



CIVIL RIGHTS UNIT ACTIVITIES & EXTENSIONS PACKET

Lesson 1 — Early Struggles for Civil Rights

Activity A — Civil Rights Timeline

Purpose:

Students build background knowledge about early events that shaped the Civil Rights Movement.

Instructions:

1. Students complete a four-step timeline labeled:
 - *Jim Crow Laws*
 - *NAACP Forms*
 - *Early Court Challenges*
 - *Brown v. Board Begins*
2. In each box, students write a short explanation and add a small sketch.
3. Encourage students to use evidence from the article to support their descriptions.

Optional Extension:

Students add a final box titled “*Why Did Change Take So Long?*” and write a short explanation using details from the reading.

Activity B — Stand on the Line: What Would YOU Do?

Purpose:

Students explore the difficult choices African Americans faced during segregation through movement and discussion.

Instructions:

1. Label three corners of the room:
 - *Speak Out*
 - *Stay Silent*
 - *Seek Legal Help*
2. Read short scenarios aloud (display them on the board or say them verbally).
3. Students move to the corner that represents the choice they would make.
4. Students share their reasoning and listen to others' perspectives.

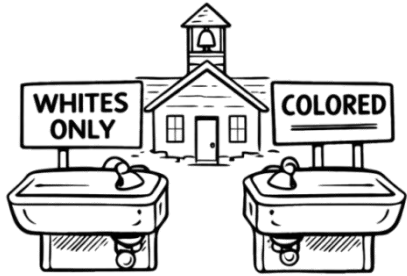
Optional Extension:

Students create a quick-sketch “courage badge” in their notebooks representing someone who stood up for equal rights.

Lesson 1 – Activity #1: Civil Rights Timeline

In each box, students write a short explanation of the event.

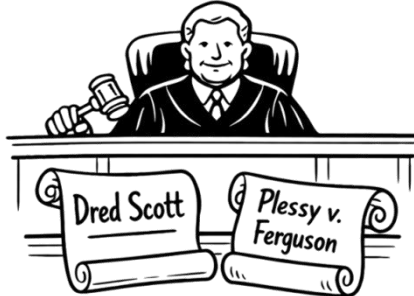
Jim Crow Laws



NAACP Forms (1910)



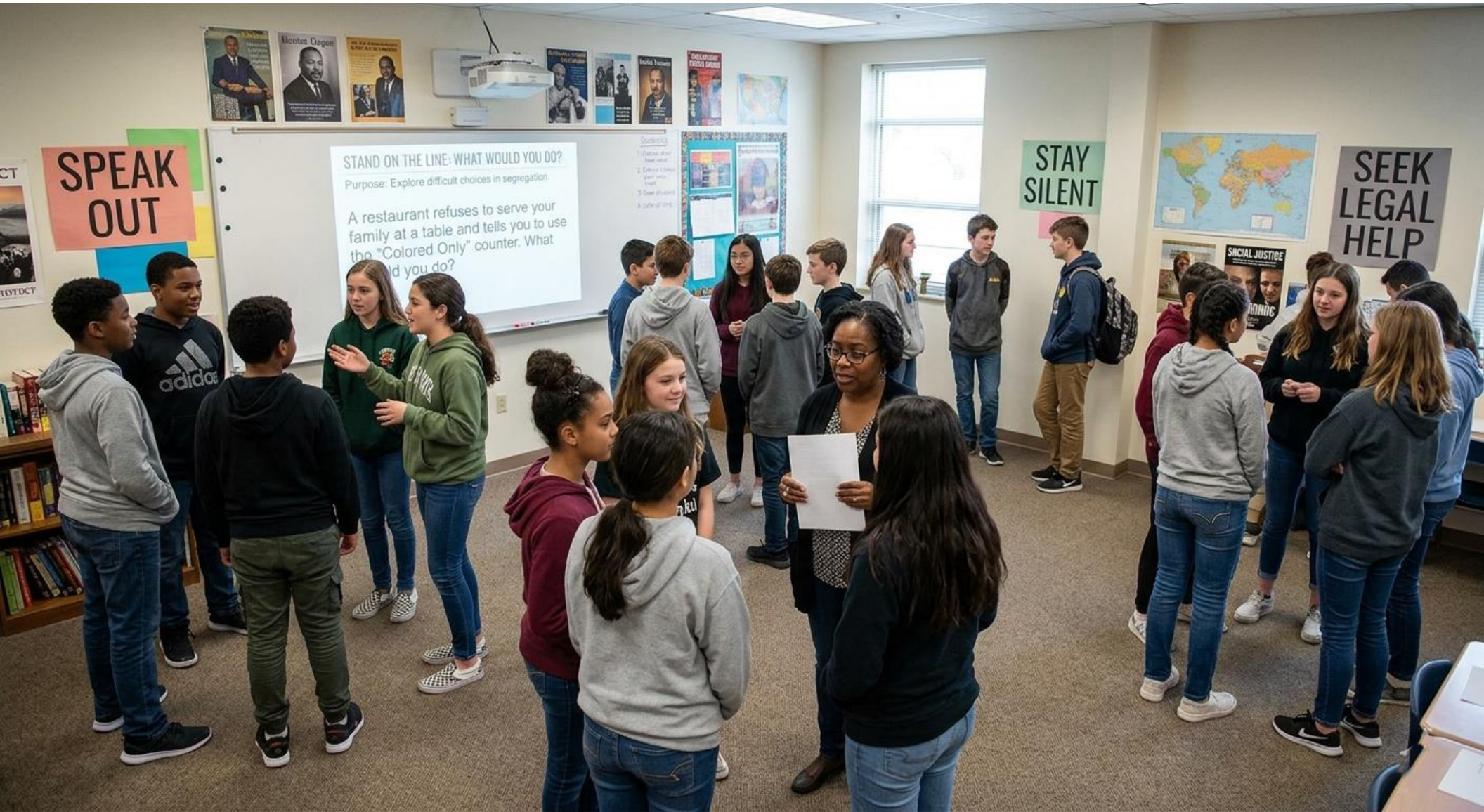
Early Court Challenges



Brown v. Board Begins (1954)



Lesson 1 – Activity #2: “Stand on the Line”: What Would YOU Do?



Lesson 2 — School Desegregation

Activity A — Comic Timeline Walk: How Did School Desegregation Happen?

Purpose:

Students analyze a comic-style timeline to understand the sequence of events and the people who helped end school segregation.

Instructions:

1. Display the comic timeline (Thurgood Marshall, Ruby Bridges, Little Rock Nine, and major milestones).
2. Students rotate through each panel or examine the image as a group.
3. For each panel, students discuss or write about:
 - *What is happening in this panel?*
 - *Why was this moment important?*
 - *How did this help end segregation?*

Optional Extension:

Students draw a “mini panel” in their notebooks showing one additional moment from the article.

Activity B — Voices of Integration: A Role-Play Circle

Purpose:

Students explore multiple perspectives from the era of school desegregation through simple, low-prep role-play.

Instructions:

1. Assign students roles such as:
 - Ruby Bridges
 - a parent
 - a teacher
 - a judge
 - a student at an integrated school
 - a member of the Little Rock Nine
2. Students sit in a circle and respond in character to prompts such as:
 - *What are you feeling today?*
 - *What challenges are you facing?*
 - *What gives you courage?*
3. Encourage students to stay in character and listen respectfully to others.

Optional Extension:

Students write a one-sentence “courage quote” their character might say to inspire others.

Lesson 2 – Activity #1: Civil Rights Timeline

In each box, students write a short explanation of the event.

Thurgood Marshall at the Supreme Court



Ruby Bridges walking with Federal Marshals



Little Rock Nine entering Central High



Eisenhower with Federal Troops enforcing Integration



Lesson 3 — Montgomery Bus Boycott

Activity A — Comic Timeline Walk: The Montgomery Bus Boycott

Purpose:

Students analyze a four-panel comic timeline to understand how one act of courage sparked a year-long community movement that changed unfair bus laws.

Instructions:

Display the four-panel comic timeline showing:

- a passenger refusing to give up a bus seat
- the passenger being taken into custody
- community members choosing to walk instead of ride
- a courtroom decision overturning the segregation rule

Students rotate through each panel or examine the image as a group.

For each panel, students discuss or write about:

- *What is happening in this scene?*
- *How did this moment contribute to the boycott?*
- *What emotions or challenges do you notice?*

Optional Extension:

Students sketch a “fifth panel” in their notebooks showing what happened after the court decision (returning to integrated buses, community celebration, etc.).

Activity B — Would You Rather — Transportation Choices

Walk 5 miles to school every day or wait 2 hours for a bus that never comes?

Ride a crowded bus where you must stand the whole way or walk home in the rain?

Share a carpool with neighbors who live far away or walk alone on a shorter route?

Give up riding the bus for a month to support a cause or keep riding but feel guilty about it?

Carry groceries home on foot for three miles or ride a bus that charges unfair prices?

Walk to work with friends every day or ride a bus alone in silence?

Fix up an old bike to get around or depend on neighbors for rides?

Walk ten blocks to help a friend get to school or take a shortcut and arrive early yourself?

Spend your money on new shoes for walking or save for bus fare you won't use?

Walk through a busy downtown area or take a long quiet route through neighborhoods?

Join a community carpool that takes extra time or walk quickly but alone?

Walk every day for a year to stand up for fairness or ride the bus and pretend nothing is wrong?

Lesson 3 – Activity #1: Montgomery Bus Boycott Timeline

In each box, students write a short explanation of the event.

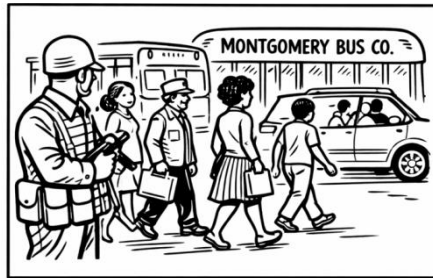
Rosa Parks sitting calmly on the bus as a police officer stands beside her.



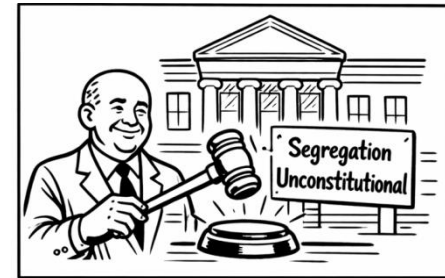
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and E. D. Nixon speaking to a small group at a church meeting, with “MIA Meeting” on a banner.



African Americans walking and carpooling past empty buses labeled “Montgomery Bus Co.”



A judge's gavel and courthouse with a sign reading “Segregation Unconstitutional,” symbolizing victory.



Lesson 3 – Activity #2: Would You Rather — Transportation Choices

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Walk 5 miles to school every day or wait 2 hours for a bus that never comes?</p> | <p>Ride a crowded bus where you must stand the whole way or walk home in the rain?</p> | <p>Share a carpool with neighbors who live far away or walk alone on a shorter route?</p> | <p>Give up riding the bus for a month to support a cause or keep riding but feel guilty about it?</p> |
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| <p>Spend your money on new shoes for walking or save for bus fare you won't use?</p> | <p>Walk through a busy downtown area or take a long quiet route through neighborhoods?</p> | <p>Join a community carpool that takes extra time or walk quickly but alone?</p> | <p>Walk every day for a year to stand up for fairness or ride the bus and pretend nothing is wrong?</p> |

Lesson 4 — Sit Ins Boycott

Activity A: “Stay or Walk Away?” Decision Scenarios

Purpose:

This activity helps students understand the courage, discipline, and emotional strength required during the sit-ins. By placing themselves in realistic, age-appropriate scenarios, students explore how peaceful protestors made difficult choices in the face of pressure and hostility.

Materials Needed:

- Scenario cards (or display them on the board)
- Student notebooks or discussion space

How to Do It:

1. Give each group a set of scenario cards or read the scenarios aloud one at a time.
2. Students decide how they would respond:
 - Stay seated
 - Walk away
 - Ask for help
3. Students explain their reasoning in writing or through discussion.
4. After several scenarios, bring the class together to reflect on how these choices connect to the real sit-ins.

Discussion Questions:

- What made some choices harder than others
- Why was staying calm such an important strategy
- How did peaceful behavior help the movement gain support

Optional Extension:

Students choose one scenario and write a short journal entry from the perspective of a sit-in protestor describing their thoughts and feelings in that moment.

Activity B: Sit-Ins Cause & Effect Card Sort

Purpose:

This activity helps students understand how individual actions during the sit-ins led to larger changes in communities and across the nation. Students practice identifying cause-and-effect relationships using events from the article.

Materials Needed:

Cause and Effect cards (printed or displayed)
Student notebooks

How to Do It:

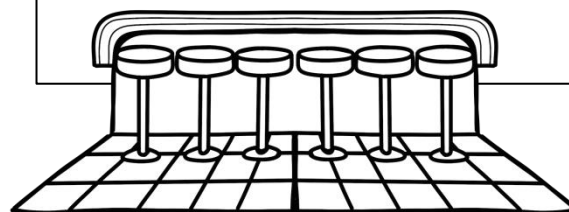
1. Give students a mixed set of cause and effect cards.
2. Students work individually or in pairs to match each cause with its correct effect.
3. After matching, students draw arrows in their notebooks or glue the cards into a T-chart.
4. Review the matches as a class using the answer key.

Discussion Questions:

- How did peaceful actions lead to national attention
- Why did businesses begin to change their policies
- What does this activity show about the power of organized, nonviolent protest

Optional Extension:

Students choose one cause-and-effect pair and create a simple sketch or symbol that represents the connection.



Lesson 4 – Activity #1: Stay or Walk Away?” Decision Scenarios

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Scenario 1 — The First Day You sit at a lunch counter and politely ask for service. The worker ignores you and serves the people beside you.</p> | <p>Scenario 2 — The Crowd Gathers A group of teenagers stands behind you, whispering and laughing loudly to get your attention.</p> |
| <p>Scenario 3 — The Spill Someone “accidentally” bumps your stool and spills a drink near your feet.</p> | <p>Scenario 4 — The Insults A customer leans close and says, “You’re wasting your time. No one is going to serve you.”</p> |
| <p>Scenario 5 — The Manager Arrives The store manager tells you, “You need to leave. You’re causing trouble.”</p> | <p>Scenario 6 — The Long Wait You’ve been sitting for over an hour. Your legs are tired, and you’re hungry.</p> |
| <p>Scenario 7 — The Police Walk In Two police officers enter the store and look around. They haven’t spoken to you yet.</p> | <p>Scenario 8 — A Friend Gets Upset The person sitting beside you starts to cry after someone yells at them.</p> |
| <p>Scenario 9 — A Supporter Appears A stranger quietly places a note on the counter that says, “Stay strong. I’m with you.”</p> | <p>Scenario 10 — The Store Closes The lights dim, and the staff begins closing the store even though customers are still inside.</p> |

Lesson 4 – Activity #2: Cause & Effect Card Sort CAUSE Cards

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Businesses lose customers during the protests.</p> | <p>Protestors remain seated even when people yell at them.</p> | <p>Protestors refuse to fight back, even when threatened.</p> | <p>Teenagers pour food on peaceful demonstrators.</p> |
| <p>Students in Nashville train to stay calm during harassment.</p> | <p>Sit-ins spread to more than 100 cities.</p> | <p>Four students sit at a Woolworth's lunch counter and politely ask to be served.</p> | <p>News reporters cover the sit-ins and show the nation what is happening.</p> |

Lesson 4 – Activity #2: Cause & Effect Card Sort EFFECT Cards

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>The sit-ins become a major turning point in the Civil Rights Movement.</p> | <p>The public sees the contrast between peaceful protestors and angry mobs.</p> | <p>The sit-ins gain national attention.</p> | <p>The movement grows stronger and more widespread.</p> |
| <p>Nashville becomes known for its disciplined, organized movement.</p> | <p>More students join the movement.</p> | <p>Businesses feel pressure to change their policies.</p> | <p>Many lunch counters decide to desegregate.</p> |

Lesson 4 – Activity #2: Cause & Effect Card Sort — Answer Key

1. Cause: Four students sit at a Woolworth's lunch counter and politely ask to be served.
Effect: More students join the movement.

2. Cause: Protestors remain seated even when people yell at them.
Effect: The sit-ins gain national attention.

3. Cause: Teenagers pour food on peaceful demonstrators.
Effect: The public sees the contrast between peaceful protestors and angry mobs.

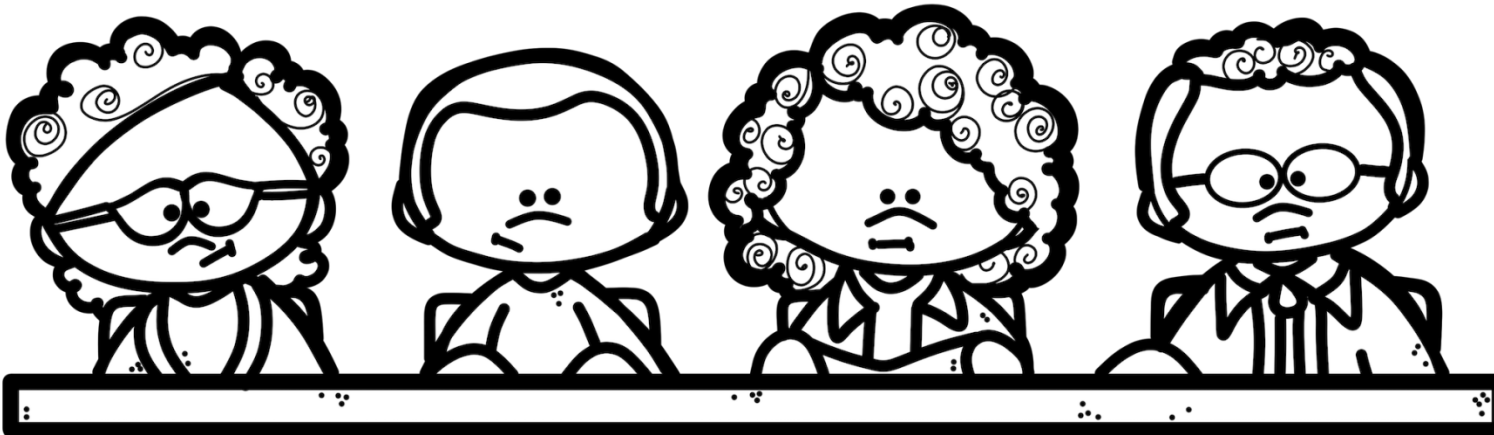
4. Cause: Students in Nashville train to stay calm during harassment.
Effect: Nashville becomes known for its disciplined, organized movement.

5. Cause: Sit-ins spread to more than 100 cities.
Effect: The movement grows stronger and more widespread.

6. Cause: Businesses lose customers during the protests.
Effect: Many lunch counters decide to desegregate.

7. Cause: News reporters cover the sit-ins and show the nation what is happening.
Effect: Businesses feel pressure to change their policies.

8. Cause: Protestors refuse to fight back, even when threatened.
Effect: The sit-ins become a major turning point in the Civil Rights Movement.



Lesson 5 — Working for Equal Rights

Activity A: “Which Action Made the Biggest Impact?” Ranking Cards

Purpose:

Students analyze five major Civil Rights actions and rank them from most to least impactful using evidence from the article. This activity helps students understand how different events contributed to change during the Civil Rights Movement.

How to Do It

1. Give students the five event cards below (or display the list on the board).
2. Students rank the events from 1 = biggest impact to 5 = still important.
3. Students write a short explanation for their top choice.
4. Discuss as a class how each action helped move the nation toward equality.

Discussion Questions

- Which action created the most immediate change
- Which action had the longest-lasting impact
- How did these events build on one another

Optional Extension

Students reorder the same cards from most dangerous to least dangerous based on the risks protestors faced.

Activity B: “Before and After” Civil Rights T-Chart

Purpose:

Students compare life before and after major Civil Rights laws. This activity helps students visualize how the Freedom Riders, marches, and new laws changed daily life for African Americans.

How to Do It

1. Students draw a T-chart labeled Before and After.
2. Using the article, they list examples of segregation, unfair voting practices, and discrimination on the left side.
3. On the right side, they list the protections created by the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act.
4. Students share one “before” and one “after” example with a partner.

Discussion Questions

- Which changes had the biggest effect on daily life
- How did laws help protect rights people were already fighting for
- Why were both protests and laws necessary

Optional Extension

Students rewrite one “before” item as a news headline showing how life changed after the new laws.

Lesson 5 – Activity #1: “Which Action Made the Biggest Impact?” Ranking Cards

Freedom Riders

challenged bus station segregation (1961)

Birmingham Bombing

tragedy that shocked the nation (1963)

March on Washington

“I Have a Dream” speech (1963)

Civil Rights Act

ended segregation in public places (1964)

Voting Rights Act

protected voting rights (1965)

Lesson 5 – Activity #2: “Before and After” Civil Rights T-Chart

Before

After

segregated buses and bus stations

bus stations required to follow desegregation laws

unfair literacy tests for voting

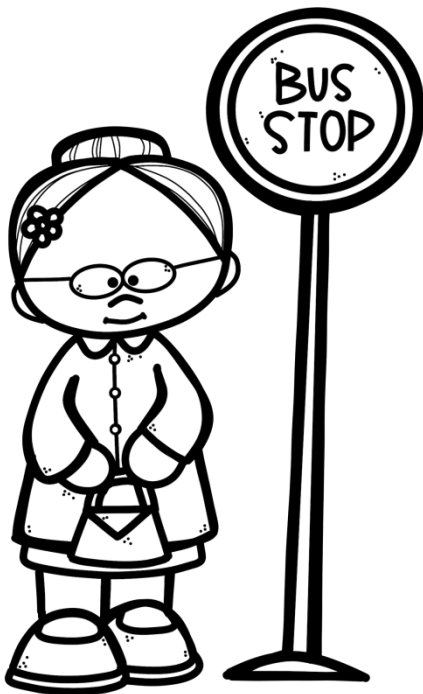
voting Rights Act banned unfair voting tests

segregated public places

Civil Rights Act ended segregation in public places

limited legal protection from discrimination

stronger federal protection for equal rights



Lesson 6 — Martin Luther King Jr. Activities

Activity A: Martin Luther King Jr. Mini-Timeline

Purpose:

Students sequence four major events in Martin Luther King Jr.'s life to see how his leadership and message developed over time. This activity reinforces chronological understanding and highlights King's lasting impact.

Materials Needed:

- Timeline template or notebook page
- Pencils or pens

How to Do It:

1. Students draw a four-box timeline labeled with the years 1929, 1955, 1963, and 1968.
2. Using the article, they fill in each box with a short caption and simple sketch.
3. Encourage students to include key details such as *Atlanta*, *Montgomery*, *Washington D.C.*, and *Memphis*.
4. Review the completed timelines together, discussing how each event built toward the next.

Discussion Questions:

- Which event shows King becoming a national leader?
- How did his actions inspire others?
- What does the timeline reveal about his legacy?

Optional Extension:

Students add a fifth box titled "Legacy" and write one way King's message continues today.

Activity B: MLK "Quote & Meaning" Match

Purpose:

Students explore the meaning behind several short, well-known ideas from Martin Luther King Jr. This activity helps students connect his words to real-world actions and values.

Materials Needed:

- Quote cards and matching meaning cards (or display on board)
- Student notebooks

How to Do It:

1. Provide students with three or four short MLK quotes and matching meanings.
2. Students pair each quote with the explanation that best fits its message.
3. After matching, students write one sentence explaining how the quote connects to King's beliefs about nonviolence and equality.
4. Discuss as a class how these ideas still apply today.

Discussion Questions:

- Which quote feels most powerful to you?
- How does this quote connect to King's actions?
- How could this idea apply to our school or community?

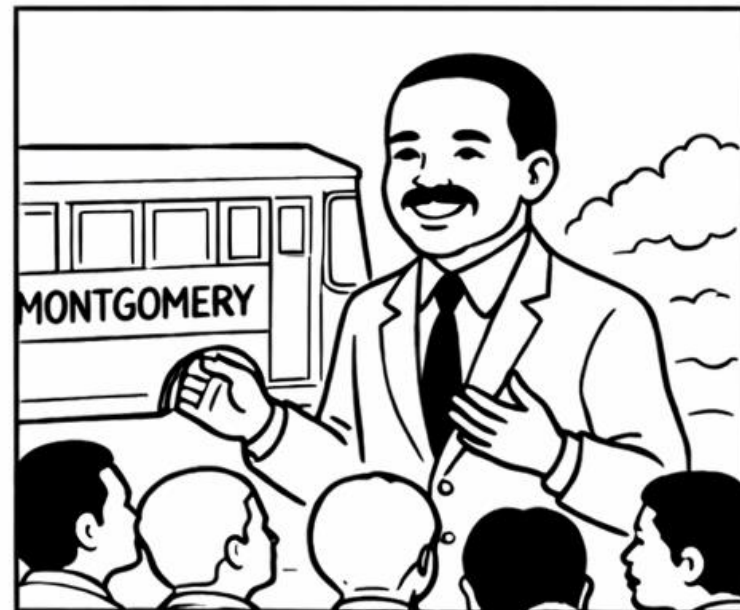
Optional Extension:

Students design a small poster or notebook page illustrating one quote's meaning.

Lesson 6 – Activity #1: “ Martin Luther King Jr. Mini-Timeline



1929 – Born in Atlanta, Georgia.



1955 – Becomes a leader in the Montgomery Bus Boycott.



1963 – “I Have a Dream” speech at the March on Washington.



1968 – A tragic loss in Memphis, Tennessee.

MLK Quotes

Choosing love leads to positive change.

Unfairness hurts everyone.

Do the right thing now.

"I have decided to stick with love."

Choosing love leads to positive change.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

Unfairness in one place affects everyone.

"The time is always right to do what is right.

Doing the right thing shouldn't be delayed.

These quotes show how Martin Luther King Jr. believed in peaceful action and fairness for all people.



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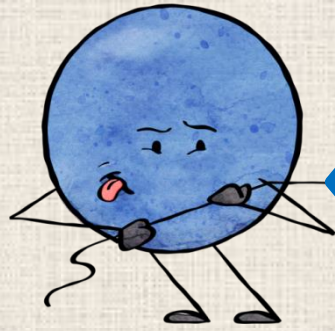
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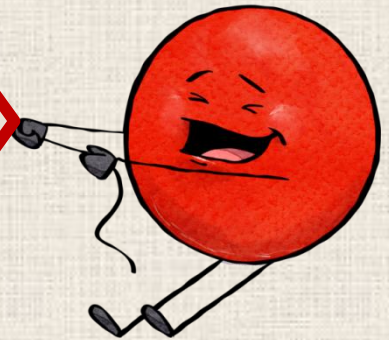




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