

An Interactive Theater Presentation Using the Essay "From Terror to Triumph: Historical Overview"

By Liz Morrison

Overview

This lesson is designed to accompany the essay "From Terror to Triumph: Historical Overview" by Ronald Davis, Ph.D. It provides students an opportunity to learn about the history of Jim Crow in the United States by creating an interactive theater production. They will use the information in the historical overview to write and act out a play that introduces them and their classmates to the four stages of Jim Crow.

Curriculum Standards

For a list of standards that this unit addresses, [click here](#).

Time Required

Three class periods (based on the 90 minute block)

Materials Needed

- Computer with Internet access and projector (1 per teacher)
- "From Terror to Triumph: Historical Overview" **Note-taking Guide** (1 per student)
- **Scene-Writing Guide** (1 per student)

The Lesson

Anticipatory Set

Explain to your class that they have the opportunity to create a four-act, interactive play on the history of Jim Crow that may be presented to the elementary schools in our school district for Black History Month. A key question they should consider is: "What will you need to know to create an interactive play on the history of Jim Crow?"

Procedures

1. Discuss the key question above with students and write their responses on the board.
2. Explain that they will obtain the background information they need to create their play from the **Jim Crow History Resources**. Distribute the **Note-taking Guide**. Project the site and discuss the completion of the guide.
3. Have students go to the computer lab to access the site. If computers are not available, you may make a copy of the overview and distribute it to the students.
4. Lead a class discussion in which students answer the following questions:

- What did they learn about Jim Crow?
- How could they turn the information into an interactive play?
- If the class divides into five groups and each group is assigned to one of the major topics, how can the groups connect each scene from the play?

Then, write the ideas on the board and determine which ones will be part of all of the scenes. Have the students rank the groups they are interested in on a scale of 1-5, where 1 = most interested and 5 = least interested.

5. Divide the students into five groups, based on their preferences, for these topics:
 - Group 1 -- Creating Jim Crow
 - Group 2 -- Surviving Jim Crow
 - Group 3 -- Resisting Jim Crow
 - Group 4 -- Escaping Jim Crow
 - Group 5 -- The Transition from Segregation to Civil Rights
6. Have students move into their assigned groups.
7. Place job descriptions on the overhead and discuss them with students.
8. Distribute the **Scene-Writing Guide**. Remind students to refer to their Note-taking Guide to ensure they include important people, events, and ideas.
9. Instruct groups to divide the jobs among members, then begin writing their scripts and practicing, and making sure scene coordinators meet and prop coordinators gather and/or create the needed props.
10. Have students present the play and complete "Notes on the Interactive Production."

Assessment

You can assess students using the following tools in this lesson plan:

- **Group Evaluation Form**
- **Self-Evaluation Form**
- **Teacher Scene/Play Scoring Guide**

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Interactive Theater Presentation Activity
From Terror to Triumph: Historical Overview

Note-Taking Guide

Directions: Access the **Jim Crow History Resources** page, then click on the links to find out more information on a person or event and complete the chart below.

Topic	Important People (Who are they and what were their roles?)	Important Events/Dates (What was the event? Why was it important? When did it happen?)	Major Ideas (What are the major ideas in the section?)	Visualization (What pictures did you see in your mind while reading the information?)
Creating Jim Crow				
Surviving Jim Crow				
Resisting Jim Crow				
Escaping Jim Crow and Transitioning from Segregation to Civil Rights				

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Scene-Writing Guide

Directions: Your group will create a 7-10 minute interactive scene that will be included in the four-act play on the history of Jim Crow. To do this, you will assign all group members specific roles and responsibilities and list them below:

Name: _____ Job/Role: _____

Name: _____ Job/Role: _____

Name: _____ Job/Role: _____

Name: _____ Job/Role: _____

Name: _____ Job/Role: _____

Note, too, that all group members also will contribute to writing the dialogue for the script and will participate in the performance.

Step 1: Assign Roles and Responsibilities

Director: Leads brainstorming discussion on ideas for the dramatization. Records ideas and writes the script for the production. Ensures the dramatization incorporates the events, ideas, and important people from the Note-taking Guide.

Researcher: Acquires additional information from the website, textbooks, and library to add depth to the production. Makes sure the most information from the Note-taking Guide is incorporated into the presentation.

Stage Manager: Works with the group to create a list of props, costumes, visuals, and sound effects for the production. Makes a copy of the props list for the coordinator. Gathers the necessary materials. Makes any necessary props for the production. Coordinates the effort to arrange the set before and after the performance.

Host: Ensures the group includes audience participation in the production as much as possible. Involves the audience during the performance. Answers the audience's questions.

Coordinator: Meets with the coordinator from the other four groups after the script has been written to create transitions from one scene to the next. Reports to the director so the transition can be incorporated into the script. Determines what props can be used by more than one group and shares the information with the stage manager.

Step 2: Brainstorm Ideas and Write the Script

1. Ensure all group members have their Note-taking Guide.

2. When writing the script, ensure the important people, events, and ideas are included.
3. Incorporate audience participation in the script.
4. Ensure interactive performance will be 7-10 minutes, including audience participation.
5. Refer to the Scene/Play Scoring Guide to ensure your scene meets the requirements.

Step 3: Set the Stage

1. List, make, and gather props.
2. Discuss costumes and decide who is responsible for each item.

Step 4: Rehearse

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Group Evaluation: _____

How well did your group work on this task? Mark the number in each column that best describes your group for each statement, according to the following scale:

3 = Excellent

2 = Good

1 = Needs Improvement

Evaluation Category	Self	Group	Advisor
We stayed on task and used our time effectively.			
We made an effort to make sure that all members understood the group's tasks.			
We encouraged everyone to contribute ideas.			
We followed the instructions for completing the task.			
We used the Note-taking Guide to ensure we incorporated the important information from the reading into our presentation.			
We included the audience in the preparation and in the performance.			
We used props to enhance our performance.			
Each group member completed his/her assigned task and contributed to the group as a whole.			

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Self-Evaluation

Name: _____ Group: _____

Directions: Circle the number best describing your level of participation and cooperation according to the following scale:

- 5 = Exceeded Expectations
- 4 = Above Average
- 3 = Average
- 2 = Below Average
- 1 = Made little or no contribution

1. Participated in brainstorming and script writing process.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

2. Listened to other group members.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

3. Encouraged other group members to participate.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

4. Adhered to the motto, "no one is finished, until everyone is finished."

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

5. Completed my assigned tasks.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

6. Contributed to the overall success of the project.

5 4 3 2 1

Comments:

7. What I liked best about working with this group:

8. What I found most challenging working with this group:

9. What I would do to improve my group participation and cooperation:

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Teacher Scene/Play

Scoring Guide

Group: _____

	Excellent	Good	Average	Needs Improvement
Content				
Performance				
Audience Participation				
Setting				
Coordination				