

Lyndon Johnson and Civil Rights

Teacher's Guide



Grade Level: 9–12

Curriculum Focus: Social Studies

Lesson Duration: 3 class periods

Program Description

Johnson Inherits Kennedy's Civil Rights Challenges (6 min.) – Presents the background of Johnson's rise to the presidency after John F. Kennedy's assassination and examines Johnson's choice to support the Civil Rights movement Kennedy had championed. **Johnson Pushes Civil Rights Act Through Congress** (4 min.) – Recounts how Johnson used his influence with Congress to gather enough votes for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. **The Voting Rights Act** (6 min.) – Explores Johnson's hesitation to push for passage of the Voting Rights Act and how events changed his mind. **Civil Unrest and the War in Vietnam** (6 min.) – Chronicles the rift that formed between Johnson and Martin Luther King, Jr., due to their disagreements over the war in Vietnam. **Johnson's Last Years** (7 min.) – Reviews Johnson's accomplishments and looks at his declining years.

Discussion Questions

- What does “having rights” mean to you?
 - Name some of the rights you believe are guaranteed by law.
 - How would your life be different if those rights were suddenly taken away from you because new laws made them illegal?
 - How do you think the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King affected the political atmosphere in the U.S.?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Explain the effort and political sacrifices Lyndon Johnson made to embrace and champion the civil rights causes set forth by President Kennedy.
- Analyze the social and political forces that worked for and against Johnson as he pushed for passage of the civil rights bills.
- Research the contents of one of Johnson's three landmark civil rights bills (the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act, or the Fair Housing Act). Define the primary goals of the bill, the injustices and inequities it sought to correct, and recognize how it changed the lives of Americans.

- Debate the merits of renewing the expiring sections of the Voting Rights Act.

Materials

- *Lyndon Johnson and Civil Rights* video
- Computer with Internet access
- Print resources about Lyndon Johnson, the 1960s Civil Rights movement, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act, the Fair Housing Act, and how Congress and the president create legislation

Procedures

1. Before viewing the video, ask some general pre-viewing questions and briefly discuss the topic with the class. What does “having rights” mean to you? Name some of the rights you believe are guaranteed by law. How would your life be different if those rights were suddenly taken away from you because new laws made them illegal? How do you think the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King might have affected the political mood in the U.S.?
2. View the video.
3. After viewing, ask students to share their general observations about Lyndon Johnson, especially the effort and political sacrifices he made in order to embrace and champion the civil rights causes begun by President Kennedy. Why would Johnson, who had long supported and been supported by segregationists, suddenly risk his own political future to help black leaders achieve their civil rights goals? What social and political forces worked for and against Johnson as he pushed for passage of his revolutionary civil rights bills? Ask students to volunteer other insights into what might have prompted Johnson’s sudden dedication to civil rights.
4. Ask students to research and write a report about one of Johnson’s landmark civil rights bills: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act, or the Fair Housing Act. In their reports students should define the primary goals of the bill, explain the injustices and inequities the bill seeks to correct, and give examples of how the bill changed the lives of Americans.
5. Students may begin their project research with the Web sites below, but encourage them to visit other sites, as well as the library.

The following Web sites provide resources for student research:

Wikipedia: The Civil Rights Act of 1964

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_Rights_Act_of_1964

Civil Rights Act; July 2, 1964

www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/statutes/civil_rights_1964.htm

A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States of America

www.africanamericans.com/civilrightsactof1964.htm

Wikipedia: American Civil Rights Movement

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_Rights_Movement_\(1955-1968\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_Rights_Movement_(1955-1968))



Wikipedia: The Voting Rights Act

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voting_Rights_Act_of_1965

U.S. Voting Rights

www.infoplease.com/timelines/voting.html

Voting Rights Law and History

www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/crt/voting.htm

Literacy Test: Would you "qualify" to vote?

www.crmvet.org/info/lithome.htm

The Fair Housing Act

www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/housing_coverage.htm

What the Fair Housing Act Prohibits

<http://brgov.com/dept/ocd/prohibited.htm>

Wikipedia: Fair Housing

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fair_housing

6. Later in the week, ask students to form into small groups and stage debates on the merits of continually renewing the temporary sections of the Voting Rights Act that were created to expire after a certain number of years. Have students form debating pairs, in which the two students will research, write, and perform their own debates against each other, or have them form teams in which researchers and writers will prepare a statement and line of reasoning for one chosen speaker to present against the speaker of another team.

Students may begin their project research with the Web sites below, but encourage them to visit other sites, as well as the library.

The following Web sites provide resources for student research:

Court TV's Voting Rights Act Debate

www.courttv.com/ipoj/voting-rights-act.html

Beyond the Voting Rights Act: Why We Need a Constitutional Right to Vote

http://reclaimdemocracy.org/political_reform/right_to_vote.html

Fair Vote: Voting Rights Act

www.fairvote.org/index.php?page=828

Our Documents: The Voting Rights Act

www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=100

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

www.lawyerscomm.org/2005website/projects/votingrights/blackvote2007.html



ACLU: Voting Rights Act

www.votingrights.org

Renewal of the Voting Rights Act

www.civilrights.org/campaigns/vra/learn_more/faq.html

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students clearly explained the effort and political sacrifices Lyndon Johnson made to further civil rights and thoroughly analyzed the social and political forces that worked for and against Johnson as he pushed for passage of the civil rights bills; students wrote an interesting and well-researched report about one of Johnson's three landmark civil rights bills, including all of the required information; students made valuable contributions to their debate team's efforts or prepared and performed their own debate on the merits of renewing expiring sections of the Voting Rights Act with excellent results.
- 2 points: Students adequately explained the effort and political sacrifices Lyndon Johnson made to further civil rights and made an acceptable analysis of the social and political forces that worked for and against Johnson as he pushed for passage of the civil rights bills; students wrote an adequate report about one of Johnson's three landmark civil rights bills, including most of the required information; students contributed to their debate team's efforts or prepared and performed their own debate on the merits of renewing expiring sections of the Voting Rights Act with acceptable results.
- 1 point: Students did not adequately explain the effort and political sacrifices Lyndon Johnson made to further civil rights or adequately analyze of the social and political forces that worked for and against Johnson as he pushed for passage of the civil rights bills; students wrote an inadequate report about one of Johnson's three landmark civil rights bills, including little or none of the required information; students did not contribute to their debate team's efforts or prepare and perform their own debate on the merits of renewing expiring sections of the Voting Rights Act, producing unacceptable results.

Vocabulary

civil rights

Definition: Enforceable freedoms and personal liberties given to citizens by the enactment of laws

Context: Nations ensure the civil rights of their citizens by writing laws to protect those rights, which include freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to assemble, the right to vote, and the right to equality in public places.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

Definition: Landmark legislation, passed by Congress and signed by President Lyndon Johnson, outlawing discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin

Context: President Johnson used his influence in Congress to get the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed into law.

Fair Housing Act

Definition: Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which prohibits housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, and familial status

Context: The Fair Housing Act protects Americans against housing discrimination whether they rent or own their homes.

literacy test

Definition: A difficult test some states once required minority citizens to pass before they allowed those citizens to vote; used as a voting barrier to discourage or prevent minority citizens from participating in the election process

Context: The literacy tests given to ethnic minorities often included questions that were extremely difficult or impossible to answer.

segregation

Definition: The practice of separating people by race, class, or ethnic group for the purposes of education, housing, or use of public facilities

Context: During his 1960 presidential campaign, John Kennedy promised to end racial segregation in the United States.

unconstitutional

Definition: Not conforming to the principles and requirements in the constitution of a nation or state

Context: During the election of 1964, Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater announced that he thought the Civil Rights Act was unconstitutional.

Voting Rights Act

Definition: A federal law forbidding states from practicing discrimination against groups of voters by preventing them from voting in elections or by making it difficult for them to do so

Context: The Voting Rights Act banned states and municipalities from giving literacy tests to citizens before allowing them to vote.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit <http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This program addresses the following national standards:

- Civics – What Are the Basic Values and Principles of American Democracy: Understands the importance of Americans sharing and supporting certain values, beliefs, and principles of American constitutional democracy; Understands the roles of voluntarism and organized groups in American social and political life; Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society; Understands the relationships among liberalism, republicanism, and American constitutional democracy; Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity; Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life.
- Civics – How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embodiment the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy: Understands the roles of political parties, campaigns, elections, and associations and groups in American politics; Understands the formation and implementation of public policy.
- Civics – What Are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy: Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights; Understands how certain character traits enhance citizens' ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities; Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals; Understands the importance of political leadership, public service, and a knowledgeable citizenry in American constitutional democracy.
- History – United States History, Era 9 – Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s): Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties.
- Language Arts – Writing: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process; Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing; Gathers and uses information for research purposes.
- Language Arts – Reading: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts.
- Language Arts – Listening and Speaking: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
- Language Arts – Viewing: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.
- Life Skills – Thinking and Reasoning: Understands and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument; Understands and applies basic principles of logic and reasoning; Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences.
- Life Skills – Working With Others: Contributes to the overall effort of a group; Works well with diverse individuals and in diverse situations; Displays effective interpersonal communication skills.

National Council for the Social Studies

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
 - Time, Continuity, and Change
 - People, Places, and Environment
 - Individual Development and Identity
 - Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
 - Power, Authority, and Governance
 - Civic Ideals and Practices
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DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How to Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index—Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons; brief descriptions are noted for each one. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units—These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.



Teacher Resources – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. Johnson Inherits Kennedy's Civil Rights Challenges (6 min.)

Lyndon Johnson became president after John F. Kennedy's assassination. Analyze the political forces that made Johnson's choice to support the Civil Rights movement so challenging.

II. Johnson Pushes Civil Rights Act Through Congress (4 min.)

Johnson used his influence with Congress to gather enough votes for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Analyze the political obstacles he confronted to achieve this success.

III. The Voting Rights Act (6 min.)

Johnson hesitated to push for passage of the Voting Rights Act soon after signing the Civil Rights Act. Discover how events changed his mind and led to another civil rights success.

IV. Civil Unrest and the War in Vietnam (6 min.)

After mutually supporting the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, Johnson and Martin Luther King disagreed on other issues. Examine the social pressures that caused the rift between them.

V. Johnson's Last Years (7 min.)

Johnson pushed through one more important reform, the Fair Housing Act. Imagine what the United States would be like today without the landmark laws championed and signed by Lyndon Johnson.

Curriculum Units

1. Kennedy's Promise Becomes Johnson's Dilemma

Pre-viewing question

Q: What do you know about President John F. Kennedy and his connection to the Civil Rights Movement?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: After Kennedy's death, why did Johnson hesitate to support Kennedy's yet-to-be-passed civil rights legislation?

A: Throughout his political career, Johnson had been supported by Southern whites who opposed all civil rights legislation. He was unsure he could rally enough political support and votes in Congress to pass a civil rights bill. He also had concerns about whether American society was ready to adapt to the changes that such legislation would bring.

2. Johnson Succeeds Where Kennedy's Efforts Had Stalled

Pre-viewing question

Q: Why do you think people wanted the government to pass anti-discrimination laws in the 1960s?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why do you think Johnson was able to push the Civil Rights Act through Congress while Kennedy could not?

A: Answers will vary and might include the following: Johnson had more experience in Congress and knew how to influence its members; Johnson had many long-time supporters and allies in Washington; Kennedy's assassination made politicians support the bill to honor the fallen leader; civil rights marches influenced them.

3. Voting Rights

Pre-viewing question

Q: Was there ever a time in the United States when some adults could not legally vote or when it was easy to bully or fool people into not casting their votes on election day?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Since blacks became free U.S. citizens after the Civil War, why did the U.S. need a Voting Rights Act?

A: Some states, especially in the South, had laws that could stop people from voting unless they first passed a "literacy test." The tests were often given only to blacks and contained questions most people would find difficult or impossible to answer.

4. Martin Luther King

Pre-viewing question

Q: Name some leaders of the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

A: Answer will vary and may include Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, and JFK.

Post-viewing question

Q: How did Johnson use King's assassination to promote another civil rights bill?

A: When riots erupted in American cities as a response to King's assassination, Johnson convinced Congress that it was time to pass the Fair Housing Act, which they had refused to pass for the previous two years.

5. Johnson Declines to Run for Reelection

Pre-viewing question

Q: Who succeeded Johnson as president?

A: Richard Nixon.



Post-viewing question

Q: Why do you think Johnson decided not to run for re-election?

A: Answers will vary and might include: his health was poor; his six years as president had been especially difficult; his entire political career had been long, and he wanted to retire; he felt discouraged that, even after having accomplished so much, so much hard work still needed to be done.

