



Freedom Riders: Youth in Action

Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

1. Know how segregation was carried out in the U.S.
2. Understand the contributions and impact of young people during the Civil Rights Movement.
3. Understand the meaning of passive resistance/civil disobedience.
4. Evaluating whether fighting back or using passive resistance/civil disobedience is better.

Materials Needed:

1. Picture or item bought from Disney World

Vocabulary

- Discrimination
- Black Codes
- Jim Crow Laws
- School Segregation
- Civil Rights Movement
- Freedom Riders
- Passive resistance
- Civil Disobedience

| Bloom Taxonomy | Affective Domain | Gardner's Multiple Intelligences |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Understanding • Application • Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving • Responding • Valuing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linguistic • Interpersonal |

Introduction/Motivation:

- Show a picture of Disney World. Teacher can also show an item bought from Disney Park.
- Ask students, “Have they ever been to Disney World and/or one of the Disney Parks in Florida?”
- If many students have not been to a Disney World/Disney Parks, as students, “What amusement park have you and your family gone to?”
- Have students share.
- Have students’ image the attendant of the ride that you and your family want to go on says, “I’m sorry but you guys cannot go on this ride.”
- Ask students, “How would you and your family respond? Would you ask to speak to the manger/director? Would you get mad at the attendant? Would you ask for an explanation?”
- List the responses.
- Say to students, **today we are going to learn about a group of students that were not allowed to participate in the same activities as other students. This group of students are Freedom Riders.**

For Older Students 1#:

- Asks students what type of clubs or teams they belong to?
- Say to students, “If you play competitively, image on game day your coach told you that you cannot play today. What would you do?”
- Say, “If you belong to a club that does not compete, what would you do if the leader said you cannot attend the team meeting today?”
- List responses.
- Say to students, **today we are going to learn about a group of students that were not allowed to participate in the same activities as other students. This group of students are Freedom Riders.**

For Older Students 2#:

- Introduce Affirmative Action.
- Share with students, “Affirmative action, in the United States, an active effort to improve employment or educational opportunities for members of minority groups and for women.” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/affirmative-action>
- “Affirmative Action began as a government remedy to the effects of long-standing discrimination against such groups and has consisted of policies, programs, and procedures that give limited preferences to minorities and women in job hiring, admission to institutions of higher education, the awarding of government contracts, and other social benefits.” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/affirmative-action>

- “The typical criteria for Affirmative Action are race, disability, gender, ethnic origin, and age.” <https://www.britannica.com/topic/affirmative-action>
- Ask student to share their opinion of Affirmative Action. Specially ask students do they think Affirmative Action is a fair progress. Students should response why or why not.
- Share the definition of discrimination with students. To, "discriminate" means to distinguish, single out, or make a distinction.” <https://civilrights.findlaw.com/civil-rights-overview/what-is-discrimination.html>
- Say to students, **today we are going to learn about a group of students that experienced discrimination. They were obstructed by the laws of the Separate But Equal doctrine. The students protested the obstruction. These students were called the Freedom Riders.**

Background on segregation:

- Segregation first originated in the form of Black Codes in 1865. These Black Codes controlled where African Americans could work and live. Thus, it allowed African Americans to earn very little and work only certain types of jobs.
- Once segregation became official policy, legislators separated African American and white from all public spaces like public parks, theaters, pool areas, cemeteries, and jails.
- **Public transportation such as buses, trains and taxis were segregated.** These prohibitions were called Jim Crow Laws approved by the separated but equal doctrine.

Background on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee:

- The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, SNCC, was a civil-rights group set up by Ella Baker. Ella Baker was a director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SCLC.
- SNCC was created to give young people an active role in the Civil Rights Movement. SNCC was instrumental in organizing marches and **Freedom Rides**.

Background on the Freedom Riders:

- The **Freedom Riders** were groups of SNCC members and white students that took bus trips through the South in 1961 to protest the segregated bus terminals.
- The Freedom Riders also protested by eating at, “white only” lunch counters and using, “white only” restrooms.
- **Although the Freedom Riders were brutally attacked by white protestors and confronted by police officers they did not fight back.** They used passive resistance.

- The members of the Freedom Riders had excessive training on **passive resistance** so they would be prepared to meet violent opposition.
- The efforts of the Freedom Riders gained international attention to the Civil Rights Movement.
- Originally there were 13 Freedom Riders: seven Black students and 6 white students. They left Washington D. C. on a Greyhound bus on May 4th, 1961.
- The goal was to reach New Orleans, Louisiana on May 17 to celebrate the 7th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision.
- The first attack on the Freedom Riders was on May 12, 1961 when they attempted to enter a whites-only waiting area.
- On May 14, 1961, an angry mob of about 200 white people surround the bus making the bus drive pass the bus terminal. When the tires of the bus blew out, one of the members of the mob threw a bomb into the bus. The Freedom Riders escaped and were met by the angry mob. The Freedom Riders were viciously beaten by the angry mob.
- A second bus was dispatched to travel to Birmingham. Those Freedom Riders were also beaten by an angry white mob with metal pipes.
- Photographs of the burning Greyhound and violence were featured on the front pages of newspapers throughout the country and the world. The international attention of the Freedom Riders bought more attention to their cause and to the race relations in the U.S.
- Robert F. Kennedy, U.S. Attorney General, negotiated with the Governor of Alabama and with the bus companies to secure a driver and state protections.
- Although the Freedom Riders had police protection, **they abandoned the Freedom Riders when they arrived at Montgomery Alabama.** The Freedom Riders were attacked by a white mob with baseball bats and clubs. The U.S. Attorney General sent 600 federal troops to stop the violence. The Freedom Riders were also arrested.

- During the Fall of 1961, the Interstate Commerce Commission issued regulations prohibiting segregation in the interstate transit terminals. The Freedom Riders achieved victory.

Body

- Introduce the Freedom Riders to students highlighting segregation of public spaces including the buses.
- Discuss how the Freedom Riders were treated by the angry crowds and by the police.
- Discuss how the Freedom Riders responded to how they were treated? Discuss their passive resistance. Also, introduce the term civil disobedience.

Activity 1#

- Make a grid.
- Define Pro and Cons with students.
- Have students identify the Pros and Cons of:

| Fighting Back | Passive Resistance |
|---|---|
| <p>Pro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • <p>Con:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • | <p>Pro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • <p>Con:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • |

- Remind students that the passive resistance of the Freedom Riders resulted in the end of bus segregation in 1961.

- Have students create a scenario/situation where the only options are fighting back or using passive resistance.
- Students can work together or individually.
- The scenario/situation should be presented or shared during class.
- Use the Worksheet to keep students focused if needed.

Activity 2# For older students

- Have students conduct research on passive resistance/civil disobedience.
- Students should focus on examples in the Civil Rights Movement, identifying leaders such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi) and Henry David Thoreau,
- Students should present examples in a report or an essay.
- For artistic students, students should present a play.

Links:

- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/civil-disobedience>
- <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/freedom-rides>
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/Freedom-Rides>
- <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/freedom-rides-1961/>



Should I Fight Back or Use Passive Resistance?

Date: _____ Title: _____

Characters:

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

Describe the situation:

| Fighting Back | Passive Resistance |
|---|---|
| <p>Pro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••• <p>Con:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••• | <p>Pro:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••• <p>Con:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">•••• |

Is fighting back or using passive resistance better? Explain.
