

Challenges: Education for African Americans after the Civil War

A Professional Development Activity for Teachers

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Audience

The audience for this lesson will be elementary, middle, and high school teachers who attend a class the Virginia Historical Society offers each summer on Virginia history. The teachers will have an introductory lesson on using primary sources and then use primary sources throughout the class. This lesson will focus on African American education after the Civil War. Follow-up discussion will focus on adapting this activity for specific classroom audiences.

Goal/Topic/Big Idea

Primary sources help students better understand the past by reminding them that history is complex and filled with multiple voices.

List of Primary Sources

Photographs:

- African American public school in Louisa, Virginia, 1935. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2005693014/>
- Students in a bricklaying class, Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia, 1899. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98502981/>

Audio Recording of Interview:

Aunt Phoebe Boyd, Dunnsville, VA 1935. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc9999001.25750b>

News Article/Editorial:

Industrial Education and Negro Progress, by Booker T. Washington (in the African Methodist Episcopal Church Review, Vol. 29, Num. 3 (1913)). [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/aaeo:@field\(DOCID+@band\(o2359\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/aaeo:@field(DOCID+@band(o2359)))

Map:

Map of Virginia and West Va., North & part of South Carolina, Maryland & Delaware, showing the situation in these states of schools taught by graduates of the Hampton Normal & Agricultural Institute from 1871 to 1876. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gmd/g3881e.ct001099>

Essential / Investigative Question

What were some of the challenges African Americans faced in their efforts to receive an education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

This professional development activity was created by a participant of TPS:BASICS, an online course conducted by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University <http://tps.waynesburg.edu/tpseasternregion>.

Objectives

- To introduce teachers to a variety of primary sources
- To demonstrate how to use primary sources to teach content, specifically African American education before the *Brown* decision

Standards

Virginia Studies

VS.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to

- a) identify and interpret artifacts and primary and secondary source documents to understand events in history;

VS.8 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the reconstruction of Virginia following the Civil War by

- a) identifying the effects of Reconstruction on life in Virginia;
- b) identifying the effects of segregation and “Jim Crow” on life in Virginia for whites, African Americans, and American Indians;

United States History, 1865 to the Present

USII.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to

- a) analyze and interpret primary and secondary source documents to increase understanding of events and life in United States history from 1865 to the present;

USII.4 The student will demonstrate knowledge of how life changed after the Civil War by

- c) describing racial segregation, the rise of “Jim Crow,” and other constraints faced by African Americans and other groups in the post-Reconstruction South;

USII.6 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the social, economic, and technological changes of the early twentieth century by

- b) describing the social and economic changes that took place, including prohibition and the Great Migration north and west;

Virginia/U.S. History

VUS.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to

- a) identify, analyze, and interpret primary and secondary source documents, records, and data, including artifacts, diaries, letters, photographs, journals, newspapers, historical accounts, and art, to increase understanding of events and life in the United States;
- b) evaluate the authenticity, authority, and credibility of sources;
- c) formulate historical questions and defend findings, based on inquiry and interpretation;
- d) develop perspectives of time and place, including the construction of maps and various timelines of events, periods, and personalities in American history;
- e) communicate findings orally and in analytical essays or comprehensive papers;
- f) develop skills in discussion, debate, and persuasive writing with respect to enduring issues and determine how divergent viewpoints have been addressed and reconciled;
- g) apply geographic skills and reference sources to understand how relationships between humans and their environment have changed over time;
- h) interpret the significance of excerpts from famous speeches and other documents;

VUS.7 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the Civil War and Reconstruction Era and their importance as major turning points in American history by

- d) examining the political and economic impact of the war and Reconstruction, including the adoption of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution of the United States;
- e) examining the social impact of the war on African Americans, the common soldier, and the home front, with emphasis on Virginia;

VUS.8 The student will demonstrate knowledge of how the nation grew and changed from the end of Reconstruction through the early twentieth century by

- c) analyzing prejudice and discrimination during this time period, with emphasis on “Jim Crow” and the responses of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois;
- d) identifying the causes and impact of the Progressive Movement, including the excesses of the Gilded Age, child labor and antitrust laws, the rise of labor unions, and the success of the women’s suffrage movement.

Procedure

NOTE: Use this activity in the classroom after teaching Reconstruction and in conjunction with the textbook readings that deal with the emergence of Jim Crow.

1. Begin by having participants/students define the term “primary source.” After some discussion (and depending on the skill level and background knowledge) talk about differences between primary and secondary sources. Ask thought-provoking questions such as:
 - Which is a better historical source, a diary or a memoir?
 - If I write something about George Washington in my diary, does that make it a primary source?
 - Can a textbook be a primary source?
2. Provide the hyperlinks to the sources and have individual participants/students analyze a selected source, using the appropriate primary source analysis sheet.
3. After analyzing the individual documents, have them share their results in groups of four or five, grouping students so that each group has a representative “expert” on each source. Remind students what it means to think like a historian.
4. Have them put the documents in chronological order and discuss what African American education was like at the turn of the twentieth century. Encourage them to consider the impact of historic events.
5. Beginning with the recorded interview of Aunt Phoebe Boyd, have groups to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each source.
6. Ask students to consider their own beliefs about African American education during the time. Be sure to have students cite evidence from the sources to back up their beliefs.
7. As an extension activity, ask students to locate additional primary sources on the Library of Congress website (loc.gov).
 - Have them look for an item that confirms their beliefs about African American education.
 - Have them find an item that contradicts or challenges their conclusions.
 - See if they can explain contradictions and reconcile the sources.

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