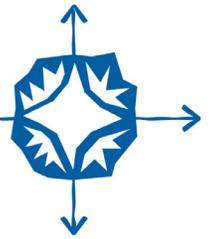


NORTH STAR



LESSON

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject: History and Social Studies

Time needed: 2 to 4 class periods

MATERIALS

The *North Star* Video is highly recommended, but not required. This lesson uses the *North Star* segment about the March on Washington titled “Minnesotans March”

Copies of handouts and primary sources

NORTH STAR CLASSROOM MATERIALS

MARCH ON WASHINGTON: MINNESOTANS MARCH

OVERVIEW

This lesson asks students to research the kind of work required to create a movement and to theorize about how the March on Washington affected people. As a final product, students create an outline for promoting social change today and attempt to convince their classmates to join their “movement.”

BACKGROUND

During the 1950s and 1960s, a series of events focused the attention of the nation on the Civil Rights movement. Though the 1954 Supreme Court case of *Brown v. Board of Education* officially banned segregation in schools, many Southern schools continued the practice. Just a year later, the gruesome murder of 14-year old Emmett Till shocked blacks and whites and motivated a young generation of activist. That same year, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white person and started the Montgomery bus boycott. In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent U.S. Army troops to desegregate the schools in Little Rock, Arkansas. In 1960, a group of black students sat down at the Woolworth’s counter in Greensboro, North Carolina and refused to leave until they were served. In 1961, young Freedom Riders boarded buses in the South in an effort to stop segregated busing. They were met with arrests and beatings in several towns.

By 1963, when the March on Washington was being organized, Americans of all races were motivated to campaign to pass the Civil Rights Act. In a one-day event, about 230,000 people arrived in Washington to rally in support of passing the bill. Their efforts were successful, and the bill became law in 1964.

Many of the March participants from Minnesota continued their fight for civil rights long after the event. They formed “The March on Washington Committee,” and successfully pressed every one of the state’s elected officials to support crucial Civil Rights legislation. They also formed groups to combat local issues and took part in national events, such as the African Liberation Day March of 1972.

The Civil Rights Movement inspired other minority groups to fight for their own rights as well. In the decades following, women, American Indians, gays, the disabled, and others used techniques that the Civil Rights movement created to demand legal and social equality.

For more information about events during this time period, see the *North Star* website's timeline at <http://www.tpt.org/northstar/Timeline.html>

For suggested resources on the March on Washington and this era, see the *North Star* website's Resources section at <http://www.tpt.org/northstar/Resources.html>

For background on Minnesotans who marched, visit the March on Washington section of the *North Star* website at http://www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingChange.html?quick_link=march_on_washington



OBJECTIVES

- To identify the grassroots techniques of organizers of the March on Washington and analyze their effectiveness.
- To identify how the March on Washington inspired activists, and theorize what similar movements are happening today.
- To develop a preliminary approach for leading a grassroots effort to change something today.

A NOTE ON DIVERSITY

The final activity for this lesson asks students to brainstorm and develop a grassroots effort to address a modern social or political problem. Before brainstorming, ask students to reconsider Josie Johnson's words on fighting for causes in which you believe. Younger students may be tempted to address injustices that are highly local or personal (such as school regulations). As a teacher, you may want to balance the appeal of focusing on such issues (high student motivation) with the unintended but unappealing comparison of the Civil Rights issues with the woes of poor school lunches. Challenge students to brainstorm issues that are relevant to them *and* significant in a broader sense.

CONTENT CONNECTIONS

This lesson fits well within the teaching of civil rights and modern activism. Many students have parents or grandparents (or neighbors) who remember the March on Washington. After students have viewed or read the interview segments, ask them to tape record or videotape their elders as they interview them about their memories of this era. Discuss how recent political movements have used techniques that are similar to what activists used during the Civil Rights Era.

CONNECTIONS TO MINNESOTA ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES

United States History Grades 9-12; I. U.S. History; N. Post- War United States, 1945-1972, “The student will understand the changes in legal definitions of individual rights in the 1960s and 1970s and the social movements that prompted them,”; IV. Historical Skills, grades 9-12; C. Historical Inquiry, “The student will analyze historical evidence and draw conclusions.”

INTRODUCTION

Connecting to Students’ Experiences:

Lead a discussion with students about their own experiences organizing people. Have they ever organized a group of people to work together? What was hard or easy about that experience? Are there issues today that students would like to change? Why are people more or less likely to join together to form a movement? While they learn about the March on Washington, ask them to keep in mind what issues they would like to affect and how they might go about doing it.

Connecting to Modern Activism

Ask students to brainstorm the differences between social and political changes that are led by grassroots activists or top-down leaders. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each type of change? Which method is more likely to effectively convince people to change their behaviors or attitudes? Which method is easier? What do you know about the Civil Rights movement? Why was the Civil Rights movement led by grassroots activists and not those in power? What modern issues are being debated in the news now, and how do the different groups involved in those debates get their opinions heard?

PROCEDURE

This lesson works best after viewing the film segment. Divide the class into small groups, and give each group one of the primary sources. Ask the students to use their student worksheets to help guide their analysis (you may want to give them fresh copies of the worksheet for each source, or have them record their findings in a notebook). As they finish analyzing each source, move the source around so that every group gets a chance to analyze each source. As you move about the room, use the following questions to help guide each group’s analysis, or after the groups are done, use the questions below to guide a class discussion of their findings.

PRIMARY SOURCE 1 ANALYSIS:**JOSIE JOHNSON SPEECH EXCERPT**

As students read about Josie Johnson and the other local activists, remind them that many of the Civil Right activist were very young at the time they were involved in the movement. You may want to discuss what groups are more likely to be active in social movements. Watch or read through her interview segment and ask the following questions. Video segments of this speech are viewable on the website. To watch it, visit the address http://www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingChange.html?quick_link=march_on_washington and click on “Organizers.”

- Have you ever had a moment that you didn’t know was important to you until after it happened? If you could go back to that moment and relive it, what would you want to note carefully or do differently?
- Would you like to “go back” and participate in any moments from history? Do you think the participants in those historical moments know they were making history?
- Are there causes that you believe in and would actively defend, no matter what others thought?
- How do Josie Johnson’s words make you reconsider your actions?

PRIMARY SOURCE 2 ANALYSIS:**MARJORIE WYNN TURNER SPEECH EXCERPT**

Marjorie Wynn Turner played an important role in the organization of the local delegation to the march on Washington. Watch or read through her speech and discuss the following questions with your class. Video segments of this speech are viewable on the website at http://www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingChange.html?quick_link=march_on_washington Click on “Organizers.”

- How did Turner learn about the March on Washington? What inspired her to join this movement?
- What were the main challenges that Turner faced?
- How many different steps did Turner take to get people to the March on Washington? Can you outline those steps?
- Why was it important to have representatives from groups such as labor and churches?
- If you had been Turner, which parts of organizing a delegation would have been hardest for you? Why?
- What are the qualities that Turner has that make her an effective grassroots leader?

PRIMARY SOURCE 3 ANALYSIS: MATTHEW LITTLE SPEECH EXCERPT

Matthew Little was the central organizer for the Minnesota contingent to the March on Washington. Watch or read through his speech and discuss the following questions with your class. Segments of this speech are viewable on the website. To watch it, visit http://www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingChange.html?quick_link=march_on_washington and click on “Organizers.”

- What inspired Matthew Little at the March on Washington?
- What did Little do once he had returned to Minnesota to help the Civil Rights movement?
- What are the similarities and differences between Little and Turner?
- How much did Little and Turner affect the Civil Rights movement in Minnesota? Would the movement have succeeded without them?

FINAL ACTIVITY AND EVALUATION

Break students into small groups, and ask them to consider the multiple primary sources they have reviewed and brainstorm some of the social or political problems that still exist today. Ask groups to choose one of the problems to focus on, and to create a presentation that will convince their classmates to join their movement to address this problem. A good presentation will:

- Describe what the problem is.
- Explain why people have not yet resolved this problem.
- Describe whose opinions need to change to solve this problem (local people, state or federal leaders).
- Explain how you would change those people’s opinions.
- Be creative, clear, carefully prepared, and convincing.

On the final day of the lesson, expand this lesson beyond the theoretical. Ask the groups to present their issues and campaign ideas to the entire class. Tell the students that it is their task to convince the class that this issue is worthwhile and that their campaign plans are sound and effective. Take a vote to see which issue and campaign is the most convincing, and give the winning group the remaining time to assign a grassroots tasks to each student for homework that night. The following day, check in with students to review what progress they made. What were the barriers that they faced in completing their tasks? How would those barriers decrease or increase if they were older? How would this be different if they were Civil Rights leaders? What are the most important and most difficult jobs of grassroots organizers?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Many students may have grandparents or other family members who can recall the March on Washington. Ask students to interview their elders about the experiences and memories of this event, and share the stories the following day. These types of assignments work particularly well when assigned over holidays when families typically gather.



**PRIMARY SOURCE 1:
JOSIE JOHNSON SPEECH EXCERPT**

Recorded at a Civil Rights reunion of elders who marched on Washington DC in 1963
March 17, 2003

Josie Johnson: *You don't know that you are participating in something that is going to be significant. You do something because you feel you must do it and you feel committed to the cause....*

We need to reengage ourselves, and recommit ourselves to what is right and just, and we must be proud of that, and we must stand forthrightly for it.

➔ **PRIMARY SOURCE 2 ANALYSIS:
MARJORIE WYNN TURNER SPEECH EXCERPT**

Recorded at a Civil Rights reunion of elders who marched on Washington DC in 1963
March 17, 2003

Marjorie Wynn Turner: My name is Marjorie Wynn Turner. The march started in my living room. After watching the water hoses and dogs on the TV every night, one evening I turned to my husband – I had seen a little blurb in the paper about the march – I said I think we should go to that. He said okay. Well, then, I didn't know what to do, so I called Doc Johnson, who lived across the alley from me. And doc came over, and I said Doc, I think we should go, and he said, well, get some people together. I called Margaret Bitten Jones, Margaret called Matt, Matt called Sam Richardson.

We got together about a dozen people and we began over the weeks to put the march together. As we got a little closer to going we realized we were going to have to have money for a bus, or two buses- but we had none. Then Doc Johnson said "You can't take three days going and three days coming back, you'll have to charter a plane." And we still had no money. He said "I'll write a check for \$6,000 to charter the plane, and you guys go get the money together by Monday, 'cause I've got to cover the check."

On Saturday morning we took some brown manila envelopes, and we fanned out from Lake Street to Minnehaha Parkway, from Nicollet to Chicago Avenue. Both sides of the street, we walked, carrying our brown envelopes and asking people for nickels, dimes, quarters, whatever, and by Sunday afternoon we had \$6,000 to pay for the plane.

Then we needed to get together the group of people that we were going to take on the march, and we wanted a cross section, from labor to churches—all the clergy. We needed them because everyone said this march is going to be a failure, we were going to be in trouble. So we really worked, everybody pulled somebody out and we settled on the final 43 that were part of the official delegation that went to the march on Washington.

But it took a lot of work, a lot of dedication, and a lot of love, but we did it.

**PRIMARY SOURCE 3 ANALYSIS:
MATTHEW LITTLE SPEECH EXCERPT**

Recorded at a Civil Rights reunion of elders who marched on Washington DC in 1963
March 17, 2003

Matthew Little: *There is one more thing that I want to mention, that in addition to the march itself, is the impact that it had upon us as marchers. I remember we decided, right then, that this was not going to be the end, as far as we were concerned. As a matter of fact, three of the speakers at the march had indicated for you “Go back home and do your own thing”....*

So what we did afterward; we formed our committee, again operating through the churches. We sent letters. I remember over at [Marge Wynne Turner’s] house again one night, we set down and we addressed letter to churches—five hundred of them—all over the state, urging them to urge their representatives to support the Civil Rights Bill. And we did other things, held press conferences.

**MARCH ON WASHINGTON:
MINNESOTANS MARCH**
Student Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____



STEP 1: ANALYZE THE SOURCES

1. What is the source? Describe what the source is, who created it, when it was created, and where it was created.

2. What does this source tell you about how people organize movements? What does it take to get people motivated and organized? What are some of the biggest obstacles? What kind of character do organization leaders need?

3. Are there similar people or movements today? What are they? How are they similar or different?



STEP 2: WRITE A RECIPE FOR A MOVEMENT

With your group, brainstorm a list of social or political problems that you feel need to be changed. Choose one of the problems to focus on, and create a presentation that will convince classmates to join your movement and address the problem. A good presentation will:

- Describe what the problem is.
- Explain why people have not yet resolved this problem.
- Describe whose opinions need to change to solve this problem (local people, state or federal leaders).
- Explain how you will change those people's opinions.
- Be creative, clear, carefully prepared, and convincing.