

A Question of Race: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 11-12

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Program Description

Race is no longer an issue of black and white. But was it ever? Or were these labels manufactured to identify a subspecies that doesn't really exist? Become a part of the debate questioning whether race is an accurate biological identification or a subcategory made up by humans to separate us.

Onscreen Questions

Part I— Before watching the video

- Think about the differences between racial classification and racism. As you watch the program, note how the concept of race first originated.
- Keep track of what the people in the program have to say about the relevance of race today. What criteria do you think determine a person's race?

Part I— After watching the video

- Discuss how the idea of racial classification may have encouraged colonization and slavery. Do you think racism is a learned behavior or a part of human nature?
- What are some of the reasons societies continue to classify people according to race?

Part II— Before watching the video

- Think of times in your life when you have witnessed or experienced racial conflict or discrimination. Also, think about why racial conflict frequently leads to violence.
- Watch for ways the program suggests to end misconceptions about race that could potentially lead to violence.?

Part II— After watching the video

- Debate Beverly Tatum's statement: "The question is not are you racist or not, the question is are you actively anti-racist?" Then discuss ways to fight racism on a daily basis.
 - Do you think there is any escape from biased thinking? Why or why not?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Understand the difference between de facto and de jure discrimination in the United States.
- Understand the challenges in creating and enforcing laws that make certain racist actions and speech illegal.

Materials

- Reference materials for the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, and de jure and de facto racism
- Writing materials
- Internet access (if possible)

Procedures

1. For students to begin to understand that racism is contrary to the ideals set forth by the founders of the United States, it is important for them to know what those ideals are. Read the famous second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence to the class. Ask students to listen carefully and write down key words such as “equal,” and “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” that describe the ideals our founding fathers sought to create in an independent democracy.

We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

2. Discuss with students whether they believe that all people in the United States have equal rights as defined in the Declaration of Independence. Even when the law seems to grant full and equal rights to all people, how are some groups of people disenfranchised or discriminated against? Why do you think this happens?
3. As a class, define racism. (For example: “Racism is the belief that certain races of people are by nature superior to others. Racism can also be discrimination based on race.”) Ask students to provide examples of racism in our country’s history. Student examples might include slavery, segregation, hate groups, hate crimes, racial profiling, affirmative action, and employment discrimination. Once the class has generated a list of examples of racism, ask them to divide the list into those practices of racism that are illegal and those that are wrong but not currently illegal. (Slavery and segregation are illegal, but hate groups, racist Web sites, racist song lyrics, or other racist publications are not illegal.)
4. Explain to students that racism can be described in two ways: de jure (a matter of law) and de facto (in reality or evidenced by human attitude). Slavery and segregation are considered de jure discrimination because they are illegal. Hate groups, racist Web sites, and other racist



publications are considered de facto because they contradict the ideals of the nation's founding fathers, but they are not punishable by law.

5. Ask students to talk about the effects of de facto racism. (For example, are there any consequences of racist Web sites? If so, what are they?) Can de facto racism be controlled by acts of law? Should they be? Why or why not? Do you think there's a connection between de facto racism and hate crimes? Why or why not?
6. Now introduce the Bill of Rights to your students. (This document is available online at <http://www.constitutionfacts.com/amendments.shtml>.) Remind students that the Bill of Rights contains the first 10 amendments to the Constitution. These amendments were added in 1791 to protect the rights of individuals. Have students read the First Amendment:
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.
7. Ask students to discuss the meaning of this amendment. Why is this amendment so important? What everyday rights would be taken away if we didn't have this amendment? How would our nation be different? (You may want to discuss the consequences in a nation that does not have freedom of speech.) Now ask students to consider this: Does this amendment protect some forms of de facto racism? If so, how? Discuss with students the challenges of creating legislation that both protects free speech and expression while protecting people from acts of racism.
8. Assign the following for homework:

Fighting De Facto Racism

- (1.) Explain the differences between de facto and de jure racism. Provide examples of both.
- (2.) Compose an essay describing what you believe to be the best strategy to fight de facto racism in the 21st century. In your essay, address some or all of the following questions: Can de facto racism be overcome? Should laws be made to control de facto racism? Why or why not? Should more emphasis be placed on educating people about bias and racism? Should parents become more involved in teaching their children tolerance? What other ways can you fight de facto racism in a society? Provide examples when possible.

Assessment

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

- **3 points:** Student has actively participated in classroom discussions, was able to provide examples of different types of racism in the activity sheet, and has completed a thoughtful, well-constructed essay on how he or she believes de facto racism can be overcome.
- **2 points:** Student has participated to some degree in the classroom discussions, was able to offer at least one example of both types of racism, and completed a fairly clear essay on how he or she believes de facto racism can be overcome.



- **1 point:** Student was attentive during classroom discussions, but was unable to provide a sufficient definition or examples for de jure and de facto racism, and had difficulty constructing a clearly written essay.

Vocabulary

de facto

Definition: In reality or fact

Context: De facto racism will exist even if lawmakers find a way to make racism illegal.

de jure

Definition: According to law

Context: When slavery was abolished, the United States eliminated one form of de jure racism.

discriminate

Definition: To make distinctions based on class or category without regard to individual merit; to show preference or prejudice

Context: It is unlawful to discriminate against someone based on race, religion, or sex.

legislate

Definition: To create or pass laws

Context: It is one thing to legislate against racism, but it is another to do away with it.

race

Definition: A categorization of people based on shared biological traits such as skin color, hair texture, and eye shape

Context: Some scientists question whether humans are a single race or a variety of races.

racism

Definition: A belief that certain races of people are superior to others; discrimination based on race

Context: Many people believed that the crime was driven by racism.

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 link:

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- History – United States History: 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, Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture and cultural diversity
 - Individual development and identity
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>