

Teaching the Legacy of Emmett Till through Poetry and Music Agenda

The workshop will be structured around four, 50-minute sessions

Session One: Historical Background

Using Stanley Nelson's 2003 documentary as background, participants will discuss the historical details of the lynching and the trial, with a particular emphasis on how Emmett Till's murder became a spark to the Civil Rights Movement. Additionally, participants will learn more about common myths and misunderstandings about the case, and be directed to resources that correct the historical record.

Readings:

- Stanley Nelson, director. *The Murder of Emmett Till*. Firelight Films. 2003. [53 minutes]
- William Bradford Huie, "The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi." In *Metress*, pp. 200-208.
- James L. Hicks, "James L. Hicks's 'Inside Story' of the Emmett Till Trial." In *Metress*, pp. 154-177.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Demonstrate an historical understanding of the Emmett Till lynching and its impact on the Civil Rights Movement.
- Analyze historical accounts of the case and identify common misunderstandings.
- Compile resources that help students to recognize the legacy of the lynching in contemporary discussion of race and justice

Session Two: Poetry and Music, Part I

Within two weeks of Emmett Till's lynching, poets and musicians began to explore the meaning of his murder. That exploration has never ceased, with contemporary artists still expressing their grief and outrage over the lynching. In this session, participants will interpret some of the seminal poems about the case, including works by Langston Hughes, Gwendolyn Brooks,

Audre Lorde, Cornelius Eady, Kevin Young, and Patricia Smith, and will be encouraged to find common themes and concerns. Additionally, participants will explore how these poems relate to the historical accounts discussed in session one, reflecting on the relationship between poetry and history, and connecting this event to current questions of race and justice.

Readings:

- Selections in "Literary Explorations," in *Metress*, pp. 290-345.
- Additional Poems provided in a PDF.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Analyze poetry for the techniques and devices that create meaning.
- Compare diverse poetic expressions for common themes and concerns.
- Appraise the relationship between poetry and history.

Session Three: Poetry and Music, Part II

An extension of Session Two, Session Three will continue our exploration of the poetic and musical legacy of the lynching. In addition to extending our discussion of poetry, this session will turn to songs that are easily accessible on the internet, with participants investigating how music contributes to historical understanding and the perpetuation of memory. Songs to be discussed include well-known works Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, and Emmylou Harris, as well as recent compositions by ALA.NI and others, and participants will be encouraged to draw parallels between the Till case and contemporary events.

Readings:

- Links provided to songs accessible on the internet.

Learning Objectives:

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- Analyze music for the techniques and devices that create meaning.
- Compare diverse musical expressions for common themes and concerns.
- Appraise the relationship between music and history.
- Formulate parallels between past events and the present.

Session Four: Assignments and Exercises

In this concluding session, participants will share ideas for classroom assignments and exercises. Those assignments and exercises will encourage and measure a diverse set of skills, from argumentative writing to creative expression, with participants developing approaches that will help students to understand Emmett Till's impact on the Civil Rights Movement and current discussions of race and justice.

Learning Objectives:

- Design assignments that measure diverse skill sets.
- Generate exercises that evaluate critical thinking.
- Locate historical understanding in creative.