

Lesson 5: Mary Church Terrell and State Sanctioned Violence

Does hope triumph over despair?

IMPORTANT: Trauma-Informed Teaching

Esteemed Educator,

*Practicing **trauma informed pedagogy** means that we center deep care and love of our shared humanity in every aspect of our work as educators. We consciously choose to offer our students, parents, colleagues and ourselves safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, empowerment and understanding in the educational experiences in and out of our classrooms.*

Your health and safety as the educator is central. Please check with yourself to determine whether this is a topic which you are confident and capable of respectfully exploring in your classroom and the ways in which you must do this work to honor your needs. Please be careful to process this work after you have read, reflected and or taught the lesson plan.

Your feedback is valuable. Please complete the teacher feedback form that can be found at this [link](#) and the end of this lesson plan to let us know the strengths and weaknesses of this lesson plan.

Thank you.

Curriculum Team

December 2020

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Trigger Warning: violence, racism, death.

This lesson plan may not be appropriate for younger children. Please read and consider the elements of the lesson for your students with regard to their age, maturity, support, context, class and neighborhood cultures.

Teachers must secure the explicit permission of school administration, fellow educators and parents. This lesson plan explores topics which discuss safety, violence and suffering. It deals with lynching and the deaths of Black people of various ages.

Though the topic of state-sanctioned violence is common and current--replayed on TV and cell phone screens endlessly-- it is not often placed in its historic context. This lesson plan attempts to do this work through the lens of the life and work of Mary Church Terrell and her fight against state-sanctioned violence.

After careful consideration of the above mentioned factors, including explicit permission from your principal, please send or consider sending the following letter home to parents and receiving their responses before using this lesson plan.

Letter to the Parents/Guardians

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are teaching students about the history of state sanctioned violence against Black people through the life of activist, author and Civil Rights champion Mary Church Terrell. Terrell, who lived and worked in the nineteenth century, fought against state-sanctioned violence of all kinds, especially lynching.

Please see attached an outline of the lesson plan for your consideration. If you are not comfortable with your child participating in this lesson, please circle NO, sign and date the form. If you are comfortable with your child participating with this lesson plan, please circle YES, sign and date it.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please call/email me as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Signed

Yes, I (print your name) _____ am comfortable with my child participating in the lesson plan on Mary Church Terrell.

Date _____

No, I (print your name) _____ am comfortable with my child participating in the lesson plan on Mary Church Terrell.

Date _____

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<p>Objective/Rationale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Examine the connections between past and present instances of state sanctioned violence. ● Evaluate why Terrell campaigned aggressively to enforce anti-lynching laws? ● When the state says lynching is legal, Identify and analyze what message that sends to both Black and POC communities and white communities in the past and the present. 	
<p>Materials</p> <p>Links and or printouts, paper & pencil for students to take notes and or screens--depending on the classroom structure-online, hybrid or in person.</p> <p>Suggested biography https://biography.yourdictionary.com/mary-church-terrell</p>	
<p>Resource Links https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M0frbuenLyusw0H8CsYq4StSp7gyGj8qTky69Rhrf9w/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>Freewrite and/or draw https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/heres-how-artists-are-responding-killing-george-floyd-180975036/#:~:text=Syrian%20artists%20Aziz%20Amar%20and,to%20an%20Arab%20News%20report</p> <p>https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/lifestyle/black-artists-america-racial-inequality/</p>	
<p>Essential Question:</p>	
<p>Does art help people to express pain and heal?</p>	
<p>Teacher/Facilitator</p>	
<p>Introduction: Teacher please read and distribute the bio on Mary Church Terrell (use active reading strategies in accordance with your students levels and needs).</p> <p>Discuss that Terrell is well known as a suffragist and Civil Rights activist in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. But her activism was sparked in 1892, when an old friend, Thomas Moss and his two partners, were lynched in Memphis by white men because his successful business, The People's Grocery competed with their store. Terrell joined the more famous journalist and activist Ida B. Wells-Barnett in anti-lynching campaigns.</p>	

Lynching was not illegal in America then or now. Because lynching is not illegal it is a form of state-sanctioned violence. Over 200 attempts have been made to make lynching illegal in America. Each one has failed. In 1900, the first attempt was by one of the first African American US congressmen, [George Henry White](#). It was defeated by Southern congressmen who comprised the Solid South bloc.

White was friends with Mary Church Terrell and worked with her and others to establish the NAACP and other Civil Rights organizations. The current [Emmett Till Anti-Lynching Act](#) remains stalled in Congress. This means that lynching, a practice used to torture and kill African American men and women more than any other group of people in America, is still not a crime.

Explain to students that today they will explore struggles to get the state to oppose the violence experienced by African Americans that Terrell faced in the 1800s. They will need to explain whether or not these struggles have changed, or are they the same or similar to the challenges many citizens are facing now. To do so, students will need to step back in time and then forward into the present.

Art is expressed in many different ways. People use artistic media--drawing, painting, sewing, sculpture, writing and performance to express their feelings and ideas about their lives and the things that they have experienced.

In this lesson plan, we are going to **look at artistic expressions** of people who have endured the loss of a loved one or a member of their community. We will look at the images they created, discuss them and then create our own images to honor the lives of people we have loved.

Suggested Activities:

Note: This is a suggested list of activities which students can complete to explore this issue.

1. **Interactive vocabulary** -To create shared language and basic understanding, students should work with the list of terms--read the definitions, use them in complete sentences, look up the definitions on their phones, learn them for spelling etc. the day before or right before the class starts.
2. **Watch/log** into the site---to learn the difference between a primary and secondary source.

NOTE: Before reading the primary source, please read with students and discuss the framing of anti-Black violence.

One way of thinking about this topic is to consider the history of [lynching in America](#). After a discussion, students will **read a primary source** that explores state sanctioned violence See link.

Explain that as a class we will explore how people have responded to violence with art. We are choosing to explore these ideas through art because art gives people a means to express their feelings creatively even when dealing with something that is very hard and painful.

(Primary Source Link Below)

<https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/?&loclr=reclnk>

3. **Transcribe:** Students will transcribe primary documents from Terrell’s archives at the Library of Congress. Please walk students through the process of logging on to *We the People* and follow the directions to begin transcribing. (Link Below)

After transcribing, discuss the experience. What did you learn about segregation in education? What do you believe and why? Explain.

INSTRUCTIONS: How to transcribe

<https://crowd.loc.gov/help-center/how-to-transcribe/>

Summative exercise/homework

Create and design your own drawing, coloring or collage which expresses what you think about state-sanctioned violence and the ways this violence impacts Black people in the United States.

Can you connect what used to happen when Mary Church Terrell was alive to the present?

Link to Post-Lesson Feedback Form

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PBkoZrVOBAi2uSX7WjlnNo7RxiOdZ8skhuNwJtLj0Gz8/edit>

Vocabulary/Terms

1. **Lynching--** a form of violence in which a mob, under the pretext of administering justice without trial, executes a presumed offender.
2. **Protest-** To express disapproval of something by taking action or objecting in a strong way.
3. **Emmett Till--**was a 14-year-old African American who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955, after being accused of offending a white woman in her family's grocery store.
4. **Civil rights--**the rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality

5. **NAACP**--The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is a civil rights organization in the United States, formed in 1909 as an interracial endeavor to advance justice for African Americans.
6. **Activist**-- an especially active, vigorous advocate of a cause, especially a political cause.
7. **State sanctioned violence**--
8. **Art**-- diverse range of human activities involving the creation of visual, auditory or performing artifacts (artworks), which express the creator's imagination.
9. **Mural**--a painting or other work of art executed directly on a wall.
10. **Mourning**--the expression of deep sorrow for someone who has died.



IMAGE: Mary Church Terrell was born in Memphis, TN, and was a charter member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Courtesy of the Tennessee State Library and Archives ID# 4732
<https://cdm15138.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p15138coll27/id/70>