



Domestic Terrorists

Guide for Curriculum Unit 11.02.06
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The purpose of this unit is to compare and contrast five Americans who killed for a cause, even if their actions were morally repugnant to most observers then and since: Nat Turner, John Brown, Charles Manson, Timothy McVeigh, and James Charles Kopp. At first glance these men don't seem to belong on the same list. Some might even be outraged that Nat Turner is considered together with Timothy McVeigh. Charles Manson is widely regarded as insane. Whatever place they had on a religious-political spectrum, a fire, a passion of some kind, moved them to act; to further a cause, they were willing to have others die. Students will research these five men and come to their own conclusions about what characteristics or life history these men shared that might explain their ability to pull the trigger or order others to do so. Students will research the following: family history, marital status and/or issues with intimacy, employment and financial problems, history of violence, views of authority, religious beliefs, and affiliation with causes or groups. In no way do I intend to have students excuse murder by explaining causes that drove killers; nor do I intend to bring students to accept moral relativism. I start with the proposition that killing innocent people is always wrong. Students need to know that John Brown's Pottawatomie Massacre is no less evil than Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Murrah Building, and to understand the danger from those who believe that the ends justify the means.

(Recommended for U.S. History and Journalism, grades 10 and 11)

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