

***The Modern Civil Rights Movement***  
***Suggested Grades: Grades 8 and 11***  
***Lesson by: Meagan McCormick***

(Be sure to contact the Castellani Art Museum for a copy of the teacher resource guide containing the images, activities, and additional information associated with this lesson plan.)

## **Disciplines: NYS Learning Standards**

### **◆ Social Studies**

***Standard 1:*** History of the United States and New York

***Performance Indicator (1):*** The study of New York and the United States history requires an analysis of the development of American culture, its diversity and multicultural context, and the ways people are unified by many values, practices, and traditions.

***Performance Indicator (2):*** Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and the United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives.

***Performance Indicator (3):*** Study about the major social, political, economic, cultural and religious developments in New York State and United States history involves learning about the important roles and contributions of individuals and groups.

***Standard 5:*** Civics, Citizenship, and Government

***Performance Indicator (1):*** The study of civics, citizenship, and government involves learning about political systems; the purposes of government and civic life; and the differing assumptions held by people across time and place regarding power, authority, governance, and law. (Adapted from *The National Standards for Civics and Government, 1994*)

***Performance Indicator (2):*** The state and federal governments established by the Constitutions of the United States and the State of New York embody basic civic values (such as justice, honesty, self-discipline, due process, equality, majority rule with respect for minority rights, and respect for self, others, and property), principles and practices and establish a system of shared and limited government. (Adapted from *The National Standards for Civics and Government, 1994*)

***Performance Indicator (3):*** Central to civics and citizenship is an understanding of the roles of the citizen within American constitutional democracy and the scope of a citizen's rights and responsibilities.

***Performance Indicator (4):*** The study of civics and citizenship requires the ability to probe ideas and assumptions, ask and answer analytical questions, take a skeptical attitude toward questionable arguments, evaluate evidence, formulate rational conclusions, and develop and refine participatory skills.

### **◆ English Language Arts (ELA)**

***Standard 1:*** Language for Information and Understanding

***Performance Indicator (1):*** Listening and reading to acquire information and understanding involves collecting data, facts, and ideas; discovering relationships, concepts, and generalizations; and using knowledge from oral, written, and electronic sources.

***Performance Indicator (2):*** Speaking and writing to acquire and transmit information requires

asking probing and clarifying questions, interpreting information in one's own words, applying information from one context to another, and presenting the information and interpretation clearly, concisely, and comprehensibly.

**Standard 3:** Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

**Performance Indicator (1):** Listening and reading to analyze and evaluate experiences, ideas, information, and issues requires using evaluative criteria from a variety of perspectives and recognizing the difference in evaluations based on different sets of criteria.

**Performance Indicator (2):** Speaking and writing for critical analysis and evaluation requires presenting opinions and judgments on experiences, ideas, information, and issues clearly, logically, and persuasively with reference to specific criteria on which the opinion or judgment is based.

### ◆ The Arts- Visual Arts

**Standard 1:** Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts

**Performance Indicator (1):** Students will make works of art that explore different kinds of subject matter, topics, themes, and metaphors. Students will understand and use sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive images to communicate their own ideas in works of art. Students will use a variety of art materials processes, mediums, and techniques, and use appropriate technologies for creating and exhibiting visual art works.

**Standard 2:** Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resource

**Performance Indicator (2):** Students will know and use a variety of visual arts materials, techniques, and processes. Students will know about resources and opportunities for participation in visual arts in the community (exhibitions, libraries, museums, galleries) and use appropriate materials (art reproductions, slides, print materials, electronic media). Students will be aware of vocational options available in the visual arts.

**Standard 3:** Responding to and analyzing Works of Art

**Performance Indicator (3):** Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate works of art, using the language of art criticism. Students will analyze the visual art characteristics of the natural and built environment and explain the social, cultural, psychological, and environmental dimensions of the visual arts. Students will compare the way in which a variety of ideas, themes, and concepts are expressed in other disciplines.

**Descriptive Title:** The Modern Civil Rights Movement

### **Context (Rationale):**

The end of slavery with passage of the Thirteenth Amendment was just the beginning of the long struggle of Black Americans for their civil rights. While former slaves were given citizenship and Black men were given the right to vote, equality of rights under the law would be hard fought and take many years to achieve. Segregation of the races would be the law of the land, re-enforced by Supreme Court rulings and state laws that allowed for separate facilities to be used by Blacks and Whites. This was especially true in southern states where “Jim Crow” laws required separate entrances into public buildings, separate seating in restaurants and movie theatres and even separate drinking fountains for “Colored” and “White.” Social interaction between the races was unacceptable and in many cases unlawful. The modern Civil Rights Movement began with the landmark 1954 Supreme Court Decision *Brown vs. The Board of*

*Education of Topeka, Kansas* which legally ended segregation in public schools. The Court's ruling overturned the prevailing opinion that segregation was legal as long as the facilities offered to both races were equal. This ruling would eventually be applied not just to schools but to all public facilities. Even though segregation may have been declared illegal, enforcement of the court decision and other federal laws pertaining to civil rights was often difficult to achieve. Protests, demonstrations, boycotts, became common place throughout the 1960's. While both Black and White protestors, inspired by the words of Civil Rights leader the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., attempted peaceful demonstrations, sometimes violence did result. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 led to race riots in a number of American cities. But throughout the following decades Americans of all races continued to work towards the achievement of equal rights for all Americans. The election of Barack Obama in 2008 was considered a defining moment in race relations. As they view artwork representing aspects of the Civil Rights Movement students will become more aware of the insidious nature of segregation and its attempt to keep a certain race of people from achieving the same rights as others.

## **Performance Task:**

The student will be able to:

- View artwork that illustrates early history and struggles of Black Americans as they endured slavery and fought their way to freedom through the Underground Railroad
- Identify artwork that represents facets of the Civil Rights Movement
- Describe how the artwork illustrates images of segregation
- Identify methods used to protest segregation
- Describe the consequences of protest
- Identify important individuals who contributed to the Civil Rights Movement
- Describe major events that occurred during this period that would have lasting effects
- Create a representation that illustrates a specific aspect of segregation before the Civil Rights Movement and then create a second representation that shows the change that occurred because of the Movement. A written explanation of these two depictions must accompany the assignment.

## **Art Resources:**

- Untitled from the Stations installation 1988 (sculpture), Houston E. Conwill, Castellani Art Museum
- Skillet Study: Mavis 1999, Alison Saar, Castellani Art Museum
- The Great International Railway Suspension Bridge, Niagara Falls, NY 1859, Ferdinand Richardt, Castellani Art Museum
- Path to the Whirlpool 1985, John Pfahl, Castellani Art Museum
- Harriet Tubman (left) at her home in Auburn, NY, ca. 1887, photographer unknown, courtesy Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts
- "DIGNITY" 1972, Robert E. Dorksen, Castellani Art Museum
- Kiss 1963, Robert Longo, Castellani Art Museum
- Harlem Night Club, Serge Soudeikine, Castellani Art Museum
- Birmingham Race Riot, Andy Warhol, Castellani Art Museum

- Students and Desks, 1991, Pat Bacon, Castellani Art Museum

## **Art Materials:**

- Pencil/Pen
- Lined Paper
- White Drawing Paper
- Eraser
- Colored Pencils
- Markers
- Magazines/Newspapers
- Glue stick
- Scissors

## **Motivation:**

The teacher might motivate students by asking them how they would feel if they were told that they could not come into the museum using the same entrance as the other students nor could they sit next to the other students in the gallery because of differences beyond their control. For many years in the United States a group of people were segregated from others because of their race. This form of discrimination was not only allowed but was the law of the land, although it was largely practiced in southern states. The teacher will ask students what they would be willing to do if they felt their civil rights were being violated. How would they react and would they be willing to put their lives in danger to protest injustices? The teacher will use the artwork in the Museum to illustrate the struggle of Black Americans to secure their equal rights throughout history, with special emphasis on the years of the 1950's and 1960's.

## **Presentation:**

1. When students arrive at the Museum the teacher will first direct them to the *Freedom Crossing* Exhibit.
2. The teacher will give a short presentation using the specific artwork in the exhibit to remind students of the early history of African Americans in this country as they endured hundreds of years of slavery yet fought for their freedom, risking severe punishment or even death, through the establishment and participation of the Underground Railroad.
3. The teacher will then direct students into another gallery featuring artwork representative of the modern Civil Rights Movement.
4. After the students have been seated, the teacher will question them concerning their feelings of equal treatment using the motivational questions listed earlier in the lesson.
5. After some discussion the teacher will then describe the background to the Civil Rights Movement beginning with the years after the Civil War.
6. The teacher will stress that despite amendments to the Constitution abolishing slavery and establishing citizenship, former slaves were far from being treated equal to other American citizens. But like their early ancestors African Americans fought against second class citizenship, resisting racial segregation and discrimination with strategies such as civil

disobedience, non violence resistance, marches, protests, “freedom rides”, and rallies.

7. The teacher will then have students study the various pieces of art in the gallery asking questions about each of the individual pieces and how they might relate in some way to the Civil Rights Movement.
8. At some point the teacher will stress that the Movement especially in the 50’s and 60’s attempted change through peaceful means and was guided by the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr.
9. The teacher will distribute a copy of Martin Luther King Jr. ’s most famous speech *I Have A Dream* which he delivered on August 28, 1963 in Washington D.C. on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and will direct students to read it.
10. The teacher will then play for the students a short video of a MLC online theme song “I Have a Dream” by the artist Common.
11. At this point the teacher will give students their assignment. They must create a representation that illustrates a specific aspect of segregation before the Civil Rights Movement and then create a second representation that shows the change that occurred because of the Movement. They may do a literal interpretation or something more abstract in nature. Their final work may take the form of a drawing, collage or combination of both. A written explanation of these two depictions must accompany the assignment.

## **Assessment Tools and Evidence:**

**Tools:** At the end of the session the teacher will ask students to share their representations and written explanations with the rest of the class. The teacher will ask the students questions about their assignment and allow other students to comment.

**Evidence:** The evidence of whether or not the students understood the influence of the modern Civil Rights Movement will be determined by their representations and explanations.

**Teacher Reflection/Follow Up:** Do the students understand the consequences of segregation and the desire for people to fight for their Civil Rights? Do they understand that standing up for equal rights means sacrifice, determination, and threat of personal danger? The teacher will make decisions based on the work created by the students and feedback from the subject area teacher.