

Lesson Plan Six

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 12



OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to accompany *Black Americans in Congress, 1870–2007*. Students have the opportunity to analyze historical photographs associated with Black Americans who served in Congress and with the history of civil rights in the United States. Students are encouraged to think more about the role historical photographs can play in the study of past events and people. (Caption and credit information for the images used in this activity appear at the end of the Historical Photographs document.)



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. history, American government, African-American studies, social studies, art
- Reconstruction Era, Great Migration, World War II, civil rights movement



OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to describe and analyze historical photographs.
2. Students should be able to analyze the relationship between photographs and the historical record.
3. Students should be able to analyze the relationship between historical photographs and African Americans who have served in Congress.



LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. What are historical photographs?
 - b. Who takes them and why?
 - c. What are some commonly photographed historic events? People? Places?
 - d. How can historical photographs be utilized by historians to study past events and people?
2. Divide the class into small groups. Each group will choose, or be assigned, a series of historical photographs from one of the four eras of *Black Americans in Congress*. Have students print out the relevant images from the accompanying Historical Photographs document <http://baic.house.gov/education/lesson-plans/photographs.pdf>.
3. Each group should read the *Black Americans in Congress* historical essay for their particular era <http://baic.house.gov/historical-essays/> to develop a better understanding of the significant people and events of the time period.
4. Write the following statement on the board, “**A picture is worth a thousand words.**” Ask students to explain the meaning of this adage. Distribute the “Photograph Analysis” worksheet (located on pages 3 and 4). Review the directions and ask students to complete the worksheet.
5. Have students present their findings in a five-minute presentation to the class. Each group should provide an overview of their photograph analysis and should choose one historical image to highlight during their presentation. As a group, compare and contrast the historical photographs from the four eras.

6. As a class activity, or using the earlier assigned groups, have students create a historical scrapbook entitled, "Justice and Equality." Students should go to their local library or historical society and research images relating to the themes of justice, equality, and civil rights. Students can combine the photographs used in this activity with the images they collected at the library and with pictures from their own families and friends. Organize the historical photographs thematically or chronologically and add captions to provide relevant information for the photos such as dates, names, and explanations of events.
7. If time permits, have students conduct basic photograph research to learn more about how images can provide levels of detail about a historical event that might otherwise be lost. Have students access the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Web site, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html>, which contains an extensive online image collection. Provide students with a list of search terms associated with the material covered in *Black Americans in Congress*. For example: slavery, Reconstruction, civil rights, Congress, World War II, Great Depression, African-American rights, and Representative. Have students use these search terms to locate and print out five historical images featuring Black Americans. Write a caption for each image and add the photographs to the scrapbook.
8. If time permits, conduct one of the optional extended activities.



SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Plan a trip to a museum or historical society to view an exhibit of historical photographs.
2. Conduct photograph research at a local library, museum, or historical society to document the history of your school or city/town. Take current photographs and design a visual timeline.
3. Design an exhibit of historical photographs of African Americans to display at your school or city/town hall.



ONLINE RESOURCES

Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

<http://bioguide.congress.gov>

Office of the Clerk, Art & History

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. House of Representatives such as weekly historical highlights, party divisions, congressional apportionment, leadership and officers, and significant events.

http://clerk.house.gov/art_history/index.html

Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Library of Congress/THOMAS

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

<http://thomas.loc.gov/>

GPO Access

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/index.html>



Photograph Analysis Worksheet (Part 1)

1. Examine the photograph for 10 seconds. Write a short caption line describing the image.
2. Divide the photograph into four equal sections and study each individually.
 - a. What details—such as people, objects, and activities—do you notice? Place your answers in the table below.
 - b. What other information—such as time period, location, season, and reason image was taken—can you gather from the photograph? What are the clues? Do you recognize any of the people in the image? Place your answers in the table below.

	Section 1	Section 2	Section 3	Section 4
People				
Objects				
Activities				
Other Information				



Photograph Analysis Worksheet (Part 2)

3. Now that you have studied the image, how would you revise your first description of the photograph?

4. What questions do you have about the photograph? How might you find answers to these questions?

5. Read the following quote and then review your images. In your opinion, which image best illustrates this statement:

“If you believe in fighting racism, you make a commitment for the rest of your life. There’s no getting off that train. You can’t say, ‘I’ve put five years in fighting racism and now I am finished.’ No, you are not finished. Our job is to fight it every day, to continue to shove it down and when it rises up to shove it down even harder.”

— Representative Parren James Mitchell of Maryland

Write a two-sentence explanation of why you chose that image.