

Slavery, the Legacy of the Civil War, and the Struggle for Civil Rights for All



Did the Civil War create a “more perfect union?”

How and why do people take action to secure and protect civil rights?

Framing the Unit

The final unit of fifth grade examines slavery, the legacy of the Civil War, and the struggle for civil rights for all. In Unit 4, students continue the work of Units 1-3 by probing the links and tensions among ideas about liberty, justice, and equality. These shaped the founding of the nation, its expansion westward, and its descent into civil war, and they remain central in the collective civic life of the nation today. In the first half of the unit, students investigate how the issue of slavery continued to divide the nation and was the primary cause of the Civil War. They also consider how the Union’s victory provided a fulcrum for change and the expansion of civil rights to African Americans. Here, students explore the nation’s “new birth of freedom” by engaging with the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments and the promise of Reconstruction.

In the second part of the unit, students grapple with the backlash ushered in by the Jim Crow era and the failure of the federal government to secure and protect civil rights for all. The unit ends with a cluster of lessons dedicated to the 20th century African American Civil Rights Movement and the ways it served as a model for civil rights movements of other groups. The themes of activism and agency, which have been at the heart of this year-long study of United States history, remain central to Unit 4. Since students will study world history and geography in the 6th and 7th grades before returning to the study of the United States and Massachusetts government and civic life in the 8th grade, the work they do in this unit provides an important foundation for the work to come.

A main purpose of this final fifth-grade unit is to reinforce the key skills emphasized throughout the year, including considering perspectives, understanding cause and effect, using evidence to support claims and arguments, and working collaboratively. Each of the skills is foundational to fostering civic engagement. Throughout the unit, students engage with primary and secondary sources about the individual and collective actions taken to secure civil rights in the 19th and 20th centuries. In doing so, they practice asking questions and conducting research to find evidence and support arguments.

Unit Overview

Note: The content standards for Unit 4 have a clear African American focus. As a result, the narrative arc of the unit centers on the African American struggle for civil rights. Brief attention is provided to the work of activists for the civil rights of other marginalized groups. Additionally, profiles of activists for other groups are included as options for the Summative Assessment research packet. A more in-depth, nuanced study of the Civil Rights Movement and the movements it inspired awaits students in 8th grade civics and 9th and 10th grade United States History. Here, they will have the opportunity to study topics such as the Black Power Movement, the Yellow Power Movement, and the intersectionality of race, class, and gender identity. However, time constraints do not allow for more in-depth attention to all groups and topics. Teachers are welcome to create additional lessons and resources to tailor the lessons to particular student groups represented in their classrooms.

Enduring Understandings

1. The primary cause of the American Civil War was slavery and questions regarding its future in the United States as it expanded westward. The movement to abolish slavery, led by African Americans and supported by White allies, began before the founding of the United States and continued throughout the antebellum era.
2. African Americans were important contributors to the Union's victory in the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in the nation. Their agency was key in shifting the Union's goals for the war from reunification with the Rebel states to the formation of a "more perfect Union" without slavery.
3. The Civil War did not resolve issues of freedom and civil rights for African Americans, nor did the short-lived Reconstruction era. Violence and discrimination continued in both the North and the South, as did efforts to resist.
4. Social movements create change through advocacy, awareness, protest, and legal action. By harnessing the talent and initiative of people from diverse walks of life and organizing them to take civic action, the civil rights movements and their participants worked to protect, promote and expand the rights of the communities they represented.
5. The 20th-century African American Civil Rights Movement built on a long tradition of activism in the Black community and inspired the civil rights movements of many other marginalized communities who also took civic action to advance and secure civil rights.

Connections to Current Events and Issues

Connections to today's world and students' lives are built into this unit. Other contemporary connections could be added or developed for various topics of study within this unit, and we encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to connect students' learning to contemporary local, national, and global developments that may arise as you teach this unit. Some ideas for linking this unit to current events and issues include:

Unit Overview

- The struggle for civil rights for all did not end in the 1960s. It is ongoing, and there is much work that remains to be done. You could introduce students to some of the prominent civil rights activists of the 21st century using information from articles such as [After John Lewis: 21 Civil Rights Leaders Who are Shaping America](#) (World Economic Forum), [Young Black Activists Changing the World](#) (DoSomething.org), and [32 Young Activists Who Are Changing the World](#) (Complex.com) For a civic connection, you could discuss [10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism](#) from the ADL with students and ask about the issues that are most important to them.
- The nation and its institutions continue to reckon with the legacy of slavery and how to address past injustices. One way of doing this has been to rename places that were named in honor of people who enslaved others, profited from the institution of slavery, or espoused racist ideals. [The NPR article "Confederate Monument Melted Down to Create New, More Inclusive Public Art"](#) discusses how Charlottesville, VA, removed a Confederate monument of Robert E. Lee and melted it down to create more inclusive public art. You could also discuss more local examples, such as the decision to rename [Yawkey Way, explained in the ESPN article "Yawkey Way Name Change Gets Green Light From Boston,"](#) and the 2023 discussion over changing the name of [Faneuil Hall, explained in the AP News article "Boston's Faneuil Hall Was Named After a Slave Owner. City Council Calls for Renaming the Site,"](#)
- Locally, you can explore African-American history with your students through Tufts University's [African American Trail Project](#), which highlights African American and African-descended public history sites across greater Boston and throughout Massachusetts. Another option is the National Park Services Black History Trail, which can be navigated through the [Virtual Black Heritage Trail® Tour](#) (Boston African American National Historic Site, U.S. National Park Service). In Boston, you can visit the [Embrace Monument to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., as described in the GBH article "The Embrace Sculpture Honors MLK Jr. and Coretta Scott King's Legacy of Love in Boston,"](#) and the 1965 Freedom Park honoring 65 of Boston's civil rights activists, which opened in 2023. You can also use the [Embrace Boston memorial website](#) to view the app, which provides information on the men and women honored at the site. Finally, Boston's Museum of African American History offers both museum visits for classes as well as virtual exhibits. Visit [Education Programs | Museum of African American History](#) for more information.

*Vocabulary (in order of appearance)***Tier 3 Vocabulary**

movement

treason

White supremacy

Unit Overview

party platform
political party
Confederate States of
America
Rebel States
secede

civil rights
Reconstruction
sharecropper
sharecropping
Jim Crow

Ku Klux Klan (KKK)
NAACP (National
Association for the
Advancement of
Colored People)
boycott
nonviolence
sit-in

Priority Tier 2 Vocabulary

advocate
contraband

discriminate
segregate

terrorist

Lesson Clusters

*Cluster 1: The Abolitionist Movement and the Causes of the Civil War (Lessons 1-4)***How did the abolitionist movement work to create “a more perfect union?”**

Focus Standards: 5.T5.1, 5.T5.2, 5.T5.3, PS 1, PS 3, PS 7, RI.5.9, W.5.1

In Cluster 1, students deepen their understanding of the abolitionist movement (first encountered in Unit 1) and the role that this movement played in challenging the continuation of slavery in the United States. Students work to organize information from multiple primary and secondary sources as they conduct an Inquiry Cycle that asks, *How did the abolitionist movement work to create a “more perfect union”?* The lessons in this cluster introduce students to the concept of a movement and an understanding of how the issue of slavery increasingly divided the nation in the years leading to the Civil War. Additionally, they provide practice with the skills of researching and analyzing the work of an activist, which will be key to the unit’s Summative Assessment.

Note: The content standards from 5.T5.1 are addressed in Lesson 1 of this unit, however they receive more extensive attention in Unit 3 (*The Early Republic*).

*Cluster 2: The Civil War (Lessons 5-9)***Why did the Union’s goals change during the first two years of the Civil War?**

Focus Standards: 5.T5.2, 5.T5.3, 5.T5.4, 5.T5.5, PS 1, PS 3, RI.5.5, RI.5.9, W.5.1

Cluster 2 focuses on the Civil War. In these five lessons, students analyze primary and secondary sources and engage with multiple perspectives by studying the goals of the

Unit Overview

Union, African Americans, and the Confederate States in fighting the war. In doing so, they encounter the agency of African Americans in shifting the Union's goals for the war toward the abolition of slavery. This cluster also provides students with information about the generals and battles that determined the war's outcome. The cluster ends with a lesson on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Here, students analyze its message calling for a new birth of freedom for the nation and a rededication to the democratic principles of its founding. Through this reading, they prepare to engage with the promise of Reconstruction and the disappointment of the backlash to progress toward African American civil rights during the Jim Crow era in Cluster 3.

Note: *At the beginning of the Civil War, the goal of the Union was to contain slavery in the states where it was legal before the war. Lincoln stated in his inaugural address that the Constitution protected slavery in states where it existed and that it was his job to uphold the Constitution. The goal of ending slavery only became part of the Union's goals after 1863. This shift was due in large part to the agency and resistance of African Americans. Cluster 2 focuses on that shift.*

Cluster 3: Progress and Backlash after the Civil War (Lessons 10-15)

How were civil rights for African Americans expanded, protected and challenged after the Civil War?

Focus Standards: 5.T5.6, 5.T5.7, 5.T5.8, PS 1, PS 3, PS 7, RI.5.5, RI.5.9, W.5.1

Cluster 3 begins with a focus on the expansion of African American civil rights during the era of Reconstruction. Students consider what freedom meant for African Americans after the Civil War as they study the changes that came with the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, the election of Black representatives to Congress, and the efforts of the federal government to protect and promote African American civil rights in the 12-year period after the end of the Civil War. As the unit moves into the 20th century, students study the backlash to this progress in the Jim Crow era and the work of individuals, churches, newspapers, and civic organizations to unify and organize the African American community to continue the struggle to secure and protect civil rights. In doing so, they gain the important understanding that although slavery ended with the Civil War, racial discrimination, threats of violence, and legal protection of racist practices did not. These issues were not limited to the South but were experienced by African Americans throughout the nation. Perhaps more importantly, students are able to understand that the African American community continued to resist and show resilience in the face of efforts to deny their full humanity. Throughout these lessons, students organize information from multiple primary and secondary sources in order to identify, describe and explain the history of the struggle for civil rights for all in the United States.

Cluster 4: The Struggle for Civil Rights for All (Lessons 16-20)

How and why did activists take action to gain civil rights for all in the 20th century?

Unit Overview

Focus Standards: 5.T5.8, 5.T5.9, PS 1, PS 3, PS 7, RI.5.5, RI.5.9

Cluster 4 sets the context for the unit's Summative Assessment, where students research the work of an activist who took action to secure and protect civil rights. Through these lessons, students organize, annotate and analyze multiple primary and secondary sources as they work to understand how and why the 20th-century African American Civil Rights Movement began in the 1950s; who participated in the movement; how and why the strategy of nonviolence was used to effect change; and how legislative acts like the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were used to expand and protect civil rights. The cluster ends with a lesson focused on the ways the Civil Rights Movement has inspired multiple other communities to employ nonviolent forms of activism to advance their campaigns for rights, freedom, and equality. This final lesson before the assessment provides students with an initial and cursory exposure to the Women's Movement, Disability Rights Movement, LGBTQ+ Rights Movement, Chicano Movement, and the American Indian (Indigenous Rights) Movement. These movements, as well as others that are not covered in fifth grade — for example, Black Power and Yellow Power — are addressed in eighth-grade Civics and high school U.S. History.

Summative Assessment: Slavery, the Legacy of the Civil War, & the Struggle for Civil Rights for All (Lessons 21-25)

Focus Standards: 5.T5.3, 5.T5.5, 5.T5.6, 5.T5.7, 5.T5.8, 5.T5.9, PS 1, PS 3, PS 7, RI.5.9

Students complete a Summative Assessment focused on the work of a 20th-century civil rights activist relevant to the central themes of the unit. In addition to asking students to display mastery of the content standards for this unit, the assessment will examine students' abilities to

- Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources to describe and analyze issues and events surrounding the US Civil War and its aftermath.
- Research and analyze the work of 20th-century civil rights activists to communicate the steps and actions they took to advance the struggle for civil rights for all.

This assessment will be completed using a curated resource packet. It is designed to be an open-notebook assessment, meaning students can and should consult their handouts from earlier lessons as needed. Access to handouts will probably be most relevant on Day 3 of the assessment, where students make connections between their activist and the activists and events from the 19th century struggle for civil rights.

Unit Focus Standards

Content Standards

- **5.T5.1:** Trace the state-by-state abolition of slavery in the Northern states in the 18th and 19th centuries and the expansion of slavery into western states; explain the effects of

Unit Overview

the 1808 law that banned the importation of slaves into the United States and explain how a robust slave trade nonetheless continued within the United States until the mid-19th century.

- **5.T5.2:** Identify the major reasons for the Civil War (e.g., slavery, political and economic competition in Western territories, the emergence of the Republican Party) and the war's most important outcomes (e.g., end of slavery, Reconstruction, expanded role of the federal government, industrial growth in the North).
- **5.T5.3:** Explain the ideas and roles of some of the people of the pre-Civil War era who led the struggle against slavery (abolitionism) and for voting and property rights for African Americans (e.g., Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe).
- **5.T5.4:** Identify the major military leaders and battles of the Civil War (e.g., Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson; Battles of Bull Run, Shiloh, Fredericksburg, Vicksburg, Gettysburg, Appomattox).
- **5.T5.5:** Describe the role of Abraham Lincoln in the development of the Republican Party and his actions as President during the Civil War, including the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution.
- **5.T5.6:** Explain the consequences of the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments for the rights of African Americans.
- **5.T5.7:** Describe living conditions for African Americans following the Civil War, during the Jim Crow era, including limited educational and economic opportunities, separate public facilities (e.g., segregated schools and colleges, neighborhoods, sections in buses, trains, restaurants, and movie theaters), the organized perpetuation of white supremacist beliefs and the threat of violence from extra-legal groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. Describe the role African American churches, civic organizations, and newspapers played in supporting and unifying African American communities.
- **5.T5.8:** Research and analyze one of the people, organizations, events, or legislative acts from the 20th century that contributed to expanding civil rights of African Americans, women, and others in the United States.
- **5.T5.9:** Explain how the 20th century African American Civil Rights movement served as a model for other movements for civil rights (e.g., the second phase of the women's movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the disability rights movement, the LGBTQ movement).

Practice Standards

- **PS 1:** Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
 - **Unit-specific target for this standard:** Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions by working collaboratively to identify, describe and explain the history of the struggle for civil rights for all in the United States
- **PS 3:** Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
 - **Unit-specific target for this standard:** Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources to describe and analyze historical issues and events.

Unit Overview

- **PS 7:** Determine next steps and take informed action, as appropriate.
 - **Unit-specific target for this standard:** Research and analyze the work of civil rights activists to communicate the steps and actions they took in pursuit of their goal.

Literacy Standards

- **RI.5.5:** Describe how an author uses one or more structures (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, to present information in a text.
- **RI.5.9:** Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak knowledgeably about the subject.
- **W.5.1:** Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

Unit Overview

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