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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1992 Volume I: The Constitution, Courts and Public Schools

Eyes on the Prize: The Civil Rights Struggle, 1954-1965

Guide for Curriculum Unit 92.01.03
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This curriculum unit is intended for use as a study guide for the PBS video-film series, “Eyes on the Prize,” the civil rights movement seen through the eyes of the photojournalists who were there to record the events for posterity. The struggle for equality begins with the Little Rock integration of Central High School, and ends with the Selma-to-Montgomery march a decade later.

Eight days of film outlines and study guides are included in the unit, plus three role playing activities centering around the Little Rock incidents at Central High School. The unit was designed for use in high school history classes, but middle school students might also benefit from the materials and activities. Teachers not intending to cover the entire civil rights era may want to focus on one or two segments from the unit.

The unit presents the civil rights struggle as an effort to overcome five different barriers: social, educational, political, legal, and racial. The confrontations, violent and non-violent, should be seen from these perspectives where possible. Setting goals and then using appropriate methods to achieve these goals are integral parts of this curriculum, as well as the black-white cooperation necessary to achieve something everyone could be part of. The important role played by ordinary students in the movement for justice is one that is emphasized, as well as the courage and commitment needed to sustain us in the face of great odds.

It is my hope that teachers who have used these films in the past will find these materials useful in their classrooms; those who have not used them will be encouraged to show them to their students as a way of inspiring them to achieve even greater progress toward the goal of racial peace and harmony.

(Recommended for U.S. History, grades 10-11, and African-American History, grades 10-12)

Key Words

Disorder American Civil History Rights Afro-American School Desegregation Sixties United States Constitution Prejudice Supreme Court Cases Race Relations

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