

Women and Jim Crow: A Geographic Perspective

By Daniel Ordorica

Overview

This lesson will help students see a number of different aspects of African-American women's experiences in the Jim Crow Era. Students will look for patterns and diversity in experiences and reactions and will discover how differences in geography can affect people's lives. This lesson is most effective as a follow up lesson to *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow* television series. While its in-depth analysis and research is most suitable for the eleventh grade U.S. history curriculum, you also can adapt the lesson to other grade levels.

Curriculum Standards

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

Time Required

Approximately six class periods.

Materials Needed

- Poster board
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils
- **Jim Crow and Women Map**

The Lesson

Anticipatory Set

Quick-write: Ask students to reflect on how their lives would be different if they had grown up in a different geographical area. For instance, if your school is in a city, how would living in a rural area affect them? You should then lead students in a short discussion on how geography has affected their lives.

Procedures

1. Assign students roles as African-American women under Jim Crow. Take these women from the jimcrowhistory.org site and assign the roles so that there are groups of three students with women from the same state, as follows:

Possible Grouping for 36 students (If you have more, you can add to make some groups of four women):

Virginia

Ella Jo Baker
Coralie Cook
Anne Spencer

Virginia

Virginia W. Broughten

Alabama

Ellen Tarry
Annie Louise Burton
Virginia Foster Durr

Louisiana

Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs

Olivia America Davidson
Ella Fitzgerald

Mahalia Jackson
Alice Dunbar-Nelson

Massachusetts

Marita Bonner
Sarah Parker Remond
Dorothy West

South Carolina

Alice Childress
Lillie Patterson
Frances Rollin Whipper

New York

Anita Bush
Olivia Ward Bush-Banks
Vinnette Carroll

Kentucky

Margaret Esse Danner
Ann Allen Shockley
Lucy Wilmot Smith

New York

Toni Cade Bambara
Jane Matilda Bolin
Lena Horne

Pennsylvania

Charlotte Forten
Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller
Ethel Waters

Georgia

Georgia Douglas Johnson
Adella Hunt Logan
Victoria Earle Matthews

Washington DC

Fanny Jackson Coppin
Daisy Adams Lampkin
May Miller

2. Day 1: Put students into groups by state and talk them to create an illustrated timeline of events in their state during Jim Crow (1870-1960) on the poster board.
3. Day 2: Have students continue working on their timelines.
4. Day 3: Have students finish timelines and discuss them, as a group, what it must have been like for African-American women in those states. If students have trouble hypothesizing on their own, remind them of what the documentary said about women in Jim Crow. Then, have the groups decide on a one-word description that African-American women would have used to describe their state and explain why that word fits what they know about the state in one paragraph.
5. Days 4 and 5: Assign students to research their roles to prepare for the next day's Salon. Questions they should consider are:
 - When did the woman live?
 - What was she known for?
 - What were the major events in and their effects on her life?
 - How did living/growing up in the state affect her decisions in life?
6. Day 6: Salon. Arrange the room by putting desks or tables together to create groups of four. You may use paper tablecloths and provide music, juice, and cookies to create the ambience of a salon. Make sure students should have nametags--they also may dress in clothing appropriate for the time. Have students initially sit, with pens and notepaper, at tables by state. At their first table, have them should introduce each other with their names, birthdays, what they're known for. Then, tell them to discuss how living in their state under Jim Crow has affected their lives by, for instance, considering the similarities and differences in their experiences and what might account for these similarities and differences (geography, time, etc)?

After about 20-25 minutes, tell students to switch tables. They may go to any other table, as long as there is nobody else from their state at the new table. Then, have students in the new, more diverse groups, re-introduce themselves and talk about the similarities and differences in their lives. For example: What accounts for the similarities and differences? What are the differences between women from the North and those from the South?

Assessment

Have students answer the following question in a five-paragraph question: How did geography affect the lives of African-American women under Jim Crow?

Interdisciplinary Links

As many of the women in the jimcrowhistory.org project are artists, musicians, and writers, you can use this lesson for any of these disciplines, with an included research component on what the women created and how it reflects their experience of Jim Crow.

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