

LESSON PLAN
Navigating Jim Crow:
The Chitlin' Circuit, the “5” Royales and the Birmingham Children’s March

by Elizabeth Carlson, Charles Montague, and Kathy White

Lesson Summary: The music of the “5” Royales on the Chitlin' Circuit reflects many of the racial challenges and tensions in the South during the 1950s and '60s. The Birmingham Children’s March (also called “The Birmingham Children’s Crusade”) impacted the lives of the “5” Royales and life in the South both in the short-term and long-term.

Historical Overview: From 1877 until 1964, many states and cities, especially in the South, were governed by Jim Crow laws. These laws provided a separate and often inferior life for African Americans. It was risky for African Americans to protest the demeaning treatment they experienced in their daily lives. Those who wanted to had to navigate with caution. African Americans had to weigh the desire for change with the need to survive. Protest could put people’s careers, and possibly their lives, at risk.

In the 1950s and '60s, the pioneering R&B group the “5” Royales from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, toured the segregated Chitlin' Circuit during the days of Jim Crow. In 1958, they released one of their most popular songs, “The Slummer the Slum.” Some music historians and listeners have viewed this song as a subtle protest of the Jim Crow system.

In 1963, by chance, the “5” Royales drove through Birmingham, Alabama, during the Birmingham Children’s March. Around the world, television viewers watched the bloody scene the “5” Royales watched first-hand: police and firefighters turning their dogs and fire hoses on peaceful child marchers. Images of injured and screaming children shocked millions, turning the tides of the Civil Rights Movement and the “5” Royales’ careers.

Historical Themes:

1. **Desire for Change and the Need to Survive:** During the Jim Crow period, it was risky for African Americans to protest. Those who decided to needed to navigate carefully. African Americans needed to weigh the desire for change with the risks to their safety.
2. **Subtle and Overt Forms of Protest:** This lesson compares the “5” Royales’ unorganized, subtle protest to the more organized, overt protest of Civil Rights activists, specifically the child protesters of the Birmingham Child March.
3. **Intended/Unintended Consequences of Defeating Jim Crow:** After the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed the Jim Crow laws, African Americans gained as a whole, but for many musicians on the Chitlin' Circuit, including the “5” Royales, their musical careers collapsed. Successes of the Civil Rights Movement, including the 1963 Birmingham Children’s March, led to the legal end of Jim Crow, but now that African Americans had more options where they could go for entertainment, many Chitlin' Circuit venues lost patrons and closed.

Lesson Objective: Students will read critically and analyze written and video excerpts from key documents and events during the Jim Crow era. Students will understand various strategies used

by both musicians and marchers and will analyze the intended and unintended consequences for African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement.

Lesson Length: 90-minutes

Grade Level: High School - African American Studies, American History; Civics Literacy; 20th Century Civil Liberties
Middle School - 8th Grade Social Studies

STEP-BY-STEP PROCEDURE:

The lesson is divided into these main parts: Jim Crow Laws, the Chitlin' Circuit, “The Slummer the Slum,” and the Birmingham Children’s March. In all discussions and written answers, be sure students provide evidence for their arguments.

As students enter the class, play “The Slummer the Slum” in the background.

Hook: Play “The Slummer the Slum,” pose the hook question, and discuss as a whole group. (See “Cheat Sheet” in the Lesson Plan Supplement.)

Part I: Introduction & Division into Small Groups

- Divide the class into critical thinking groups of three to four students. For most of the lesson, students will work in these groups.
- Give each student a packet of the **Student Materials**.
- Introduce the lesson

Materials:

For the lesson introduction, see short “teacher script” in teacher Lesson Supplement.

Part II: Jim Crow Laws (whole group discussion; no writing)

(Note: This section is to reinforce any previous lesson the class has done on Jim Crow laws, or to introduce the topic.)

Materials:

- Vocabulary Words and Vocabulary Check Sheet (optional)
- PowerPoint slides #2-3
- Jim Crow Laws Discussion Questions

Procedure:

1. If you choose to assign the vocabulary work (for in class or for prep homework), have students complete the Vocabulary Check sheet; then discuss responses as a whole class. During class discussions throughout the lesson, focus on students using vocabulary words correctly in sentences.
2. As a whole class, read the Jim Crow laws summary and the sample laws. Then discuss the questions.

Part III: The Chitlin' Circuit (whole class/small group activity)

Materials:

- [Chitlin' Circuit Video](#)
- Chitlin' Circuit Video Analysis Questions

Procedure:

1. Before you play the Chitlin' Circuit video, tell students to pay close attention to what people being interviewed are saying about the challenges Chitlin' Circuit musicians experienced during Jim Crow.
2. Play the Chitlin' Circuit video. (You can play the whole video first and then play the clips that correspond to the specific questions.)
3. Have students work in their small groups to write responses for the Chitlin' Circuit Video Analysis questions.
4. Discuss students' responses as a class. Ask students to give evidence for their arguments.

Part IV: The "5" Royales and "The Slummer the Slum" (whole class/small group activity)

Materials:

- PowerPoint, slides #4 - #20
- ["The Slummer the Slum" video](#)
- "The Slummer the Slum" Text Analysis Questions

Procedure:

1. Show and read aloud PowerPoint slides on the "5" Royales, #4 - #17.
2. Teach the song words "Purple People Eater" and "Slummer" as whole class activity, referring to PowerPoint slide #18.
3. Before you play the song, tell students to pay close attention to all the lyrics.
4. Tell students to read the lyrics on their handouts or on PowerPoint slide #20 as you play the "The Slummer the Slum."
5. Have students work in their groups on Text Analysis questions #1 and #2.
6. Discuss students' responses as a class. Be sure students use evidence for their arguments.

Part V: The Birmingham Children's March (whole class/small group)

Materials:

- PowerPoint, slides #21 - #32
- [Birmingham Children's March video segment: 3:39 \(begin\) - 6:23 \(stop\)](#)
(You can play the whole video clip first, and then play the shorter clips that correspond to the specific questions.)
- Birmingham Children's March Critical Thinking Questions

Procedure:

1. Show and read aloud PowerPoint slides #21 - #25.
2. Before you play the video segment, tell students to pay close attention to the difference in viewpoints and goals between Birmingham's African American and white citizens.

3. Play video segment.
4. Have students work in their small groups to write responses to each question.
5. Discuss students' responses as a class. Ask students for evidence for their arguments.
6. Show PowerPoint slides #26 - #32.

Assessment and Summary: Culminating Questions

At the end of this lesson, students should answer the culminating questions. If time allows, have students answer these questions individually in writing before discussing them as a whole group. Insist on evidence for arguments.

Homework and Extra Credit

Materials:

- Follow-up homework
- Extra credit (optional)

Procedure:

1. Hand out follow-up homework and extra credit sheet.
2. Hand out extra credit options to interested students.

(At the end of class as students are leaving, if appropriate, play “The Slummer the Slum” as background music.)

NC Essential Standards

African American Studies

AAS.H.2 Understand the significance of historical personalities, groups, institutions, and events in shaping African American life over time.

AAS.H.2.1 Analyze how key turning points in history have affected the lives of African Americans.

AAS.H.2.3 Explain how various forms of resistance by individuals and groups have influenced change in the lives of African Americans.

AAS.C.1 Analyze the lives of African Americans to understand the impact of shared and differing experiences and identities.

AAS.C.1.1 Analyze the impact of assimilation, stereotypes, and oppression on the lives of African Americans.

American History

AH.I.1.4 Developing Claims and Using Evidence

- Analyze visual, literary, and musical sources.
- Examine change and continuity over time.
- Analyze causes, effects, and correlations.

AH.I.1.5 Communicating Ideas

- Construct written, oral, and multimedia arguments.

- Support arguments with evidence and reasoning while considering counterclaims.
- Develop new understandings of complex historical and current issues through rigorous academic discussions.

AH.B.1 Evaluate American identity in terms of perspective, change, and continuity.

AH.B.1.3 Critique multiple perspectives of American identity in terms of oppression, stereotypes, diversity, inclusion, and exclusion.

AH.B.1.6 Explain how the experiences and achievements of minorities and marginalized peoples have contributed to American identity over time in terms of the struggle against bias, racism, oppression, and discrimination.

AH.C&G.1 Evaluate the relationship between the American people and the government in terms of freedom, equality, and power.

AH.C&G.1.3 Explain how various individuals and groups strategized, organized, advocated and protested to expand or restrict freedom and equality.

AH.C&G.1.4 Explain how racism, oppression, and discrimination of indigenous peoples, racial minorities, and other marginalized groups have impacted equality and power in America

8th Grade Social Studies

8.B.1 Analyze the impact of group behavior on the development of North Carolina and the nation.

8.B.1.2 Explain how cultural values, practices and the interactions of various indigenous, religious, and racial groups have influenced the development of North Carolina and the nation.

8.H.2 Understand how innovation and change have impacted the development of North Carolina and the nation.

8.H.2.3 Explain how the experiences and achievements of women, minorities, indigenous, and marginalized groups have contributed to the development of North Carolina and the nation over time.

Civic Literacy and 20th Century Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Upon request, the aligned NC essential standards for these two courses will be provided.

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