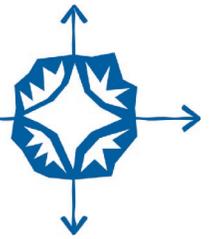


# NORTH STAR



## LESSON

Grade Level: 6-8

Subject: History and Social Studies

Time needed: 1 to 2 class periods

### MATERIALS

The *North Star* Video is highly recommended, but not required. This lesson uses the *North Star* segment about the Duluth lynchings titled “Presence of the Past”

Copies of handouts and primary sources

## NORTH STAR CLASSROOM MATERIALS

### DULUTH LYNCHINGS: PRESENCE OF THE PAST

#### OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students analyze how individuals and groups have responded to the Duluth tragedy throughout the years – in silence or with apology. Through this, students develop a more sophisticated understanding of their own responsibilities for a group’s behavior. In the final project, students develop a proposal for addressing a different historical wrong.

#### BACKGROUND

The period around 1920 was a tense time of racial conflict in both the North and the South. After the end of Reconstruction, mobs in the South used lynching to enforce strict racial segregation and oppression. In northern states like Minnesota, discrimination and suspicion grew as native and immigrant whites feared that migrating black workers would take their jobs or move into their neighborhoods.

After World War I, many blacks returned home hopeful that their efforts to secure democracy in Europe would entitle them to greater rights and better treatment at home. Unfortunately, this was not the case. In Duluth, suspicions and fears against “outsiders” and blacks was high. During the 1920s, U.S. Steel recruited southern black laborers to work in the steel mills, most likely as a way to prevent locals from forming unions or gaining power. Actions like these further fueled white intolerance, and the events of June, 1920 were fed by deep racist frustrations.

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 Duluth Lynchings and this era, see the *North Star* website’s Resources section at <http://www.tpt.org/northstar/Resources.html>

For background on the lynchings, visit the Duluth Lynchings section of the *North Star* website at [http://www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingHome.html?quick\\_link=duluth\\_lynchings](http://www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingHome.html?quick_link=duluth_lynchings)

## OBJECTIVES

- To review how people in Duluth and Minnesota have discussed and viewed the lynchings since 1920.
- To recognize the central benefits of individual and group reconciliations, identify a modern grievance issue, and develop an appropriate remonstrance.

## A NOTE ON DIVERSITY

This lesson encourages students to consider and question the responsibility that individuals and groups have to apologize and atone for past grievances. It is important to stress that *individuals* are not held responsible for historic injustices, but that groups and societies can only form positive futures by acknowledging past errors and resolving to prevent similar actions in the future. As a teacher, help lead students away from simplistic assumptions and arguments like “all white people are descendants of slave owners” or “all Germans are responsible for the Holocaust.” By initially focusing on smaller, more personal experiences, you can help prime students to acknowledge their own roles in past injustices, empower them to address those past issues, and prevent future wrongs. Keep the spirit of the conversation objective and pragmatic by focusing on the general nature of apologies, and not the specific wrongdoings.

### Please Note

The documentary’s depiction of the lynching is moving, and the photograph of the lynching is shown repeatedly. You may need to prepare students for this, as some may have strong reactions, particularly students who are from regions affected by war and violence. For more information and support on these issues, contact the Center for Victims of Torture at <http://www.dvt.org>.

## CONTENT CONNECTIONS

This lesson fits well within the teaching of the Great Migration and the expansion of racism and the Ku Klux Klan. Help draw parallels to historical wrongs such as apartheid in South Africa, “Ethnic Cleansing” in Serbia, Japanese Internment during World War II, and Rwanda’s civil war in 1994.

## CONNECTIONS TO MINNESOTA ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Minnesota History Grades 4-8; II. Minnesota History, F. World Wars I and II, and the Interwar period, 1914-1945, “The student will know and understand the impact on Minnesota of World War I and World War II, as well as the social and economic changes of the 1920s and the 1930s;”; Minnesota History G. Post-World War II to the Present, “The student will know and understand Minnesota’s role in the major social, economic and political changes, both national and international, in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century through the present and analyze the impact of those changes;”; Historical Skills grades 4-8, IV Historical Skills, B. Historical Resources, “The student will begin to use historical resources;”; C. Historical Inquiry, “The student will analyze historical evidence and draw conclusions;” C. Historical Inquiry, “The student will present and explain the findings of a research project.”



## INTRODUCTION

### Developing a Shared Understanding of “Apology”

Throughout this lesson, we use the word “apology” to signify a sense of remorse, a desire for reconciliation, and a commitment to work to prevent the problem in the future. Students (particularly older students and adults) have different reactions to the word “apology,” so you may want to spend some time developing a shared understanding of its meaning. Ask students to define the words apology, reconciliation, reparation, atonement, appeasement, and resolution. Ask students to use each word appropriately in a sentence. Discuss the different internal significances of apologies. For example, when a child says “I’m sorry” they are often sorry that they “got caught.” An older person is sorry that they hurt someone’s feelings. Still, and even more mature person regrets not only the consequences of their actions, but the motivations and scenario that led to the action.

### Connecting to Students’ Experiences

Ask students to think about apologies, and to create lists that they will keep private to themselves. Give students two minutes to brainstorm a list of moments when someone apologized to them. Give students another two minutes to brainstorm a list of moments when they apologized to someone for something they did wrong. Give students a final two minutes to make a list of moments when have done wrong, and have not yet apologized for their act. *Please note:* Do *not* ask students to make a list of moments when others failed to apologize to them—that is likely to shift the focus away from personal responsibility and may encourage feelings of anger, resentment, and possibly accusations.

Ask the class to look at their lists and see if there are any patterns. Which list is longest? Which is shortest? Are friends or family members more likely to apologize to you for wrongs than strangers? Is it easier to apologize for some things and not others? Are any group apologies on their lists? Are people more or less likely to apologize when they did something wrong as a group?

## PROCEDURE

This lesson works best when taught after viewing the film segment. Divide the class into four 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:****QUOTES FROM *MANKATO DAILY FREE PRESS*, JUNE 18, 1920**

After the lynchings, newspapers across the state reported accounts of the supposed crime and lynchings. They also editorialized the event, opining on whether the lynchings were justified or not. Though most papers in the state deplored the lynchings, others, such as the *Mankato Daily Free Press*, argued that the lynchings were justified. Note that the vocabulary and style of this source may be difficult for some students to understand. You may want to analyze the *Mankato Daily Free Press* source together as a class.

- What is this document? When was it created? Who created it? Why was it created? What is it about?
- How many different rationales does the *Mankato Daily Free Press* offer to justify the lynchings? Can you make a list of them all? What is the validity of each of them?
- The writers of this editorial believed that the crime had occurred. Do you think their opinions would have changed if they knew the crime evidence was so flimsy?
- Would the writers of this editorial think an apology to the families or memories of lynching victims would be appropriate? Why or why not?

**PRIMARY SOURCE 2 ANALYSIS:****FRED BELL ORAL HISTORY**

African American Fred Bell moved to Duluth in 1923, when he was just 21 years old. He came to Duluth from Texas for a job with the U.S. Steel Corporation, where he worked for forty years. Bell remarks on how the lynchings inspired fear among black Duluthians. Discuss the following questions with your students. For an additional example of a reaction by a black Minnesotan to the lynchings, hear part of Ethel Ray Nance's interview online. Visit [www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingChange.html?quick\\_link=renaissance\\_women](http://www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingChange.html?quick_link=renaissance_women) and click on "Reaction."

- What is this document? When was it created? Who created it? Why was it created? What is it about?
- What was the reaction of some blacks in Duluth to the lynchings?
- Given that Fred Bell came to Duluth three years after the lynchings, how valuable is he as a source?
- What made the blacks in Superior willing to return to Duluth?
- Do you think apologies from Dondino or Duluth society would have comforted Fred Bell or the blacks that he mentions? Why or why not?

**PRIMARY SOURCE 3 ANALYSIS:****LOUIS DONDINO'S COMMENTS**

On Friday, February 4, 1921, Louis Dondino was committed to prison. In the court records from that day, the state's attorney Mason Forbes commented on the case. "By the Court" shows the "Q" question of the judge, Bert Fesler. The "A" answer is Dondino's. This document shows Dondino's only known apology.

- What is this document? When was it created? Who created it? Why was it created? What is it about?
- What is Dondino sorry about? How does referring to his actions as "this trouble" affect the strength of his apology?

**PRIMARY SOURCE 4 ANALYSIS:****WARREN REED EXTRACT**

At the unveiling of the Clayton-Jackson-McGhie memorial, Warren Reed gave an eloquent explanation of his reasons for appearing at the memorial and offering an apology. Reed first learned about his great-grandfather's role in the Duluth lynchings when he was researching his family genealogy online. The Clayton-Jackson-McGhie committee invited him to be the keynote speaker at the unveiling of the memorial. Reed's words offer a great approach to thinking about the use and importance of apologizing for past injustices. Discuss with your students:

- What is this document? When was it created? Who created it? Why was it created? What is it about?
- Why does Warren Reed want to talk about the lynchings in Duluth?
- What responsibility does Warren Reed place on himself? For what issues does he not claim responsibility?
- What is "true shame" to Warren Reed? Do you agree?
- Do Warren Reed's apologies to the memories of Clayton, Jackson, and McGhie make anything better? For whom are Warren Reed's apologies really intended?
- Since Warren Reed has apologized for his great-grandfather's actions, are any other apologies needed?

 **FINAL ACTIVITY AND EVALUATION****Organize a Service Learning Project**

As a class, brainstorm a service learning project that connects to righting a historical wrong. Examples include a food or clothing drive for migrant workers, who are often ignored economically and socially, or campaigning for a historical marker that honors a forgotten group or historical event.

**Connect to Students' Experiences**

Ask students to review their brainstormed list of moments when they themselves had not apologized for their actions, and ask them to choose one of those moments to address. Ask students to develop a strategy for making an apology for that action. Should they prefer, students can deal with past historical injustices that have not been adequately addressed. Ask students to describe what form their apology could take – spoken words, a formal memorial, or an action. Should you choose this approach, remember to keep the spirit of the conversation objective and pragmatic to help prevent students from assuming personal responsibility for all past injustices.

**EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

Students may be interested to learn how other communities or nations have dealt with past injustices. You may want to ask students to research South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation efforts, the U.S. Government's reparations to Japanese-American internees, or the many apologies and efforts connected to atrocities committed during World War II.

## PRIMARY SOURCE 1:

QUOTES FROM *MANKATO DAILY FREE PRESS*, JUNE 18, 1920**The Duluth Tragedy**

The people of Duluth appear to express a greater amount of indignation over the lynching of three negroes in that city than they do over the terrible outrage that caused the stringing up of the black fiends. The city of Duluth is not disgraced. There have been lynchings in other cities and the towns survived the chock, Lynch law is to be deplored, but the crime which led up to the rule of the mob is more deplorable.

The city of Duluth can recover from any stigma that may be attached to the quick hanging of the negroes. A few years hence people will have forgotten the incident – but the unfortunate girl – what of her? She is the one to be considered. Her fate is far worse than that which has befallen the city.

And it must be understood that white men – men of blood – will not sit idly by when black rascals pounce like fiends on white women. Those of the pulpits may deplore and preach against the acts of the mob, but in such instances the anger of the mob knows no restraint. They are out to avenge foul deeds.

Mad dogs are shot dead without ceremony. Beasts in human shape are entitled to but scant consideration. The law gives them by far too much advantage. Their victims are humiliated in the courts and their names dragged through the mire by conscienceless lawyers who have no hearts and show no pity.

Referring to this phase of the situation, the St. Paul Pioneer Press said: “The unfortunate victim of such an assault, if she survives, must undergo intolerably humiliating examinations before court and jury, and must endure legal bickering among attorneys over the most abhorrent details. In many previous instances of lynch law it has been made perfectly clear that a desire to shield the victim from a legal inquisition little worse than the crime itself, has been partly responsible for mob vengeance.” That explains lynch law in a nutshell.



**PRIMARY SOURCE 2 ANALYSIS:  
FRED BELL ORAL HISTORY**

Interviewed July 9, 1975

Fred Bell: *Now, when this lynching happened [local African Americans] were really afraid. Now, I can remember this, that they were so afraid, a lot of them from Duluth went over to Superior side, left their homes. They were so afraid to stay in their homes. And I was told some of them hit the bay out there and went right across, they didn't look for dry land, they were so afraid. They kept themselves hidden from being seen, you know, out in the streets. They were afraid to go out. They were even afraid to go out. But later the laws of the city here and the different officials said there wouldn't be any more lynchings. They kind of got them where they would have more confidence that they could come back to their homes. But they were really shook up there at that time.*

→ PRIMARY SOURCE 3 ANALYSIS:  
LOUIS DONDINO'S COMMENTS

Minnesota State Prison (Stillwater, Minn.)  
Louis Dondino: Case No. 6614, February 1921.  
Commitment Papers.

Mr. FORBES: The facts, of course, sufficiently appear from the testimony which will accompany the commitment, but I do think it is unfair to call the court's attention to the fact that this verdict was returned on the 10th of September, 1920, and that the defendant has been in the county jail since that time, now nearly five months. This, of course, is not due to any fault of mine or the court, but is entirely due to the wishes of Mr. Dondino and his friends, and his counsel. But I would like to recommend, and I hope the court will endorse the recommendation, when the matter comes before the Board of Parole that they take into consideration in handling the Dondino case, in whatever institution he shall be sent by the court, - to take into consideration these months of service in the county jail. This man never had a criminal record and has been a good living, decent citizen in this community until he got into trouble this time.

By the Court:

Q. Have you anything more to say, Mr. Dondino,     A. I am awfully sorry, Your Honor, that I got into this trouble. I never was in trouble before.

S e n t e n c e :

It is the judgment and sentence of the court that you, Louis Dondino, as punishment for the crime of Riot, of which you have been duly convicted, be taken by the sheriff of this county to the Minne-

➔ **PRIMARY SOURCE 4 ANALYSIS:  
WARREN REED EXTRACT**

From Warren Reed's keynote speech at the Duluth Lynching Memorial's dedication  
October 10, 2003

Warren Reed: *When the committee asked me to speak today, I immediately agreed. . . .*

*Again, as a family, we've been supportive of the project as soon as I discovered it. One of the risks inherent in digging into any of our histories is the possibility of discovering something that is, at the very minimum, unexpected. At worst, what we might find, indeed, might be deeply disturbing. From the beginning, though, it was never about personal shame, but the anatomy of such shame. A synthesis of the events and relationships in our lives that spoke to the denial and cloaking of an event in our family's past that was truly horrific.*

*At this point, we are determined to bring the event full circle, to demonstrate that whatever fear or hatred sparked that incident, did not continue in a cycle. As a family, we have used the discovery of this as a tool for continued discovery of ourselves. This means our past, present and future selves and the lesson that true shame is not in the discovery of a terrible event such as this, but in the refusal to acknowledge and learn from that event.*

*It's been said that true remorse is not just a regret over consequence, it's a regret over motive. Since Louis Dondino was one representative of the thousands of people that night, it was upon his shoulders to take some responsibility for the events that took place. I don't know that he ever did that beyond his short prison sentence, but I like to think that in his own heart he did. Nonetheless, I stand here as a representative of his legacy, and I willingly place that responsibility on my shoulders.*

*For Elmer Jackson, I am sorry that unreason and bigotry disallowed you the right to prove your innocence and deprived you the opportunity to create a legacy of your choosing. For Elias Clayton, ignorance and self-righteousness were the fuel for your untimely and undignified death. For this, I offer my deepest apologies. For Isaac McGhee, I give you my heartfelt apology. Fear can never be used as an excuse for hysteria, and passage of time can never be used as a reason for ignoring an injustice.*

*We will never know the destinies and legacies that these men would have chosen for themselves had they been allowed to make that choice, but I know this: Their existence, however brief and cruelly interrupted, is forever woven into a legacy of my own life. My son will continue to be raised in an environment of tolerance, understanding and humility now with even more pertinence than before. I would like to extend my great appreciation to the committee for their invitation today and to you for your presence. Thank you.*

**DULUTH LYNCHINGS  
PRESENCE OF THE PAST  
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. How were the creators of this source affected by the lynchings?** Did they think that the lynchings were justified?

**3. What does this source tell you about the nature of apologies?** Would the creators of this source think an apology for the lynchings would be appropriate?

**STEP 2: RECONCILE THE PAST AND THE PRESENT**

Discuss what you have learned about the nature of apologies and reconciliation with the other students in your group. Think about moments in the past when you have failed to apologize for your actions, and choose one event for which you would like to make amends. Brainstorm and make a list of all the ways you could try to make up for this past action, and choose to follow through with one of them. Good luck with your efforts! Remember that it takes a lot of courage to apologize.