic, social, and political structures of Jim Crow and racism in America. By utilizing non-violent methods of resistance and protest, civil rights activists forced the United States legal and political system to take action, which ultimately led to some advancements in the fight for civil rights.

Non-violent direct action required a trained and educated core of activists and leaders. Across the county, African American leaders and civil rights groups trained their communities for the realities, and benefits, of practicing non-violence. This lesson plan explores the strategies of non-violent direct action through an economic, social, and political lens. Additionally, this lesson plan also reveals the ways in which the leaders and planners of the Civil Rights Movement educated and trained their communities in their quest to advance civil rights in America.

INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION

What were the strategies used in the Civil Rights Movement, and how did these strategies advance the cause of the Movement?

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

Fifth Grade Social Studies
5.24: Analyze the key people and events of the Civil Rights movement, including Martin Luther King Jr. and non-violent protests, Montgomery Bus Boycott and Rosa Parks, Brown v. Board of Education and Thurgood Marshall, and Freedom Riders and Diane Nash.
5.50: Identify Tennessee’s significant contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, including Highlander Folk School, Tent City Movement of Fayette County, Nashville Sit-Ins, The Clinton Twelve.

English Language Arts
5.SL.CC.2 Summarize a text presented in diverse media such as visual, quantitative, and oral formats
5.SL.PKI.4 Report on a topic or text, or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas.
5.W.RBP.K.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work and provide a list of sources.
### UNDERSTANDING GOAL

Students will analyze a variety of primary sources to understand the different strategies used by African American activists during the Civil Rights Movement and how those strategies helped to secure equality.

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze primary sources for historical content and knowledge.
- Students will identify different strategies used to win the Civil Rights Movement.
- Students will compare these strategies with current activists strategies.

### RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

#### RESOURCES

**Nashville—Confrontation at City Hall** [1960]

**Group One (Non-Violence)**
- **CORE Rules for Action** [1963]
- C.T. Vivian oral history interview conducted by Taylor Branch in Atlanta, Georgia [2011]

**Group Two (Brown V. Board of Education)**
- Why the Interracial Youth March for Integrated Schools, A. Philip Randolph, YMIS, BSCP. Undated 1958

**Group Three (Montgomery Bus Boycott)**
- Image 6 of Rosa Parks Papers: Subject File, 1937-2005; Montgomery Bus Boycott; Typescripts annotated by Parks, circa 1956; Interviews by Aubrey Willis Williams; King, Martin Luther, Jr. [1937-2005]
- Montgomery Improvement Association Constitution

**Group Four (Freedom Rides)**
- George M. Houser and Bayard Rustin. Journey of Reconciliation. Typescript, 1948
- Report of Meeting of May 26, 1961

#### MATERIALS

- **E-S-P Analysis Worksheet**
- **The Civil Rights Act of 1964: Timelines**
- **Keywords and Definition Guide**

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![Image](image_url) **Image 2 of Rosa Parks Papers: Subject File, 1937-2005; Montgomery Bus Boycott; Typescripts annotated by Parks, circa 1956; Interviews by Aubrey Willis Williams; King, Martin Luther, Jr.**
### Note

This lesson plan is designed to challenge your student’s knowledge on the strategies utilized to socially, economically, and politically fight for civil rights in America. For more context about the Civil Rights Movement, see these articles located on the Civil Rights Movement Veterans’ website.

Additionally, we offer alternative steps in this lesson plan for teachers with struggling readers. These steps include a shorter primary source list and a Keywords and Definition Guide for your students.

### Step 1

Begin the class by showing your students the following YouTube video on sit-ins and non-violent protests. After your students have watched the video, pose the following questions to your students: What strategies did the activists in this video use to combat inequality and segregation? Why do you think they used these strategies? What kind of training and education do you think was required to engage in non-violent direct action?

### Step 2

Divide your students up into four groups. Assign each group their paired sources. Each individual student in the group also receives the E-S-P Worksheet. This worksheet will serve as the assessment for this lesson plan. Additionally, the teacher can also provide their students with a copy of The Civil Rights Era Timeline to help contextualize their sources.

### Step 3

Have your students read through their paired sources using the read aloud teaching strategy. Each student in the group will read aloud to the rest of the group two to three lines in their primary source. As they do so, the rest of the group should be following along and marking any words or phrases they have questions about. After each section or set of lines is read aloud, allow your students time to ask any questions they had about the section or any of the words/definition in the selection. Then the next student in the group will read aloud the next two to three lines, rotating throughout the group until the entire primary source has been read aloud. After students have read the full passage, have them complete the E-S-P form. The teacher may find it useful to model this strategy and the E-S-P Worksheet for your students.

### Step 4

Next, have your students report out their findings. The teacher will need to have access to digital copies of each these primary sources to display on an overhead projector to the rest of the class. The teacher can have their students report their findings in one of the following ways:

1) Each of the groups can report their findings orally

Or

2) The teacher can have students write their observations on the white board. The teacher can then have each group present what they found in their source.
**Step 5** After students have reported their findings, have students as a group answer the investigative question “What were the strategies used by activists during the Civil Rights Movement, and how did these strategies advance the cause of the Movement?” in one to two five sentence paragraphs. Be sure to tell them to include three references to their two primary sources.

**Step 6** Use the E-S-P Worksheet and the above response as assessments for the day.

**ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE**

**Step 1** Begin the class by showing your students the following YouTube video on sit-ins and non-violent protests. After your students have watched the video, pose the following questions to your students. What strategies did the activists in this video use to combat inequality and segregation? Why do you think they used these strategies? What kind of training and education do you think was required to engage in non-violent activism?

**Step 2** Assign each group the following two sources: [C.T. Vivian oral history interview conducted by Taylor Branch in Atlanta, Georgia][2011] and the CORE Rules for Action [1963]. Each group member will also get an E-S-P Worksheet and the Keywords and Definition Guide.

**Step 3** As a class, read through the two sources using the read aloud teaching strategy. As the teacher, read aloud two to three lines of one of the sources. During this time, your students should be taking notes and marking any words or phrases they have questions about. Pause to allow students time to ask questions or spend some time defining terms you think your students will struggle with. This provides your students a model with which to increase and refine their own reading comprehension skills. Additionally, the teacher should also model the E-S-P Worksheet in response to the passage read aloud.

After modeling the read aloud for your students, have your students continue to read aloud sections from the primary source for the entire class, continuing to take notes and completing their E-S-P. Continue until all of the sources have been read through.

**Step 4** Next, have your students report out on what they found. The teacher will need to have access to digital copies of each these primary sources to display on an overhead projector to the rest of the class. The teacher can have their students report on their findings in one of the following ways:

1) Students can report out on their findings orally as part of a class discussion

Or

2) The teacher can have their students write their observations.. The teacher can then have volunteers present on what they found in their source.

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[1] C.T. Vivian oral history interview conducted by Taylor Branch in Atlanta, Georgia [2011]

Step 5

After your students have reported out on their findings, have your students as a group answer the investigative question “What were the strategies used by activists during the Civil Rights Movement, and how did these strategies advance the cause of the Movement?” in one to two five sentence paragraphs. Be sure to tell them to include three references to their two primary sources.

Step 6

Use the E-S-P Worksheet and the above response as assessments for the day.

Extension Ideas

This lesson plan lends itself to many extension ideas. For teachers looking to explore this subject further, consider the following suggestions:

- Have your students look at modern movements, like Occupy Wall Street, the Me Too Movement, or Black Lives Matter and analyze their strategies. Then have your students compare those strategies with the ones the explored in this lesson plan. What are some similarities between these movements? What are some major differences between these movements? Why do you think that they adopted or did not adopt certain strategies from the Civil Rights Movement?

- One of the sources included in this lesson plan featured an oral interview with a prominent member of the Civil Rights Movement. His story is one part of a larger collection at the Library of Congress, the Civil Rights History Project. Using the “Questions to Ask Your Oral History” worksheet on page 7, have your students explore these collections. What are the stories of those involved in the Civil Rights Movement? In what capacity did they serve? What strategies did they use to advance the fight for civil rights? Do these strategies differ from the ones you saw in this lesson plan? Were the similar? Why do you think they were different or similar? Have your students then create a gallery walk in which they provide pictures, biographical information, and a short statement as to why their activist is important for other students, teachers, and faculty to view.

- The non-violence that would come to define the Civil Rights Movement had roots deep in the teachings of Gandhi. Have your students research Gandhi and his non-violence movement in India. Next, encourage your students to investigate the connections between Gandhi and the United States’ Civil Rights Movement. What kind of connections are there, including people and ideas? What can these connections tell us about the Civil Rights Movement globally? Next, print off a global map and have your students, using strings and pins, map these connections. This visualization should demonstrate the global nature of the Civil Rights Movement. This is also a fantastic opportunity to engage in cross curricular education with World History and Civilization teachers in your school.

- Using the list of names on the CORE brochure, have your students research those activists and their role in the Civil Rights Movement.
Group One: Non-Violence

Guarantees of the Individual to the Group

1. A CORE member will investigate the facts carefully before determining whether or not racial injustice exists in a given situation.

2. A CORE member will seek at all times to understand both the attitude of the person responsible for a policy of racial discrimination and the social situation which engendered the attitude. He will meet the anger of any individual or group in the spirit of good will and creative reconciliation.

3. He will meet the anger of any individual or group in the spirit of good will and creative reconciliation.

4. A CORE member will never use malicious slogans or labels to discredit any opponent.

5. A CORE member will be willing to admit mistakes.

6. He will meet the anger of any individual or group in the spirit of good will and creative reconciliation.

7. A member will never engage in any action in the name of the group except when authorized by the group or one of its action units.

8. A CORE member will make a sincere effort to avoid malice and hatred toward any group or individual.

9. A CORE member will make a sincere effort to avoid malice and hatred toward any group or individual.

10. A CORE member will be willing to admit mistakes.

11. A CORE member will use no malicious slogans or labels to discredit any opponent.

12. A CORE member will seek all times to understand both the attitude of the person responsible for a given situation.

13. A CORE member will investigate the facts carefully before determining whether or not racial
C.T. Vivian oral history interview conducted by Taylor Branch in Atlanta, Georgia [2011]

Reverend Vivian: Jim Lawson is in Nashville and begins to train ministers, begins to train students, and that training of students went on for several months. It was through that that I met Jim, because I had already been in [the] movement in Peoria, Illinois, so I knew Jim and then it ended up that Jim got an apartment right across the street from our apartment. Jim really knew far more about nonviolence than I did, and so I welcomed him because this was what we needed, as much knowledge as we could get of the method. I had done it, but he had the background to be able to teach it in quite a different way. But that's what fit the ministry. To teach the students so they can get it is another thing. Jim was excellent at it.

Interviewer: I never will forget Diane Nash saying that she was a very, very good student and she said that her government professors defined government and politics as a monopoly of violence so how can nonviolence work? And they were doing all these experiments and slapping each other around and everything--she was horrified by it. Did you actually participate in any of those and watch that or having already done it, did you not need to- -?

Reverend Vivian: Yeah, I watched some of it and participated in some of it. I never will forget one of the ministers there, they burned--put out a cigarette on him and it burned a hole, some of the fire fell and burned a hole in his trousers, and he made it very clear that we were going to buy him a new suit.
ARGUMENT

II. THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THIS CASE [BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION]

A. The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States forbids the racial separation herein practiced.

1. The mere unjustified fact of segregation in education is unconstitutional.

2. *Plessy v. Ferguson* is inapplicable to this case, but even under a ‘separate but equal’ interpretation, the constitution is being violated because, the uncontradicted evidence shows that segregation *per se* constitutes an inequality.

C. Even if segregation *per se* is not unconstitutional, the tangible inequalities proved herein deprive plaintiffs of the equal protection for their laws.

*Brief of the Attorneys for the Plaintiffs (Charles E. Bledsoe, Charles Scott, Robert L. Carter, Jack Greenberg, and Thurgood Marshall) in the case of Oliver Brown, . . . delivered in the United States Court for the District of Kansas, June 1951*
WHY THE INTERRACIAL YOUTH MARCH FOR INTEGRATED SCHOOLS?

BY A. PHILLIP RANDOLPH

PURPOSE OF THE MARCH

First of all, because of some disquiet in the nation’s capital concerning the purpose of the March, let me state definitely and positively that this Youth March is wholly non-partisan and is absolutely free from any form of control or influence from communists or communism. It is to our interest not to weaken but to strengthen the hands of the President since we wish him to uphold the school decisions as the law of the land…

What then is its purpose?

To give dramatization to the God-given right of every child, regardless of race or color, religion or national origin or ancestry, to receive an education in the public schools, free from the insult of segregation and discrimination…

To help awaken, inform, arouse and mobilize the people to the realization of the patriotic duty of every American citizen to support the Supreme Court decisions for the desegregation and integration of public schools as the law of the land.

To point out and highlight the American way of life through democracy and Christianity, which seek to tie every boy and girl an equal chance to build character and manhood…

To meet the cold war of half-truths, whole lies, incitement to violence and racial hate of Little Rock Faubism, which is attempting to brainwash the American people into rejecting and nullifying the Supreme Court decisions for the desegregation and integration of public schools, with the cold war of truth, righteousness, non-violence, good-will, love and Americanism…

To indicate that children can learn to unlearn to hate other children and adults, solely because of race, religion, national origin or ancestry, but contact in the schools, by sound science, education and Christian teachings, for contact between children of different races will help children to know the truth; namely that all human beings are created by God and are children of God and are, therefore, fundamentally alike, which will help to make the free from, and immune to, the sickness of human hate…

Why the Interracial Youth March for Integrated Schools, A. Philip Randolph, YMIS, BSCP. Undated 1958
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY AUBREY WILLIS WILLIAMS, EDITED BY ROSA PARKS

WILLIAMS: Well, in other words, is it your expectation that this [Montgomery Bus Boycott] will to continue will carry on undiminished?

KING: Yes.

WILLIAMS: Do you fear that there may be a point out there in which it will begin to give way?

KING: No, I don’t think so. I think it will last until the bus problem is solved and even there I think it will continue. I don’t think it will stop even there. I think it will continue. My impression is that the community has been, the Negro community as whole has been so fed up and pushed back to the point that there is this new response in terms of courage and the fear has gone and it will never return again. The Negro will not be content anymore with this negative reconciliation, this negative peace that has characterized his life so many years. I think that history will bear me out here, that once oppressed people rise up against their oppression, there is no stopping point short of full equality. That has been proven throughout the world by people revolting against colonial and imperial powers. The difficulty is to get oppressed people to rise up and take a stand. But once they start there is no stopping point and I think it a vain hope for the reactionaries in the white race to feel that they can fear the Negro into a subservient position. That day will never return again. The Negro will never accept, passively accept, injustice and inequality anymore...
CONSTITUTION AND BI-LAWS OF THE MONTGOMERY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

PREAMBLE

Ultimately the local community is the proving ground for the social progress of the nation. Every community has the basic potential for the solution of social problems and the implementation of legal decisions which re-define the ideals set forth by the founders of this nation. Enveloped in a world of war complex and constantly geared for bloody conflict as a means of settling human differences, it is not easy to persuade the masses, where difference are deeply entrenched. Spiritual and moral forces are the only means through lasting settlements of social problems can be realized. It becomes the responsibility of an organized force to sensitize a mass conscience to the responsibility in the fulfillment of the highest ideals of human society.

…the Montgomery Improvement Association directs a course of action in an effort to improve the status of all people who are deprived any of the blessings of the society in which they live. The organization shall teach people to discipline themselves for ordeals that may arise because of persistent efforts to make real and practical the Christian and democratic way of life; and, that violence is not the answer to personality or group differences.

Montgomery Improvement Association Constitution
JOURNEY OF RECONCILIATION

AN ACCOUNT OF THE TEST TRIPS

The report of what happened on the test trips should be much more complete than is possible in this brief report. A later report will have to fill in what is lacking here both in description and in analysis.

1. WASHINGTON, D.C., TO RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, APRIL 9TH

No difficulties on this leg of the trip. On both the Trailways and the Greyhound the Negroes in our group were seated up front, and the whites in back. Very little notice was paid to this by the passengers, and the bus drivers said nothing. Other passengers tended to cross the color line, too. A white couple sat on the back seat of the Greyhound with two Negroes. A Negro woman sat beside a young white man in the center of the bus when she could have taken a vacant seat by a Negro man. Rustin gave his seat, third from front, to an elderly Negro woman, and then sat by a white lad directly behind the driver. Nothing was said.

4. PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA, TO DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA APRIL 11TH

On the Greyhound to Durham there was no arrest, but two attempts at arrest. Peck and Rustin seated up front. About ten miles out of Petersburg the driver told Rustin to move. When Rustin refused, the driver said he would ‘attend to that at Blackstone.’ However, at the bus station in Blackstone, after consultation with other drivers, the bus went on to Clarksville. There the group changed buses. No further incident occurred until Oxford, N.C., was reached. There the driver got the police. The police refused to make the arrest, while the bus waited for forty-five minutes. Other passengers waiting to get on at Oxford were not permitted to do so during this wait. However, a middle-aged Negro schoolteacher from the community was permitted to board, to plead with Rustin to move: ‘Please move. Don’t do this. You’ll reach your destination either in front or in back. What different does it make?’ Rustin explained his reason for not moving. Other Negro passengers were strong in their support of Rustin, one of them threatening to sue the bus company for being delayed. When Durham was reached without arrest, the Negro schoolteacher pled with Peck not to use his name in connection with the incident at Oxford. ‘It will hurt me in the community. I’ll never do that again.’
SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Report on Meeting Friday, May 26, 1961

NOTE: Meeting called by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to explore developments related to the Freedom Ride and to consider action based on long and short-range objectives.

LONG-RANGE OBJECTIVE: To continue the Freedom Ride program until safe, secure interstate travel can be enjoyed throughout the nation by all citizens and other persons legally entitled to this constitutional privilege.

IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE: To intensify the Freedom Ride so that national public attention can be brought to examine the denial of legal rights of interstate travelers by certain citizens and public officials in the hard-core Southern states. To create a committee which will be empowered to organize, coordinate, schedule and otherwise implement the travel of Freedom Riders. To meet the issues and bring a strong ruling from the Attorney General in clearly establishing the right of interstate travelers (possibly) through an order to the Interstate Commerce Commission. To fill jails of Montgomery and Jackson in order to keep a sharp image of the issues before the public.
KEY WORDS AND DEFINITION GUIDE

CORE Rules for Action

Activist: A person who works to bring about political or social change.

Authorized: Having permission.

CORE: The Congress Of Racial Equality. Founded in 1942, CORE became one of the leading and most important civil rights group in the Civil Rights Movement.

Discrimination: Unjust and unfair treatment of people based on race, age, or gender.

Engendered: To cause or give rise to.

Injustice: Lack of fairness or justice

Malice/Malicious: Intending or intended to do harm.

Retaliate: Make an attack in return for a similar attack

C.T. Vivian Oral History Interview Conducted by Taylor Branch in Atlanta, Georgia

C.T. Vivian: Born July 28th, 1924. Vivian is a minister, author, and close friend of Martin Luther King Jr during the Civil Rights Movement.

Diane Nash: Born May 15th, 1938. Nash is a civil rights activist and a leader of the Civil Rights Movement student wing. Her campaigns were the most successful of the era, and she participated in the Nashville Sit-Ins and in the Freedom Rides.

Horrified: Filled with horror or terror.

Jim Lawson: Born September 22nd, 1928. Lawson is an activist and professor. He deeply believed in nonviolence. During the Civil Rights Movement, he served as a mentor to activists that participated in the Nashville Student Movement.

Monopoly: A company or group that has complete control over a commodity or service.

Reconciliation: The action of creating friendly relations.