



Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Curriculum and Lesson Plans

Foot Soldiers for Justice

Samantha Elliott Briggs, Ph.D.

Overview

“Foot Soldier” is a term of endearment given to the brave individuals who fought tirelessly during the Civil Rights Movement in an effort to put an end to the inhumane treatment of African Americans. Some foot soldiers, like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Andrew Young and John Lewis, received great notoriety and applause. However, there were many unsung heroes that put their lives and livelihood on the line as well.

Did you know that Claudette Colvin was only 15 years old when she refused to give up her seat to a white patron on a Montgomery bus 9 months before Rosa Parks organized to do the same? What about sisters Dorie and Joyce Ladner? Did you know that they were expelled from Jackson State University after being urged by their mentor, Medgar Evers, to support the Tougaloo Nine? Ever hear that it was Carter Gaston, Jr., a Birmingham laborer, that guarded neighborhood churches involved in the CRM?

All of these individuals – and countless others – were impacted by the harsh treatment of the Jim Crow South and answered the call to show up on the battlefield for justice. With this lesson students will focus on the words used to motivate and empower the foot soldiers as they sacrificed themselves on behalf of us all.

New Words

Foot Soldiers, endearment, inhumane, mentor, notoriety, livelihood

Grade Level:

Adaptable for All Grade Levels

Primary Learning Objectives

The students will:

- recognize unsung heroes of the Civil Rights Movement.
- collect words used to motivate and empower civil rights foot soldiers.

Approximate Duration of Lesson

One Language Arts Block

Materials and Equipment Needed

Copies of the clip art boot provided at the end of this lesson, newspapers and magazines, scissors, glue

Teacher Preparation

The teacher should select the stories of several of the individuals listed in the resource section of this lesson, and become familiar with their contributions to the Civil Rights Movement. If the teacher chooses to do the extension exercise for this lesson, it will be necessary to print out copies of their biographies or secure computers for the students

to use for independent or small group research. The teacher will also need to gather the necessary art materials and make copies of the clip art located at the end of this lesson. If there are not enough scrap magazines and newspapers that can be used within the classroom, the teacher can ask local businesses (doctors' offices, for example) or local markets for media they may be ready to discard.

Procedures/Activities

- The teacher should engage the students in a dialogue about what motivates them to do their best on school work or in extracurricular activities, like community service, athletics, art, music, or drama. Try to solicit answers that fall in line with: "I work hard because I like when my parents tell me how proud they are of me." Or "It makes me feel good when I help out in the community garden in my neighborhood; the older residents always have a smile on their face when I'm finished." They may even list rewards, like good grades, trophies and money as motivating factors.
- Ask students to describe a time that they felt defeated, or felt as though no effort on their part would make a difference in whatever task they saw ahead of themselves. The teacher may want to begin with an example of their own. After a few students have shared, ask students if they know what a "foot soldier" is, with regard to the Civil Rights Movement. Explain that a foot soldier is a term of endearment given to individuals who fought for social justice.
- Next, ask students to imagine what it must have felt like to be a foot soldier in the 1960s. The conversation should cover issues about fear and bravery along with the threat of violence, jail, loss of job or school sanctions (e.g. expulsion or suspension). Ask students what level of motivation was necessary to encourage and empower students – many of whom were their age – to participate in the Civil Rights Movement.
- Explain to students that they will help you create a bulletin board display by filling up the image of a boot with words that may have been used to encourage and empower the foot soldiers. Some words may include: justice, hope, power, equal rights, peace, freedom, love, happiness, and joy – just to name a few.
- The students should begin the project by writing a list of words based on the earlier conversation, and then they should look through print media (magazines, newspapers, etc.) in search of the words written on their list. Students may need to be reminded that if they should cut out any relevant word that they may find, even if it's a word that they had not previously considered.
- The teacher should distribute the image of the boot to students and allow them to write their names on the back of the boot before they begin gluing the words onto the front of the boot.
- Once the students have covered their image with motivational words, they should cut their boots out and add them to a prepared bulletin board with a catchy title like, "Foot Soldiers for Justice," "The Power of Words," or "Words Give Inequality the Boot." You may even consider: "Words to Stand by" or "Marching onto Freedom."

Assessment Strategies

Students should be graded on the depth of their word associations and the neatness of their work.

Extension

Students could also be asked to write a paragraph or perhaps an essay about how words can be used to both condemn and empower. People who were proponents of segregation often lashed out against protestors and used words to try and break their spirits. In contrast, words were the very thing that kept protestors motivated to persist in their efforts.

Remediation

If locating words in print media and cutting them out proves to be a challenge, students should have the option to simply write in the words that were discussed as a whole group.

Additional Resources

More Foot Soldiers to Research

Hassan Jeffries

James Farmer

Rabbi Israel "Si" Dresner

James Peck

Juanita J. Craft

Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr.

Howard Thurman

Anne and Carl Braden

Modjeska Monteith Simkins

References

Dorie and Joyce Ladner

<http://www.clarionledger.com/article/20110825/NEWS/111010018/Witnesses-King-s-Dream-speech-recall-unforgettable-day>

Joyce Ladner

<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/joyce-ladner-39>

Dorie Ladner

<http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/dorie-ladner-41>

Claudette Colvin

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101719889>

Carter Gaston, Jr. and Foot Soldiers of Justice

<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines03/0502-09.htm>

Unsung Foot Soldiers

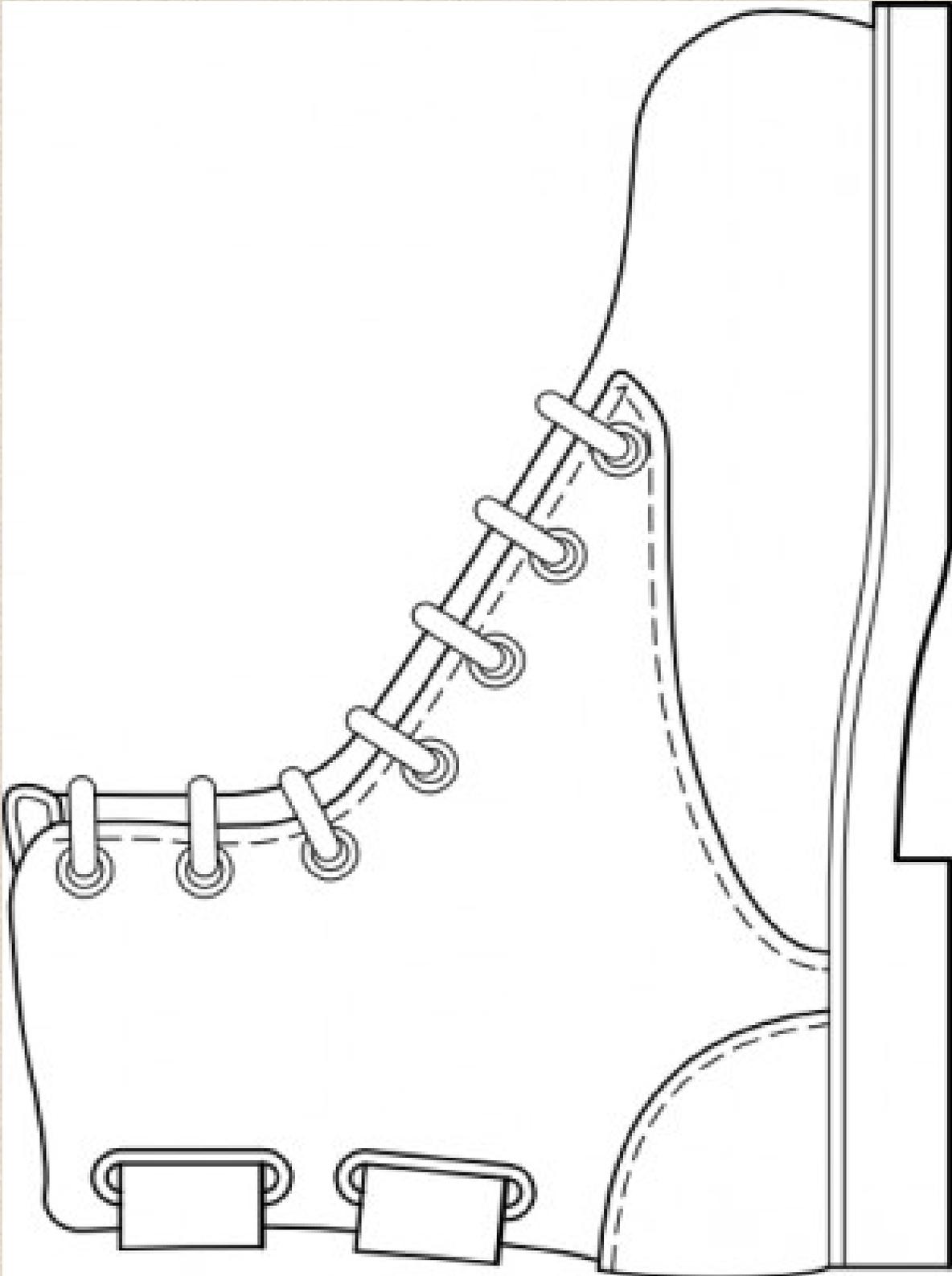
<http://www.footsoldier.uga.edu/about/intro.html>



Birmingham Civil Rights Institute Lesson Plan-Standards

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Social Studies Course of Study Standards

FOURTH GRADE

Standard 14. Describe the social, political, and economic impact of the modern Civil Rights Movement on Alabama.

- Identifying important people and events of the modern Civil Rights Movement

Examples: people—Martin Luther King, Jr., George C. Wallace, Rosa Parks; events—Montgomery bus boycott, Birmingham church bombing, Selma-to-Montgomery march

- Identifying benefits of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act

SIXTH GRADE

Standard 13 GRADE

Standard 13. Describe the role of major civil rights leaders and significant events occurring during the modern Civil Rights Movement. Examples: civil rights leaders—Rosa Parks; Martin Luther King, Jr.; events—Brown versus Board of Education; Montgomery bus boycott; student sit-ins; march on Washington, D.C.; Freedom Rides; Civil Rights Act of 1964; Malcolm X; voter registration efforts; Selma-to-Montgomery march.

SEVENTH GRADE – Citizenship

Standard 11. Describe examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence of groups, societies, and nations, using past and current events.

- Tracing the political and social impact of the modern Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to the present, including Alabama’s role. *Extension to consider the impact.*

ELEVENTH GRADE

Standard 14. Trace events of the modern Civil Rights Movement from post-World War II to 1970 that resulted in social and economic changes, including the Montgomery bus boycott, the desegregation of Little Rock Central High School, the march on Washington, and the Freedom Rides.

- Tracing the federal government’s involvement in the modern Civil Rights Movement, including the abolition of the poll tax, the desegregation of the armed forces, the nationalization of state militias, Brown versus Board of Education, the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965
- Explaining contributions of individuals and groups to the modern Civil Rights Movement, including Martin Luther King, Jr., James Meredith, Medgar Evers, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
- Identifying people and events in Alabama that influenced the modern Civil Rights Movement, including Rosa Parks, Autherine Lucy, John Patterson, George C. Wallace, Vivian Malone, Fred Shuttlesworth, *the Children’s March*, the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing, and the Selma-to-Montgomery march
- Describing the development of a Black Power movement, including the change in focus of the SNCC, the rise of Malcolm X, and Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panther Movement
- Describing the impact of African-American entrepreneurs on the modern Civil Rights Movement Examples: S. B. Fuller, A. G. Gaston

English Language Arts Course of Study - Appendix D:

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

Key Ideas and Details

Standard 1. *Can use the primary source of oral histories or written histories from the foot soldiers who are the unsung heroes. Resources include the BCRI website Resource Gallery oral histories and the Kids in Birmingham 1963 website.*

Grades 6-8. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Grades 9-10. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

Grades 11-12. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, {connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.}

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Standard 9.

Grades 6-12. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

English Language Arts Course of Study

Language Standards

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Consider the specific grade level and adapt this lesson plan in leading conversations and in independent learning about the unsung hero foot soldiers.

[L.K-2.6] Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts [including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., *because*) – grade 1] [including using adjectives and adverbs to describe (e.g., *When other kids are happy that makes me happy*) – grade 2].

[L.3-5.6] Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, [including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships (e.g., *After dinner that night we went looking for them*) – grade 3] [including those that signal precise actions, emotions, or states of being (e.g., *quizzed, whined, stammered*) and that are basic to a particular topic (e.g., *wildlife, conservation, and endangered* when discussing animal preservation) – grade 4] [including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., *however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition*) – grade 5].

[L.6-8.6] Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

[L.9-12.6] Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.