

THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CENTER
FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE, INC.
BELOVED COMMUNITY TEACH-IN
FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



**2025 LESSON PLAN 6-8:
HONORING LOCAL AND
NATIONAL HEROES OF
FREEDOM, JUSTICE, AND
DEMOCRACY THROUGH
DIGITAL STORYTELLING**



Lesson Plan: Honoring Local and National Heroes of Freedom, Justice, and Democracy through Digital Storytelling

Grade Level: 6-8

Duration: 2 days (45 minutes each)

Cross-Curricular Connections: Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), English/Language Arts, Social Studies, Art

Thematic Focus: Mission Possible: Freedom, Justice, Democracy, Nonviolence

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will research and understand the contributions of national and local figures who advanced freedom, justice, and democracy through nonviolence.
2. Students will create a digital storytelling presentation that reflects their understanding of these concepts.
3. Students will connect historical actions to their own communities and the ongoing pursuit of equality and justice.

Success Criteria:

- Students can articulate the contributions of figures who championed freedom, justice, and democracy through nonviolent means.
- Students actively participate in research and discussions about these figures' work.
- Students create a thoughtful digital presentation that honors the sacrifices and legacy of the figure they are studying.

Quote for the Lesson Introduction:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

— Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham Jail*

Use this quote to introduce the theme of the lesson, focusing on how students can contribute to the protection of freedom, justice, and democracy, just as the figures they will study did through nonviolent actions.

Day 1: Introduction and Research (45 minutes)

Introduction (10 minutes):

- Start with Dr. King’s quote from the Letter from Birmingham Jail and discuss its relevance to the protection of democratic values.

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- Discussion: Ask students how this quote relates to freedom, justice, and democracy.
- Definitions: Explain key concepts as listed in the glossary.

Research Assignment (35 minutes):

- **Group Work:** Divide students into small groups. Each group selects a national figure (like Dr. King) or a local figure relevant to their community (a list should be provided by the teacher).
- **Research:** Provide resources for students to find key facts about their figure’s nonviolent contributions for Freedom, Justice, and Democracy. Students should look for the following:
 - Background information about the figure.
 - Key contributions to freedom, justice, and democracy.
 - Examples of nonviolent actions taken by the figure.
 - Personal reflections on what they learned.
- **Tip for Teachers:** Teachers might consider contacting local historical societies for additional information about local figures.

Day 2: Digital Storytelling Presentation (45 minutes)

Presentation Creation (45 minutes):

1. Introduction to Digital Storytelling:

- **Explain what digital storytelling is and show examples. Here are some examples:**
 - **Short videos:** Like those on platforms such as YouTube that tell a story or share information.
 - **Interactive presentations:** Using tools like Google Slides or Prezi that combine text, images, and animations.
 - **Digital comics:** Websites or apps that allow users to create comic strips, incorporating dialogue and visuals in a storytelling format.
 - *See more ideas in the Appendix*
- Discuss the importance of visuals, text, and narrative in telling a story.

2. Create the Digital Storytelling Presentation:

- Each group creates a digital presentation about the figure students researched on Day 1 of the lesson.
- Components of the Presentation:
 - Background information about the figure.
 - Key contributions to freedom, justice, and democracy.
 - Examples of nonviolent actions taken by the figure.
 - Personal reflections on what they learned.

3. Presentation Guidelines:

- Encourage creativity with visuals (images, quotes, etc.).
- Remind students to keep their audience engaged.

Wrap Up:

- Briefly discuss how each group can prepare to present their digital story in the next lesson.
- Encourage students to think about how they can relate these figures' actions to their own lives.

National Figures to Consider:

1. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
2. Coretta Scott King
3. Rosa Parks
4. Cesar Chavez
5. Harriet Tubman
6. Frederick Douglass
7. Sojourner Truth
8. Thurgood Marshall
9. John Lewis
10. Ella Baker
11. Susan B. Anthony
12. Alice Paul
13. Ruth Bader Ginsburg
14. Sitting Bull
15. Wilma Mankiller

Potential Local/Community Figures:

- Local Civil Rights Activist
- Community Organizer
- School Board Member
- Mayor or City Council Member
- Historical Society Member

- Local Teacher or Educator Promoting Justice
- Youth Group Leader
- Social Worker
- Volunteer Coordinator at a Community Center

Glossary for Grades 6-8:

- **Advocacy:** Supporting or arguing for a cause, often aimed at promoting social change.
- **Civil Rights Movement:** A movement in the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s aimed at ending racial discrimination and promoting equal rights.
- **Democracy:** A system of government in which power is held by the people, who exercise it through voting.
- **Equality:** The state of being equal, especially in rights and opportunities.
- **Freedom:** The state of being free from oppression and having the ability to make choices.
- **Justice:** The quality of being fair and ensuring that everyone has equal rights.
- **Legacy:** Something handed down from one generation to another, such as contributions to society.
- Nonviolence is a love-centered way of thinking, speaking, acting, and engaging that leads to personal, cultural and societal transformation.

Appendix: Ideas for Digital Storytelling Presentation

- 1. Short Video:**
 - Students can create a short video using tools like iMovie or WeVideo that tells the story of their chosen figure. They can include visuals, narration, and relevant music to enhance the storytelling experience.
- 2. Interactive Presentation:**
 - Using platforms like Google Slides or Prezi, students can create a dynamic presentation that combines text, images, and animations. They can incorporate hyperlinks to additional resources or videos to enrich their story.
- 3. Digital Comic Strip:**

- Students can use comic creation tools such as Pixton or Comic Life to create a comic strip that illustrates key moments in their figure's life. This format allows them to blend dialogue and visuals creatively.
- 4. Podcast Episode:**
- Students can produce a podcast episode where they discuss their figure's contributions and the impact of their nonviolent actions. They can include interviews, sound effects, and music to make the episode engaging.
- 5. Digital Timeline:**
- Students can create a digital timeline using tools like Tiki-Toki or TimeToast that outlines important events in their figure's life. They can include images, quotes, and descriptions of key contributions to freedom, justice, and democracy.
- 6. Photo Essay:**
- Students can compile a series of images and captions that tell the story of their chosen figure. They can use tools like Adobe Spark to create a visually appealing photo essay that highlights significant moments and contributions.
- 7. Interactive Infographic:**
- Using tools like Canva or Piktochart, students can design an interactive infographic that summarizes their figure's life, contributions, and the values of freedom, justice, and democracy. This can include clickable elements for more information.
- 8. Website Creation:**
- Students can create a simple website using platforms like Google Sites or Wix to showcase their research. The site can include sections for the figure's biography, contributions, and reflections on their impact.

Supports for Diverse Learners:

Supports for Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs):

- **Visual Supports:** Use visual aids such as drawings or images to reinforce each concept (e.g., showing images of freedom, justice, and voting).
- **Movement Breaks:** Incorporate short, sensory-friendly movement breaks if necessary.
- **Simplified Instructions:** Offer clear and simple instructions for each activity. Provide additional verbal reminders as needed.

- **Extended Time:** Give additional time to complete the worksheets or participate in the voting activity.
- **Flexible Seating:** Allow students to work in comfortable seating arrangements if needed.

English Learner Supports:

- **Pre-Teach Vocabulary:** Introduce key terms like freedom, justice, and democracy with visual examples.
- **Bilingual Materials:** Provide worksheets with simplified text or translations in the students' home language.
- **Peer Support:** Pair English learners with a buddy who can assist with translating or explaining the activity.
- **Gestures and Visuals:** Use gestures, pictures, or props to demonstrate abstract ideas such as fairness and choice.
- **Simplified Language:** Use simple and direct language during instruction, repeating important concepts.

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