

Lesson Plan: Teaching Civil Rights Through James Baldwin

Course: Grow Your Own Educator Preparation Program

Grade Level: 9-12 (Future Educators)

Duration: 35-40 minutes

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify at least three strategies for teaching civil rights to students at different grade levels (pre-K through high school)
2. Explain how James Baldwin's approach to writing about civil rights can inform classroom teaching practices
3. Apply differentiation strategies to adapt civil rights content for various learners

Standards Alignment

Texas TEKS - Instructional Practices (Education and Training Career Cluster):

| TEKS | Standard |
|------|--|
| 4 | The student understands the learner and the learning process. Demonstrate techniques for development of effective relationships with students that foster mutual respect and rapport and result in effective instruction. |
| 5 | The student understands instructional planning and delivery. Present subject matter effectively, including selecting and using a variety of instructional strategies to promote student success. |
| 7 | The student creates an effective learning environment. Describe and implement a safe and effective learning environment; demonstrate teacher characteristics that promote effective learning. |

Connection to Educator Preparation:

- Develops skills for teaching sensitive historical content appropriately across grade levels

- Models differentiation strategies (adjusting complexity, not importance, by age)
- Demonstrates discussion-based approaches to inclusive classroom conversation
- Shows how to use personal stories and present-day connections to make content accessible

Source: TEKS from `teks/practices/generated/` (Instructional Practices course materials)

Materials Needed

- ■ Presentation slides (slides.md) - displayed via projector/screen
- ■ Reading passage (reading.md) - displayed for students to follow along
- ■ Group discussion worksheet (worksheet.md) - students access on their devices
- ■ Paper and pencils for group note-taking
- ■ Google Classroom quiz (created from quiz.md via Automagical Forms)
- ■ Photo of James Baldwin (assets/james-baldwin.jpg) - included in slides

Lesson Sequence

Opening (5 minutes)

0:00 - 0:05

- Welcome students and introduce the topic: "Teaching Civil Rights Through James Baldwin"
- Ask: "Has anyone heard of James Baldwin before?" (brief responses)
- Present learning objectives
- Frame the lesson: "As future teachers, you'll teach students ranging from pre-K to high school. Today we'll explore how to teach civil rights across all those grade levels."

Direct Instruction (10 minutes)

0:05 - 0:15

- Present slides covering:
 - Who James Baldwin was and why his words matter for teaching
 - The challenge of teaching civil rights
 - Key strategies: age-appropriate entry points, questioning, personal stories, present-day connections
- Read aloud the reading passage while students follow along on screen
- Pause briefly after the reading to check for understanding

Guided Practice - Group Discussion (15 minutes)

0:15 - 0:30

- Organize students into groups of 3-4
- Direct students to access the worksheet on their devices
- Explain instructions: discuss prompts verbally, summarize key points on paper
- Circulate among groups to:

- Listen to conversations and ask follow-up questions
- Provide scaffolding: "What makes you say that?" or "How might that work with younger students?"
- Redirect if discussions go off-topic
- Encourage quieter students to share their thinking
- At 0:28, give a 2-minute warning to wrap up discussions

Closure (5 minutes)

0:30 - 0:35

- Bring class back together
- Invite 2-3 groups to share one key insight from their discussion
- Summarize main takeaways:
 - Civil rights can and should be taught at every grade level
 - Adjust complexity, not importance
 - Baldwin's approach: connect history to human experience
 - Create safe spaces for honest conversation
- Transition to assessment

Assessment (5-8 minutes)

0:35 - 0:40

- Direct students to Google Classroom to complete the quiz individually
- Remind students: questions are randomized, no retakes, answers not shown at end
- Remain available for technical questions

Differentiation Strategies

For students needing additional support:

- Pair with supportive peer during group discussion
- Provide sentence starters for discussion: "One strategy I would use is..." or "I think younger students would respond to..."
- During circulation, spend extra time with these groups to model discussion
- Allow verbal summary to instructor instead of written notes if needed

For advanced students:

- Assign discussion facilitator role within their group
- Pose extension questions: "How might you assess whether your civil rights lesson was effective?"
- Challenge them to find connections between Baldwin's ideas and other educators or thinkers they've studied

Assessment

Formative Assessment:

- Observation during group discussions (engagement, quality of ideas, peer collaboration)
- Questions asked during instructor circulation
- Group summary notes (collected optionally)

Summative Assessment:

- Google Classroom quiz: 8 multiple choice and true/false questions
- Automatically graded; results available for instructor review
- Quiz data informs whether concepts need reinforcement in future lessons

Reflection (Post-Lesson)

To be completed after teaching:

What worked well:

What needs adjustment:

Student engagement observations:

Notes for next time:

Appendix

Key Vocabulary:

- **Civil rights:** The rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality
- **Differentiation:** Adjusting instruction to meet diverse student needs
- **Primary sources:** Original documents or firsthand accounts from historical periods
- **Scaffolding:** Temporary support provided to help students reach higher levels of understanding

About James Baldwin:

James Baldwin (1924-1987) was an American novelist, essayist, playwright, and activist. His works explore intricacy of racial, sexual, and class distinctions in Western society. Key works include *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), *The Fire Next Time* (1963), and *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974).

Additional Resources:

- Baldwin's "A Talk to Teachers" (1963) - available online
- PBS American Masters documentary on James Baldwin
- The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (digital archives)