

10th Grade High School Social Sciences Lesson Plan with a Language Arts Extension

Unit: Civil Rights Movement and Social Justice

Novel: *While the World Watched* by Carolyn McKinstry

Standards:

- **Alabama Course of Study Social Studies (High School):**
 - **SS24.US1.19.** Describe the emergence of the New South economy and Jim Crow era and explain the corresponding efforts to secure civil rights by Black Americans after Reconstruction.
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Lesson Objectives

- Analyze primary personal narratives to gain insight into the Civil Rights Movement's complexity.
 - Explore themes of resilience, forgiveness, and social justice at an advanced level.
 - Critically assess the impact of violent and nonviolent resistance.
 - Develop higher-order thinking through text-based analysis and discussion.
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Materials

- Copy of *While the World Watched*
 - Excerpts with analytical questions (below)
 - Group discussion and essay prompts
 - Supplementary historical documents (e.g., speeches, court rulings)
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Lesson Procedures

Day 1: Introduction and Context

- Provide historical background on the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, focusing on Birmingham, Alabama.
- Introduce Carolyn McKinstry's story and the significance of personal testimony in history.

Day 2-3: Reading and Analytical Discussion

- Assign selected chapters or excerpts from the novel.
- Use the excerpt questions below to guide deep discussions in small groups or Socratic seminars.

Day 4: Writing and Reflection

- Students write analytical essays responding to prompts such as:
 - How does McKinstry's narrative deepen understanding of the movement's emotional and social impact?

- Discuss the role of forgiveness as presented in the novel and its relevance today.

Day 5: Connection to Present-Day Activism

- Facilitate a class debate or project connecting historical civil rights activism to current social justice movements.

Excerpts with Questions and Answers for High School

Excerpt 1

"The bombing shattered not only bricks and mortar but the illusion that we were safe, that justice could protect us. It revealed the brutal reality of hatred embedded in our society."

Questions:

1. How does the metaphor of shattering "bricks and mortar" and "illusion" deepen the impact of the event?
2. What does this reveal about systemic racism and the limits of legal protection at the time?
3. How might this insight influence a reader's understanding of the Civil Rights Movement's urgency?
4. See primary source: How would you connect the primary source with this excerpt?

Answers:

1. It contrasts physical destruction with the breaking of false security, emphasizing emotional and societal trauma.
2. It highlights that laws alone couldn't safeguard Black communities from deep-rooted hatred and violence.
3. Readers see why activists pushed for more than legal change—they demanded true social transformation.

Excerpt 2

"Our church was the heart of the community, a sanctuary where faith and activism intertwined. Its destruction was a calculated attack on both our spirit and our fight for equality."

Questions:

1. Analyze how faith and activism were connected in the Black community during this era.
2. Why does the author describe the bombing as "calculated"? What does this imply about the attackers' intentions?

3. How does this shape your perception of the challenges faced by civil rights activists?

Answers:

1. Churches served as meeting places and moral foundations that empowered activism through shared beliefs.
 2. "Calculated" implies premeditation and an intent to intimidate and suppress the movement.
 3. It reveals activists faced deliberate, violent opposition targeting their most sacred spaces.
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Excerpt 3

"Despite the violence meant to silence us, our collective voice grew louder, rooted in justice and resilience that no bomb could destroy."

Questions:

1. What literary devices are used here to convey the strength of the movement?
2. How does this excerpt illustrate the concept of nonviolent resistance?
3. In what ways does resilience contribute to social change?

Answers:

1. Contrast (violence vs. voice), metaphor (voice growing louder), and personification (voice rooted).
 2. It shows that peaceful persistence in the face of violence amplified their message and impact.
 3. Resilience sustains movements through hardship, encouraging continued advocacy and progress.
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Excerpt 4

"I wrestled with my pain and rage, yet I came to understand that forgiveness was not weakness but a powerful act of reclaiming my humanity."

Questions:

1. Discuss the psychological and social complexities of forgiveness in the context of trauma.
2. How does this perspective challenge common assumptions about justice and revenge?
3. What lessons can contemporary activists draw from McKinstry's approach?

Answers:

1. Forgiveness involves overcoming deep hurt and can be a step toward healing and community restoration.

2. It reframes forgiveness as strength and agency rather than surrender or passivity.
3. Activists can see how healing and reconciliation can coexist with demands for justice.

Excerpt 5

"The Civil Rights Movement transcended law; it was a profound cultural shift demanding that society confront its conscience and redefine equality."

Questions:

1. Why does the author emphasize "culture" alongside law in describing social change?
2. How do cultural attitudes influence the effectiveness of legal reforms?
3. How might McKinstry's story serve as a cultural artifact reflecting this shift?

Answers:

1. Legal changes require cultural acceptance to be meaningful and lasting.
2. Laws without societal buy-in can be ignored or undermined; culture shapes daily behavior and beliefs.
3. Her narrative personalizes historical events, making abstract ideas tangible and relatable.

Primary Source: Image from <https://affiliate.wcu.edu/mlkjr2021/bomb-at-birmingham-church/>



English Language Arts Connect:

Grade: 7

Subject: English Language Arts

Alabama ELA Standards:

- ❖ W.7.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas clearly.

In speaking with Dr. McKinstry, she stated Monday was a regular school day, and the incident was not addressed.

Write a script of how you would have addressed the event as: parents, teachers, or community member / leader.

Primary Source: <https://bcariohp.org/items/show/55>

Description

Carolyn McKinstry discusses getting involved in the Movement as early as eighth grade by doing clerical work at 16th Street Baptist Church where she saw Dr. King and Ralph Abernathy speak. She was the secretary there through the church bombing. McKinstry participated in various demonstrations before attending Fisk University.