

High School History Lesson Plan: Civil Rights Issues

Introduction

Each lesson in the Adolescent Literacy Toolkit is designed to support students through the reading/learning process by providing instruction before, during, and after reading/learning.

Note that lessons incorporate the *gradual release of responsibility* model. When this model is used within a single lesson and over several lessons, students are provided with enough instruction and guidance to use the literacy strategies on their own. The following lesson includes some examples of explicit instruction and modeling, guided practice, and independent practice, but students need more practice and feedback than is possible within the context of a single lesson.

Bold print indicates a direct link to the *Content Area Literacy Guide* where readers will find descriptions of literacy strategies, step-by-step directions for how to use each strategy, and quadrant charts illustrating applications across the four core content disciplines.

The following lesson plan and lesson narrative show history teachers how they can incorporate the use of literacy strategies to support high school students to learn history content and concepts. The lesson is designed for one block period (80–90 minutes) or two traditional classes (50 minutes).

Instructional Outcomes

NCSS Standard: To enable learners in developing historical comprehension so they might reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage; identify the central question(s) addressed in the historical narrative; draw upon data in historical maps, charts, and other graphic organizers; and draw upon visual, literary, or musical sources.

Content Learning Outcome: Students will draw upon primary source documents to elaborate upon information provided by historical narratives related to the Civil Rights Movement. Students will distinguish between accepted historical facts and interpretations; consider multiple perspectives in interpreting the past; and evaluate historical sources.

Literacy Support Strategies and Instruction

Before reading/learning: **Discussion Web** (teacher modeling)

- Materials: Overhead projector, overhead markers, overhead copy and handout of the introduction of the remarks of former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Stephen J. Pollak, *1968 and the Beginnings of Federal Enforcement of Fair Housing* (<http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/documents/pollak.htm>)

During reading/learning: **Discussion Web** (guided practice)

- Materials: **Discussion Web Template**, highlighters, and copies of or online access to each of the following Justice Department New Releases:
http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2007/August/07_crt_651.html
http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2007/August/07_crt_606.html
http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing/documents/gambone_pr.pdf

After reading/learning: **Discussion Web** (guided practice) and **Quick Write**

- Materials: Overhead projector, overhead marker, handout, **Discussion Web Template**, paper and pens for **Quick Write**

Before Reading/Learning (20 minutes)

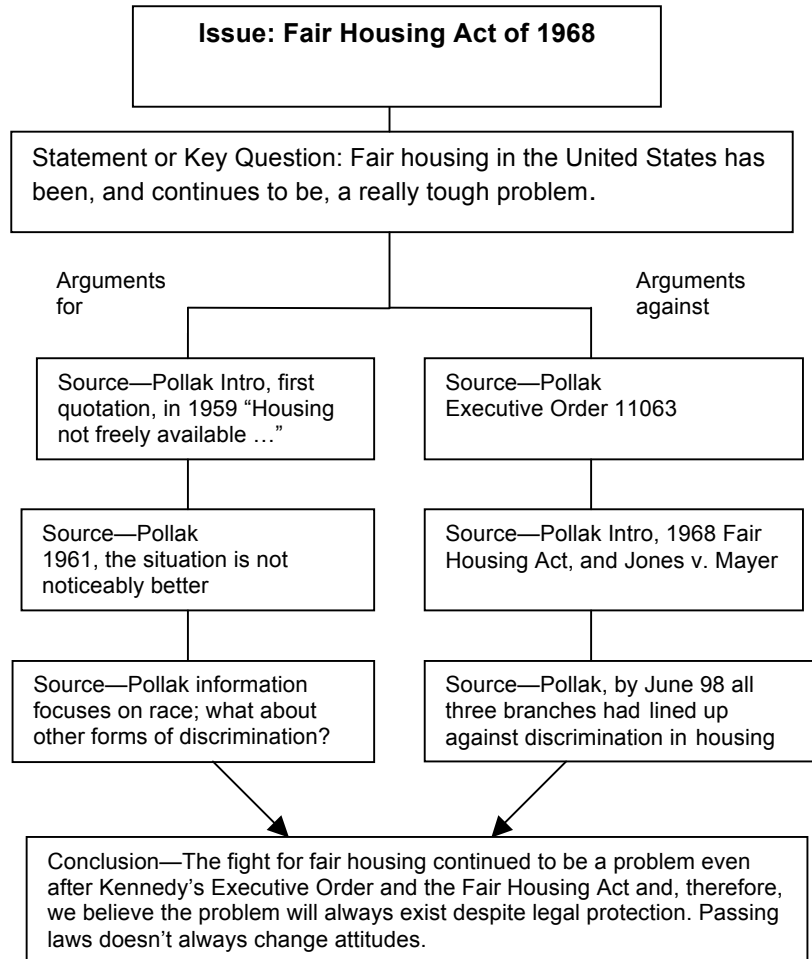
Literacy outcome: Students will activate prior knowledge and make connections to previous lessons in the Civil Rights unit.

Teacher facilitation: Remind students they have been studying Civil Rights and learning about specific Congressional Acts related to Civil Rights, particularly the 1882 Civil Rights Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1968 Fair Housing Act.

- 1) Use the overhead projector to display and read aloud the introduction to the speech by former Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, Stephen J. Pollak, *1968 and the Beginnings of Federal Enforcement of Fair Housing*. As you read, stop to **Think-Aloud** to share how you access prior knowledge and use comprehension strategies to make sense of the text. (e.g., as you read the first two quotations, think aloud about the fact that these are statements made in a 1961 report about fair housing and are not Stephen Pollak's own words. However, Stephen Pollak asks the question, "Where do we stand today, 40 years later?"). Tell students this is the question you want them to consider as they read and think about the history of the Civil Rights Movement. Finish reading the introduction aloud, pausing to ask students the main idea of each part of the introduction, modeling your thinking and probing theirs. Then return to Pollak's question, "Where do we stand today, 40 years later?" Tell students they will be reading to consider the question of fair housing from 1968 to present.
- 2) To focus the discussion, write the following guiding question on the board or post it on chart paper at the front of the room.
Guiding Question:
Is the following statement true or false, and why? A really tough problem for the United States has been, and continues to be, discrimination in housing.
- 3) Allow students to consider this question and solicit a few initial responses. Use probing questions to elicit students' reasoning for their response. Tell students that in order to consider this question further, they will be reading some press releases from the U. S. Justice Department related to recent fair housing cases. After reading, they will take a position on this statement using evidence from the texts they have read.
- 4) Distribute copies of the **Discussion Web Template**. Write the *Issue* in the first box and the *Statement* in the second box as shown in the following template. Explain to students they will be working in pairs to read through three Justice Department press releases. As they read, they will be gathering evidence in support for or against the statement. Tell them you will first show them how to do this using the text you began reading earlier.
- 5) Going back to Pollak's introduction, model a mini **Discussion Web**. Put the template on the overhead. Write the *issue*—fair housing. For the *statement*, write "Before 1968, the United States Government had worked hard to pass laws to ensure fair housing for all, regardless of race, gender, ability, or national origin." Then, rereading the text, think aloud and underline evidence for or against that statement. Engage the class in a discussion about your evidence for and against the statement, and model how you would use the evidence and the discussion to come to a conclusion.

Ask students to summarize how they would state a conclusion based on the text.
Write the conclusion in the last box of the example.

Example of a **Discussion Web Template**:



During Reading/Learning (40 minutes)

Literacy outcome: Students will improve their skills at using textual evidence to support their position on a topic for discussion.

Teacher facilitation: Tell students they will be using the **Discussion Web** to help them comprehend three press releases from the Justice Department. They will work collaboratively with a partner to find evidence in each of the texts for and against the statement about fair housing. Then each pair will compose a brief summary, following the process just modeled for them.

- 1) Assign students into pairs. Distribute handouts. Ask students to read through each of the three texts using **Paired Reading** or reading independently.
- 2) As they read, they will complete both sides of the **Discussion Web**, noting the text title and page numbers where they find evidence. Then they will work together to form a tentative conclusion. Encourage students to be open-minded and suspend

their personal judgments as they read and collect evidence for both sides. Pairs should share their thinking as they gather data and textual evidence to support arguments for or against the statement.

- 3) Circulate around the room to monitor student understanding, engagement, and persistence with completing the assignment as they read and work to find textual evidence.

After Reading/Learning (30 minutes)

Literacy outcome: Students will synthesize understanding of content text through small group and whole class discussion.

Teacher facilitation: When students have finished collecting data from the three texts, have two pairs work together to review their **Discussion Webs** and add additional arguments.

- 1) Ask the four students in each group to discuss all the evidence and come to a consensus about the strongest point of view, based on the evidence (not personal opinion).
- 2) Ask students to create a conclusion that summarizes the group's thinking and write it at the bottom of the **Discussion Web**. Encourage them to avoid biased language.
- 3) Once students have worked in their groups, have each group report their conclusions to the whole class. They should mention any dissenting viewpoints within their group. Limit the report to three minutes so all groups have time to present.
- 4) Have students complete a 3-2-1 *Exit Slip* using the following prompts:
 - The three most compelling arguments I heard today were:
 - Two ways the **Discussion Web** deepened my thinking about this issue:
 - One thing I learned that surprised me, or one question I still have about fair housing in America:
- 5) Debrief the lesson, focusing on new understandings about fair housing and questions for further study.

Like all student-completed literacy strategy templates, these completed **Discussion Web Templates** and *Exit Slips* provide valuable data for teacher reflection. These should not be graded. The student responses should be used to assess student learning and make decisions about next lessons.

Suggested Subsequent Lessons

The **Discussion Webs** that students complete can be used as the basis for an essay on this topic. Modeling how a **Discussion Web** can be turned into an essay can be a next step. The teacher can also use the **Discussion Web Template** to review articles and arguments related to other civil rights issues (e.g., employment and education), working first in pairs, then individually. Students can use completed **Discussion Web Templates** to write expository or persuasive essays on a variety of topics.

High School History Lesson Narrative: Civil Rights Issues

Teachers: As you read the lesson narrative, think about the following questions. You may want to discuss them with fellow history teachers.

- *What does the teacher do to support students' literacy development and content learning before, during, and after reading/learning?*
- *What challenges do you anticipate if you were to implement this lesson in your own classroom? How would you prepare to meet these challenges?*
- *How would you make improvements to this lesson?*

Ms. Clark knew her students enjoyed debating issues in history, but they often took positions and made arguments without a basis in evidence, despite the reading and learning they did on the topic. Ms. Clark valued the opportunity to have class discussion and recognized the increased level of engagement when she allowed time for class discussion and debate. But, she wanted to be sure these discussions supported their learning about history and were grounded in evidence from their reading. She decided to try using the literacy strategy called the **Discussion Web**, which tied provocative statements to a conclusion by helping students identify textual evidence for and against the issue. She thought structuring the class in this way might raise the quality of class discussions while still allowing students the chance to engage in the debates they seemed to enjoy so much.

Before Reading/Learning

Ms. Clark opened her class by reminding students of the learning they had done about specific Congressional Acts related to civil rights, particularly the 1882 Civil Rights Act, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the 1968 Fair Housing Act. "Today I want you to think about some of the questions that are raised in the following passage from the Assistant Attorney General, Stephen Pollak, in a speech entitled *1968 and the Beginnings of Federal Enforcement of Fair Housing*. Listen while I read a few paragraphs from Pollak's speech aloud." Ms. Clark began reading and thinking aloud about the text. She stopped after the first two quotations in the introduction. "So, these are quotes from a report issued in 1961, not Stephen Pollak's own words about the current time. But this 1961 report he's quoting tells us that 'the dollar in the dark hand' or, I'm assuming in the hand of someone of color, maybe African American, maybe Native American, didn't have the same buying power as in the hand of a white, Anglo person when it came to either buying or renting a place to live. That was how it was before the 1968 Fair Housing Act was passed." She continued reading Pollak's introduction, again stopping and rereading the words, "Where do we stand today, 40 years later?" She paused, and then told them, "Pollak asked that question in this speech, but this is a question I want you to think about now. Where do we stand in America today when it comes to fair housing? We'll be doing some reading today to explore the issue of fair housing from the 1960's to the present."

She wrote the following question on the white board: *Is the following statement true or false and why? A really tough problem for the United States has been, and continues to be, discrimination in housing.* She read it aloud and asked students to think for a moment about whether they agreed or disagreed. Joe's hand went up immediately. "I disagree." Ms. Clark asked him to explain. "Because after 1968, the law protected people from discrimination. It's illegal to not sell or rent to someone because of race." Ms. Clark nodded and looked around. "Anyone else want

to take a position?” Tessa raised her hand. “Well,” she said tentatively, “I know my aunt went to see an apartment for rent. She’s a single mom, and when it came time for paperwork, all of a sudden the landlord told her the apartment had already been rented. She couldn’t prove it, but she felt like the fact that she had kids and there was not a man signing the lease kept her from getting that apartment.” Ms. Clark thanked Tessa, and told her she hoped her aunt eventually found a place. Tessa nodded and Ms. Clark went on. “In order to take an informed position on this statement, I am going to give you three short articles to read.” She heard some moaning and groaning, but continued, “And you will use a strategy called a **Discussion Web** to gather evidence, evaluate your information, and come to a conclusion. You have used graphic organizers before in this class and I know you have used them in other classes. This is another type of graphic organizer meant to help you sort through the issues connected to a controversial topic. I want to emphasize that I don’t expect you all to agree and you are not trying to guess the right answer here. What you do need to do is read, evaluate, and take a position based on your learning. Okay?”

She passed out copies of the **Discussion Web Template** and then projected it on the overhead. “Watch me as I use this template with the text we just read, the Pollak introduction, to show you how I will gather information, evaluate it, and draw a conclusion.” She reread the text and stopped to underline places where there was information to support an argument for or against the statement she had written on the board. “The information in the first two quotes supports the fact that the problem of fair housing was persistent in 1959, in 1961, and even two years later when Kennedy signed his Executive Order, so I will put that in as an argument for the statement. However, the Executive Order served as a protection against discrimination, so I will put that as an argument against the statement because this was designed to improve the situation. The 1968 Fair Housing Act and the Jones v. Mayer case further protected people from discrimination. So I’ll add those to my arguments against the statement. Finally, I see that “all three branches of government lined up against discrimination in housing”—in other words, those passing laws, those interpreting laws, and those carrying out the laws were focused on a solution. That is an argument against the statement that “fair housing has been and continues to be a really tough problem.”

“Now I’m looking at what I read and I see most of this section of the text deals with discrimination based on race. Tessa brought up another kind of discrimination. We may not see as much discrimination based on race today, or at least we think we don’t, but there are other kinds of discrimination this section of text has not really addressed. And Tessa gave us a current example, so I will make a note of that here.” Ms. Clark wrote in the last box on the argument for side. “Now, before I draw a conclusion, I’m going to reread the statement.” She reread slowly, “Fair housing in the United States *has been*—I see plenty of evidence for that—and continues to be... Mmmm, I have to go to my evidence to see if there is some sign this problem is ongoing. Tessa’s example was evidence, but it wasn’t from the text. But the text did tell me that even after Kennedy’s Executive Order was passed, there was a need to pass the 1968 Fair Housing Act. And even after that was passed, there was a major court case about discrimination in housing. What do you think?” Marcus jumped in, “Yeah, but if the Executive Order wasn’t written and the Fair Housing Act wasn’t passed, there would have been no way those people could have sued. The laws made it fair!” Tessa raised her hand. “My aunt’s situation makes me think the problem may not be solved just because the laws were passed.

Laws may not change the way people think and act, and not everyone knows they can fight it.” Ms. Clark asked Tessa to help her compose a conclusion based on that statement and wrote it into the **Discussion Web Template** on the overhead.

During Reading/Learning

“Pollak’s remarks are about 1968 and the beginning of enforcement of the Fair Housing Act. As you read the other articles, I want you to think about the second half of the statement. Does fair housing continue to be a really tough problem for the United States?” Ms. Clark passed out copies of the three Justice Department press releases she had printed off. “Using **Paired Reading**, work with a partner to read through the three texts or you can read independently. As you read, underline evidence and work with your partner to decide if it goes into the **Discussion Web** and, if so, is it an argument for or against the statement? Now that you have three texts you are working from, not just one, I want you to put the title of the article where you found your evidence and, if applicable, a page or paragraph number. Some of you have a sense of how you stand on this issue just based on the discussion so far. But I want you to put your current opinion “on hold” and see how the information in these three texts influences the way you think about the issue. I want you to collect evidence for both sides and then work together to form a tentative conclusion that captures your thinking at this time *based on what you read*. Share your thinking and explain yourself to your partner. Ready? You have 35 minutes to complete the reading and the **Discussion Web Templates** and then we’ll come together to compare notes.”

Ms. Clark circulated around the room, listening in on pairs as they read the text aloud and discussed evidence. When she suspected a pair was floundering with the reading, she sat down to support them by taking a turn reading and thinking aloud. Some students needed encouragement to gather evidence for both sides of the argument, and several pairs were concerned about coming to a conclusion. “Remember, I told you there is not a “right” or “wrong” answer. This is a way for you to practice using evidence from your reading to help you form a point of view on a complicated issue. Do your best. I am asking you to develop a tentative conclusion and we’ll be discussing this some more.”

After Reading/Learning

Once students had finished filling out the templates, Ms. Clark asked them to find another pair to work with. “You will now have four to a group. The four of you will review your **Discussion Webs** and add additional arguments as you compare notes. You want your notes to reflect the best thinking and evidence from all four of you. Then, look at your tentative conclusions, discuss them, and see if you can write a single conclusion to summarize the thinking of all four people in your group. Don’t be afraid to change your mind after you hear everyone’s thinking. The whole idea of this activity is to help you gather and use information to form a position. Listening to the thinking of your classmates’ use of the text is another way for you to gather data.” Students moved into groups to work and discuss. Ms. Clark continued circulating and supporting students as they worked. After about fifteen minutes, she asked the groups to report to the whole class. “You have three minutes to report out to the whole class. Be sure to include any dissenting opinions from your group’s discussion. I heard several groups in heated discussion,” she said with a smile.

Once all the groups had presented their conclusions, Ms. Clark asked them to work independently to complete an *Exit Slip*. “Please jot down quickly a response to the following 3-2-1,” she instructed them as she wrote the prompts on the board. “I want to know the three most compelling arguments you heard today, the two ways the **Discussion Web** stretched your thinking about fair housing, and one thing you learned that surprised you,” she told them as she finished writing. “What if nothing surprised you?” asked Jackson. Ms. Clark was ready. “You can write a question you have about fair housing. Your choice, but pick one.” Students wrote quickly in the remaining minutes of class and dropped their *Exit Slips* and completed **Discussion Web Templates** on Ms. Clark’s desk as they left the room.