

TAH Lesson Plan

Title: Busting the myth of MLK Jr.

Possible Subject Area(s): The life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Overview: Students will be examining the common narrative of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s life. For much of America, the image of Dr. King is limited to a small part of the "I have a Dream" speech. The goal of this lesson is to broaden the knowledge base of students as well as to deal with the phenomena of how the life and works of famous individuals is condensed into "sound-bite" style narrative.

Essential Understanding: The common narrative version of history tends to simplify and condense the lives and works of important individuals. This simplification can often be detrimental in dehumanizing or characterizing these individuals in a way that undermines true historical understanding.

Essential Questions: How is the popular narrative version of history different from actual history? What is the effect of this difference on the common person's understanding of history?

CT Standards:

- Formulate historical questions and hypothesis from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources.
- Interpret and evaluate the legitimacy of oral traditions and legends as "histories".
- Evaluate data within the historical, social, political and economic context in which it was created, testing its credibility, and evaluating its bias.

Objectives:

- The student will identify bias in the popular narrative of MLK Jr.'s life.
- The student will analyze the effect on the discrepancy between the popular narrative and the actual history of MLK Jr.'s life.
- The student will synthesize a new and more accurate account of MLK Jr.'s life.

Materials Needed:

- Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March on Washinton*, a children's book about MLK Jr. and the "I have a Dream" speech.
- Various articles about MLK Jr.'s life including articles about: Montgomery Bus Boycott, March on Washington Movement, Project C, Bloody Sunday, Civil Rights Movement in the North, and The Poor People's Campaign.

Suggested Activities/Procedures:

Day 1

- Students will brainstorm everything they know of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life. (5-10 mins.)
- I will read a children's story about MLK Jr.'s life to the class. (10 mins.)
- The students will compare their knowledge from the brainstorming to the information presented in the children's story. As a class we will look why our own knowledge is so similar to the story intended for children. What are the holes in our knowledge? What does it say about our view of history that, most of what we know, we seemed to have learned at a very young age? (20 mins.)
- I will explain the goals of the lesson (5 mins.)
- For homework, students will read different articles about different parts of the life of MLK Jr.

Day 2

- Students will do a jigsaw activity where they present the info. They will present the info. that they learned from their homework articles with students that read different articles. (20 mins.)
- Students will organize into small groups and brainstorm they info. that they feel should be included in a new children's book about MLK Jr.'s life. (5-10 mins.)
- The groups of students will write their own children's books about MLK Jr.'s life (20 mins.)
- For homework, students will finish whatever aspects of their children's books they did not finish in-class.

Day 3

- Groups of student's will present their children's books to the rest of the class. (25 mins.)
- I will lead a short discussion about the meaning of this activity. (5 mins.)
- Students will response to an in-class writing prompt about how is the popular narrative version of history different from actual history and what this says about the common person's understanding of history.

Suggested Assessment/Evaluation

- There will be two forms of assessment: a content based assessment and a conceptual assessment. I will use a project rubric to assess the children's book the students create. I will also assess to the student's in-class write to assess if they understand the concepts presented in this lesson.