

Class Activity for: *Newspapers* (2011 Student Projects)

Lesson Information

Suggested Grade Level: 8th – 12th grade

Lesson Title: Newspapers: The African-American Story

Rationale: Using Omaha, NE as a backdrop, students will explore and learn why African-American newspapers were crucial to the development of African-American communities, and how the newspapers did more than just report the news.

Guided Questions: What roles have newspapers served in our past and present? Why would African-Americans feel the need to create their own newspapers? How might African-American newspapers be different than mainstream newspapers? What role in our history might African-American newspapers have played?

Lesson Goals: Students will be able to connect the historical and present day significance of African-American newspapers on the national and local level. The readings, artifacts, and the oral history students will examine bring awareness about African-American newspapers in our nation's history, and connect it to the African-American community in Omaha. Students can analyze the short term and long term impacts of African-American newspapers on a local scale, and discover the voice African-American newspapers have given, and continue to give, to the African-American community.

Suggested Time: 30-45 minutes (full lesson; teacher can pair down to fit shorter time frame)

Required Materials: At least one computer with internet access for every two students

Activity Instructions

Introduction/Anticipatory Set: Communication Today

1. Place students into small groups.
2. Groups will create a list of what they see as the top five ways we communicate news and information today
3. Instruct the groups to write down their list, and then write down what they see as pros and cons of each form of communication.
4. Once all groups are done, have one member from each group share their list and pros and cons; teacher can keep tally of top communication ways groups present as a point of discussion.
5. When all groups are done sharing: As a large group, have students take turns responding to and discussing the following questions:
 - In what ways has communication changed over our history?
 - What is good about older styles of communication, like newspapers? What is negative?
 - What connections do you see between older communication styles and newer styles?
6. Use this last discussion question to transition into the lesson activity:
Given their history, why might African-Americans have created their own newspapers? What purpose would these newspapers still serve today?

Directions/Procedures for Instruction:

1. Working in pairs, instruct students to go to the Making Invisible Histories Visible website (www.ops.org/invisiblehistory)
2. Students will click on 2011 Student Projects and then on the Newspaper project
3. Students will read the information, explore and analyze the artifacts, as well as watch the oral history video to research information and complete the following:
 - a. Students will create a timeline of Omaha's African-American newspapers
 - b. Students will summarize what they see as the top three roles black newspapers serve(d) in the

African-American community.

- c. Students will explain why African-American newspapers are such an important part of our history.
4. Once the students have completed their research, they will work to create a newspaper (or just an article depending on how much time the teacher wants to spend on this activity).
5. For the newspaper they will create it from the point of view of an under-represented or misrepresented group in today's society. Students' newspapers should cover the following:
 - a. Title and slogan that appropriately represents the group.
 - b. Headlines and small articles discussing topics important to this group.
 - c. Information that gives the general public a better understanding of this group.
6. In addition to the newspaper, students will answer the following questions as part of their assessment:
 - a. How is the student's newspaper similar to African-American newspapers (past and/or present)?
 - b. Why do you think this group is under-represented or misrepresented in our society? How might a newspaper like the one you created help this group?