



Stories in Civil Rights

Introduction

This lesson focuses on the narrative experiences of different civil rights figures, activists, and some everyday people. It is designed to be used with Dashka Slater's *The 57 Bus*, and it serves as an introduction to that unit of study. It introduces students to concepts of civil rights and social justice. It draws from a wide selection of source material, including from the American civil rights, gay rights, and indigenous rights movements, as well as the stories of Sasha and Richard from *The 57 Bus*. It is structured to reinforce the analysis of text sets, a skill often utilized in college prep courses.

This lesson was created as part of the Making Gay History / National Education Association Teaching Fellowship. Each lesson specifically uses a podcast episode and related resources from the Making Gay History podcast. These lessons have been created so that teachers across the country have the context and tools to bring archival audio from the Making Gay History podcast into middle and high school classrooms.

The Making Gay History podcast brings LGBTQ+ history to life through the voices of the people who lived it. We strive to create a world where everyone understands, respects, and honors the experiences and histories of LGBTQ+ people by providing engaging and accessible entry points to its largely hidden history. The podcast is hosted by historian and journalist Eric Marcus, who has been documenting LGBTQ+ history for more than 35 years.

Grade Level

9th-12th grade, particularly 10th

Disciplines / Unit Recommendations

This lesson was specifically designed to be taught with Dashka Slater's *The 57 Bus* in an English Language Arts classroom. In that context, *The 57 Bus* readings provide a common context for students and the common foundation for all discussion groups.

This lesson could also be relevant in ELA or social studies classrooms that are studying civil rights and social justice through other pieces of narrative. In later grade levels, if some students have read *The 57 Bus* and some have not, groups could be structured to include one or more students who have read it in order so that they may share their prior knowledge and expertise about the book with their groups.

Estimated Time

Approximately 200 minutes (3-4 days depending on schedule)

Preparation

It is recommended that teachers double-check all links as some may shift since they are not hosted by Making Gay History directly.

All relevant text sets except for *The 57 Bus* are found in the slideshow, as well as via the individual links below. The slideshow also includes links to the referenced Edpuzzle and Testimonials sites, which might be projected for the class to watch together or assigned for individual viewing. Teachers may also choose to adapt the questions to the particular study focus of their course or students.

- ☐ Listen in advance to **Making Gay History episode: 4.9 Ernestine Eckstein**
<https://bit.ly/mgh-eckstein>

As the teacher, you know your students and teaching situation best. It is always advised to listen to the full podcast individually before playing for or assigning to your students, just as you would review any text for classroom use.

Optional: Make the podcast [episode transcript](#) available for students to read/reference when listening to the podcast.

- ☐ Review and make a copy to use with your students of the Edpuzzle, [Civil Rights & Liberties: Crash Course Government & Politics #23](#), or alternatively, review the source video directly on [Crash Course](#).

Note: Edpuzzle does require an account to copy. If you have an account, from this link there is a button right above the video that says “edit” and it creates a copy in Edpuzzle.

- ☐ Review the testimonials at the National Museum of African American History & Culture's [Civil Rights History Project](#) website. If viewing testimonials as a class, choose which testimonials to share.
- ☐ Review handout for the four text sets and make available digitally or by print copy:
 - Ernestine Eckstein
 - Eloise Cobell
 - Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - The 57 Bus
- ☐ Prepare 4 large sheets of butcher paper or easel-sized post-it notes if the class is being taught in person.

Background

This lesson is structured around using text sets to understand the following four people/incidents in the struggle for civil rights.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was an instrumental leader in the American civil rights movement, playing a leading role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott, March to Selma, and the March on Washington.

Ernestine Eckstein, or Ernestine Delois Eppenger, is most famous for her work in the early gay rights movements of the 1960s. An iconic figure in her white-framed sunglasses, Eckstein was a prominent activist, participating in many protests to support equal rights for LGBTQ+ individuals.

Eloise Cobell was the Treasurer of the Blackfeet Nation, an activist, and a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom. She is most noted for being the lead plaintiff in one of the largest class action lawsuits against the federal government, over the mismanagement of Indian trusts.

The 57 Bus is a real life account of the fire on the 57 bus in Oakland, California in 2013. It explores the lives of the victim, Sasha, and the perpetrator, Richard, while addressing the complexities of the city of Oakland, gender identity, race, and the criminal justice system.

Procedure

Note: the intent of this lesson is that it be taught in person; however, the slideshow can also be used to simulate a virtual tabletop.

Steps 1 and 2 could be assigned for students to complete independently before class.

1. Students independently complete the Edpuzzle, [Civil Rights & Liberties: Crash Course Government & Politics #23](#), or alternatively, view the source video directly on [Crash Course](#). These are the comprehension questions and time stamps:
 - a. After 1:08: What are civil liberties? What are civil rights?
 - b. After 3:25: In the case of Barron v. Baltimore, the court said that the Bill of Rights applied to the _____, not the _____.
 - c. After 7:16: What is the difference between civil liberties and civil rights?
2. Students view two civil rights testimonials from the National Museum of African American History & Culture's [Civil Rights History Project](#) (up to student selection).
 - a. For each video, summarize the testimony as follows:
I watched _____'s testimonials. Their story was _____ (1-2 sentences). The part that I connected with the most in the testimonial was _____ because _____.
 - b. After watching both videos, complete this prompt: One thing in common I noticed between the two testimonials was _____. I think this might be important to share with my peers because _____.

Variation: it would be very easy to complete this set as a whole class. Simply show the Edpuzzle and answer the questions as a class. You may select the testimonials to view with the class. A few recommendations are: Dr. Scott Bates, Dr. Roberta Alexander, Anne Pearl Avery, and Robert G. Clark, Jr.

3. Students share their responses to the Edpuzzle and testimonials.
From the author: Any share out/discussion strategy works, but I personally have everyone at a table go around and present one of their responses to their tablemates. I then invite any students to share out to the class as a whole, on a volunteer basis.
4. Students join tables based on a text set. You may assign these groups or have students self-select, with a cap (so that all text sets are covered).
Variation: if doing digital tables, I recommend making a copy of the slide for each text set and assigning them to groups in your learning management system.

5. Students begin engaging with text sets in a way that works for them (may read/listen as a group, etc.) They will note responses to guided reading questions on their group note catcher.
 - a. In person, use large sheets of butcher paper or easel-sized post-it notes as a group note catcher.
 - b. Online, if you are using the slideshow as a digital table, I recommend students add slides after their text set.
6. As a table, students decide on the most important information to share out from the guided reading. Each student should record this information independently so they have the information with them in later groups as well as for their later reflections.
 - a. Students who directly did *The 57 Bus* as their text set are required to share their elevator pitch (a brief synopsis of key takeaways from what they read).
7. Divide students up as evenly as possible to form new groups consisting of 1-2 members from each text set per group.
8. Students share their observations from the guided reading on the different perspectives that they have read about.
 - a. Students who directly did *The 57 Bus* as their text set are required to share their elevator pitch (a brief synopsis of key takeaways from what they read).
9. Students respond to an exit ticket reflection question and turn it in at the end of the lesson:
 - a. Reflecting on your learning today, write a brief paragraph that describes what you learned and how it might impact your thinking going forward.
 - b. Slide 12 includes sentence starters for those who need additional scaffolding. Students would choose one to write on:
 - i. The most important event that happened for me today was...
 - ii. Thinking back over the day, what I valued most was...
 - iii. One of the things that surprised me was...
 - iv. I'm still shocked by...
 - v. I keep thinking about...
 - vi. In the future I would like to...
 - vii. I have to think more deeply about...
 - c. From the author: *This is a great opportunity to use a function of your Learning Management System to collect these!*

About the Author: Dan Johnson

Hi everyone, Dan Johnson here. I am a Montana-based English language arts teacher who has taught middle school and high school for 13 years in some of Montana's largest and smallest school districts. I hope you find these resources useful. I try my best to include marginalized voices, particularly those of Montana's indigenous peoples, in my own teaching.