

Marian Anderson at the Lincoln Memorial

Lesson Type: Humanities – Social Studies

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This lesson plan is geared towards a fifth grade level, but may be adapted for use by any age group. It meets the following National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (Middle Grades):

Theme: Culture

- Explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture
- Articulate the implications of cultural diversity, as well as cohesion, within and across groups

Theme: Time, Continuity and Change

- Identify and use key concepts such as chronology, causality, change, conflict, and complexity to explain, analyze, and show connections among patterns of historical change and continuity
- Identify and describe selected historical periods and patterns of change within and across cultures, such as the rise of civilizations, the development of transportation systems, the growth and breakdown of colonial systems, and others
- Develop critical sensitivities such as empathy and skepticism regarding attitudes, values, and behaviors of people in different historical contexts

Theme: Individual Development and Identity

- Describe the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity
- Identify and describe ways regional, ethnic, and national cultures influence individuals' daily lives
- Identify and describe the influence of perception, attitudes, values, and beliefs on personal identity
- Identify and interpret examples of stereotyping, conformity, and altruism

Theme: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

- Demonstrate an understanding of concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the interactions of individuals and social groups
- Analyze group and institutional influences on people, events, and elements of culture
- Describe the various forms institutions take and the interactions of people with institutions
- Identify and analyze examples of tensions between expressions of individuality and group or institutional efforts to promote social conformity

Theme: Power, Authority, and Governance

- Explain and apply concepts such as power, role, status, justice, and influence to the examination of persistent issues and social problems

Theme: Global Connections

- Describe instances in which language, art, music, belief systems, and other cultural elements can facilitate global understanding or cause misunderstanding

Theme: Civic Ideals and Practices

- Examine the origins and continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government, such as individual human dignity, liberty, justice, equality, and the rule of law
- Explain and analyze various forms of citizen action that influence public policy decisions
- Identify and explain the roles of formal and informal political actors in influencing and shaping public policy and decision-making
- Analyze the effectiveness of selected public policies and citizen behaviors in realizing the stated ideals of a democratic republican form of government

Standards taken from: *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. National Council for the Social Studies, April 1994. ISBN 0-87986-065-0

Goals:

1. Students will be able to understand Marian Anderson's place in the history of the Civil Rights Movement in the US.
2. Students will become aware of the segregationist policies following the Civil War and the early 20th century that led to the Civil Rights Movement.

Objectives:

1. Discuss segregation in the US from the end of the Civil War through the mid-20th century.
2. Learn of the support given by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to Marian Anderson and the Civil Rights Movement.

3. Learn about the difficulties African-American singers, including Marian Anderson, had to overcome to advance their careers.
4. Investigate the sequence of events that led to the Lincoln Memorial Concert.

Resources Needed:

- **Highlights Magazine**, January 2005. “Marian’s Revolution” by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen.
- Sequencing Chart below.
- Recording of Marian Anderson singing, “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” from the radio broadcast of the Lincoln Memorial Concert.

Approximate Time Required: 45 minutes

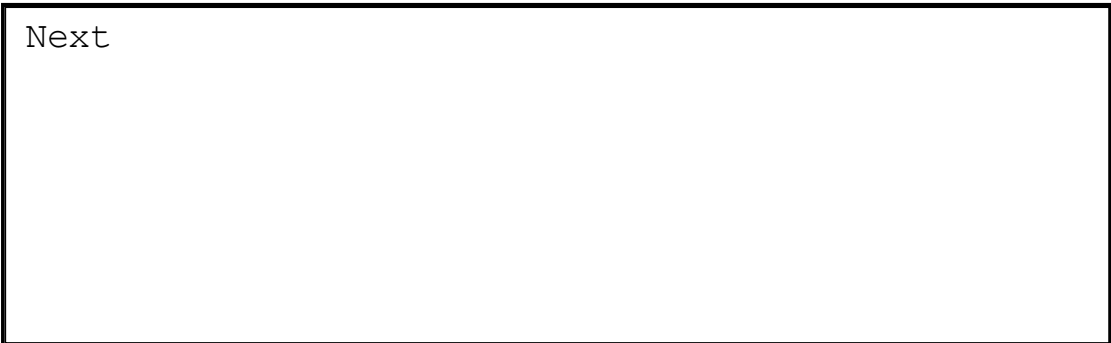
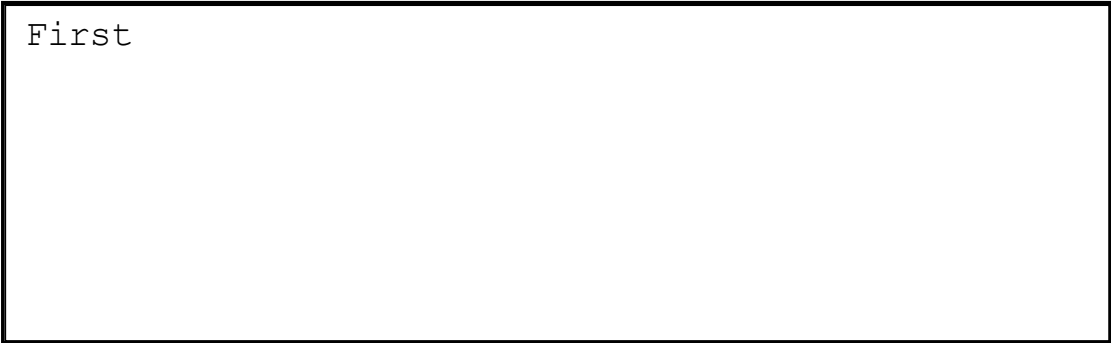
Lesson:

Play “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” for the class (text appears below.)

My country, ' tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside let freedom ring!

- Discuss meaning of the song, focusing on the underlined lyrics.
- Distribute copies of the “Marian’s Revolution” article and the Sequencing Chart.
- Divide students into pairs. Direct students to share reading of article and develop a sequence of events that led to the Lincoln Memorial Concert on April 9, 1939.

Sequencing Chart



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- Revisit “My County ‘Tis of Thee.” Discuss the meaning of the underlined words and phrases again. What is the significance of the words, and how do they apply to Marian Anderson and the Civil Rights Movement?
- Review the manner in which Marian was subjected to prejudice:
 - The rejection at the music school in Philadelphia
 - Having to go to Europe to advance her career
 - Segregation in restaurants and hotels and on trains
 - Segregated concert halls
- Review Eleanor Roosevelt’s support for Marian:
 - Resigning from the DAR
 - Using her influence on the Secretary of the Interior to allow Marian to sing at the Lincoln Memorial

The Lincoln Memorial was the site for another event in the struggle for Civil Rights: The March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, August 28, 1963. The highlight of this march was Martin Luther King Jr.’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

Extension of Activity:

- Research Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech.
- Have the students report on the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Why was the Lincoln Memorial a fitting venue for Marian Anderson’s concert? For the “I Have a Dream” speech?

Closure/Reflection

- What characteristics did Marian Anderson possess that enabled her to be an advocate for Civil Rights?
- How did her actions help end discrimination against African-Americans?
- How did Martin Luther King fight for the Civil Rights of African-Americans?
- Compare and contrast Martin Luther King’s and Marian Anderson’s actions and views on Civil Rights.

Assessment:

Have the students write a newspaper article reporting on Marian Anderson’s 1939 Lincoln Memorial concert.