

Aim:

What was the 1963 March on Washington really about?

Instructional Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. articulate the different objectives of the March on Washington, placing emphasis on the March's economic demands and not just focusing King's vision of color-blindness and equality;
2. differentiate between the popular memory of the March and what actually happened at the March.

Grade Level: Secondary, 9-12

Common Core Standards

Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

Grades 9-10

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1](#) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](#) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.6](#) Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.7](#) Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9](#) Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.10](#) By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.1](#) Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.8](#) Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.9](#) Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.10](#) Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Grades 11-12:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1](#) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2](#) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6](#) Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7](#) Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9](#) Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.10](#) By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 11–CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.1](#) Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.8](#) Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.9](#) Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.10](#) Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Overarching Understanding:

The 1963 March on Washington was a march for “jobs and freedom,” and was organized by A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin. But the popular misconception is that the March was only about Martin Luther King, his famous “I Have a Dream” speech and the vision of color-blindness, equality, and freedom that inspired that speech. If we are to understand the full historical significance of the March, the organizing roles of Randolph and Rustin, as well the March’s focus on economic justice, must be reestablished as central to the event.

Length: Two 40-50 minute periods. It would be possible to do the lesson in one period by cutting some of the evidence used, and making the writing assignment at the end a homework assignment.

Resource Materials:

History Channel Video Clip: <http://www.history.com/topics/march-on-washington/videos#martin-luther-king-jr-leads-the-march-on-washington>

Life Magazine Cover: <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/images/br0217s.jpg>

Cobblestone Magazine, p. 14 - "Rustin's Things to Do":

<http://www.shankerinstitute.org/images/CS-BaryardRustin1.pdf>

March on Washington Organizing Manual #2: <http://www.crmvet.org/docs/moworg2.pdf>

Bayard Rustin Audio Clip: <http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/march-777724-bayard-rustin-reads-the-demands-of-the-march>

A Phillip Randolph Audio Clip (begins at 4:40) <http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/march-592217-the-march-begins>

A Phillip Randolph Speech Transcript: <http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/march-592217-the-march-begins/print>

About The Lesson:

This lesson uses an inquiry approach. Students are first presented with a certain view of the March (Martin Luther King, Jr. was the main person involved and it was about his vision of equality, freedom and color-blindness) that is likely to confirm what they already know. Throughout the lesson, they are presented with evidence that challenges this conception, eventually moving them to a more complex and nuanced understanding that incorporates the significance of Randolph and Rustin, as well as the economic demands of the March.

Motivating Exercise:

Tell students: *As you watch this History Channel video, note who was involved with the March on Washington, and what they wanted.*

Show History Channel Video Clip

Ask students the following questions. Write the answers you get to questions (a) and (b) on the board:

- a. *According to the video, who was involved in the March on Washington?* (Answers: Martin Luther King, Jr; 200,000 people; Joan Baez; Bob Dylan, Mahalia Jackson.)
- b. *According to the video, what were the goals of the March on Washington?* (Answers: to help get JFK's proposed civil rights legislation passed; freedom; equality.)
- c. *Based on your knowledge, do you think this video gives a good account of the March on Washington?* (Most students will probably say yes.)
4. (If the clip will not play in your school, instead ask students to share what they know about the March on Washington. Questions throughout the lesson refer to the History Channel clip; replace that with questions about what people knew at the start of the class.)
5. *Now, I want you to think about your lives. Have you ever had a time where somebody else got the credit for something you did? How did that make you feel?* Have students think for a minute, then give students one minute to share with the person sitting next to them. After, ask three students to share with the class.
6. Tell students: When most people think of the March on Washington, they think about Martin Luther King, Jr and the "I Have a Dream" speech, with its vision of equality for all.

Today, we're going to look at what really happened fifty years ago in Washington. Who really was involved in the March? What did they really want?

Lesson Development:

Project the Life Magazine cover for the class. Ask students:

- a. What are we looking at? (*Life Magazine* cover; mention how popular *Life* was at the time.)
 - b. When was this from? (September 6, 1963; note this was one week after the March.)
 - c. How does this confirm or challenge the History Channel clip? (It challenges the clip by claiming the leaders of the march were Randolph and Rustin.)
 - d. What questions does this raise? (Answers will vary, but key ones are: Who are Randolph and Rustin? Why is this different from History Channel?)
2. Tell students: *Let's start with Bayard Rustin. Bayard Rustin was the primary organizer of the March on Washington, taking care of the behind the scenes work. Rustin was born in 1912 and grew up near Philadelphia. In 1937, he moved to NYC and got involved with politics, supporting organized labor and working for civil rights. He was briefly a member of the Young Communist League. Rustin was also a Quaker, and therefore a pacifist. He spent three years in jail rather than fighting in World War II. He studied Ghandi's use of nonviolence in India, and brought the methods to the Civil Rights Movement. He became an advisor to Dr. King during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and convinced him to adopt nonviolence. Many were concerned about Rustin's involvement in the March because of his history as a "draft dodger" and a former communist, in addition to Rustin being a homosexual. However, A. Phillip Randolph insisted Rustin take the lead organizing role, and defended him from attacks.*
3. (*Optional - cut if trying to do this lesson in one period.*) Project or pass out "Rustin's To Do List" and give students a minute to read. Ask students:
- a. What are we looking at? (A list of everything Rustin did for the March.)
 - b. How does this confirm or challenge the History Channel clip? (It challenges the clip by showing all the work Rustin did to organize the March.)
4. Project or pass out pages 3-4 of "Organizing Manual No. 2." Tell students that Bayard Rustin wrote this manual.
5. (*Optional - cut if trying to do this lesson in one period*) Read aloud, or ask students to read "Why We March." Then ask students
- a. What are we looking at? (A description of the March used to get people to the event.)
 - b. When was this from? (Before the March in 1963.)
 - c. According to this document, what was the March on Washington about? (Answers will vary, but key ones include: "to redress old grievances and to help resolve an American crisis;" "twin evils of racism and economic deprivation; to gain self-respect; gaining education and training for all minorities; for civil rights legislation; to stop disenfranchisement; to show our forces; for "Jobs and Freedom".)
 - d. How does this confirm or challenge the History Channel clip? (It challenges the clip by showing it was about more than civil rights for African Americans.)
 - e. What questions does this raise? (Responses will vary.)

6. Have students read through the demands of the March, then play the audio clip of Rustin reading the demands at the March on Washington, then ask students:
 - a. What were we listening to? (The demands of the March.)
 - b. When was this from? (August 28, 1963.)
 - c. According to this, what was the March on Washington about? (Answers could include any of the demands, but be sure to emphasize it was civil rights **and** economic concerns.)
 - d. How does this confirm or challenge the History Channel clip? (It challenges the clip by showing it was about more than civil rights for African Americans.)
 - e. What questions does this raise? (Responses will vary.)
7. (If teaching the lesson over two periods, this is a good place to wrap up Day 1. You may want students write a brief exit ticket by responding to the question: How have your views on the March on Washington changed from over the course of today's class?)
8. Project the Life Magazine cover again. Tell Students: *We have now learned about one of these two men. Let's turn to the other, A. Phillip Randolph. In 1963, Randolph was President of the Negro American Labor Council, an organization founded in 1960 to address the failure of the AFL-CIO, the largest trade union federation in the country, to end racial discrimination in some of its member unions. Randolph was the elder statesmen of civil rights leaders, and was widely respected by all in the movement. Randolph had a long history of working at the intersection of race and labor. In 1925, Randolph formed the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, which organized the African-American men or worked as porters on trains. In 1937, the Brotherhood became the first national African American organization to sign a labor agreement with a U.S. corporation. In 1941, Randolph conceived of and began to organize the first March on Washington to protest discrimination in American defense industries on the eve of U.S. involvement in World War II. Just the very real threat of the March was enough to get President Franklin D. Roosevelt to sign Executive Order 8802, which banned racial discrimination in all defense industries. In response, Randolph called off the March. Randolph continued to work for labor and civil rights throughout the 1950s and 60s, and was responsible for the idea for the 1963 March on Washington. He gave the first speech on August 28, 1963. Let us look at what he had to say.*
9. Pass out copies of Randolph's speech, and ask students to follow along as they listen to a radio broadcast of the speech. Tell students: as you listen, underline passages where Randolph talks about why the March is happening. After finishing ask students (questions (a)-(c) are optional discussion questions if you are trying to do this lesson in one period; answers will vary):
 - a. Why does Randolph think civil rights are not enough to secure freedom?
 - b. What does Randolph mean when he says, "The sanctity of private property takes second place to the sanctity of the human personality"?
 - c. According to Randolph, why is it important to take "taken our struggle into the streets"?
 - d. According to this, what was the March on Washington about? (Answers could vary, but be sure to emphasize jobs and taking the fight to the streets.)
 - e. How does this confirm or challenge the History Channel clip? (It challenges the clip by showing that the March was about more than civil rights for African Americans.)

f. What questions does this raise? (Responses will vary.)

Summary Question:

Do you agree with the following statement: “The goal of the March on Washington, which was led by Martin Luther King, Jr., was to get civil rights for African-Americans”? Use specific evidence from the lesson to support your claim.

(Note: Depending on the time you have and your students, this question could be answered as an informal exit ticket, or a more formal paragraph or essay to be completed for homework.)