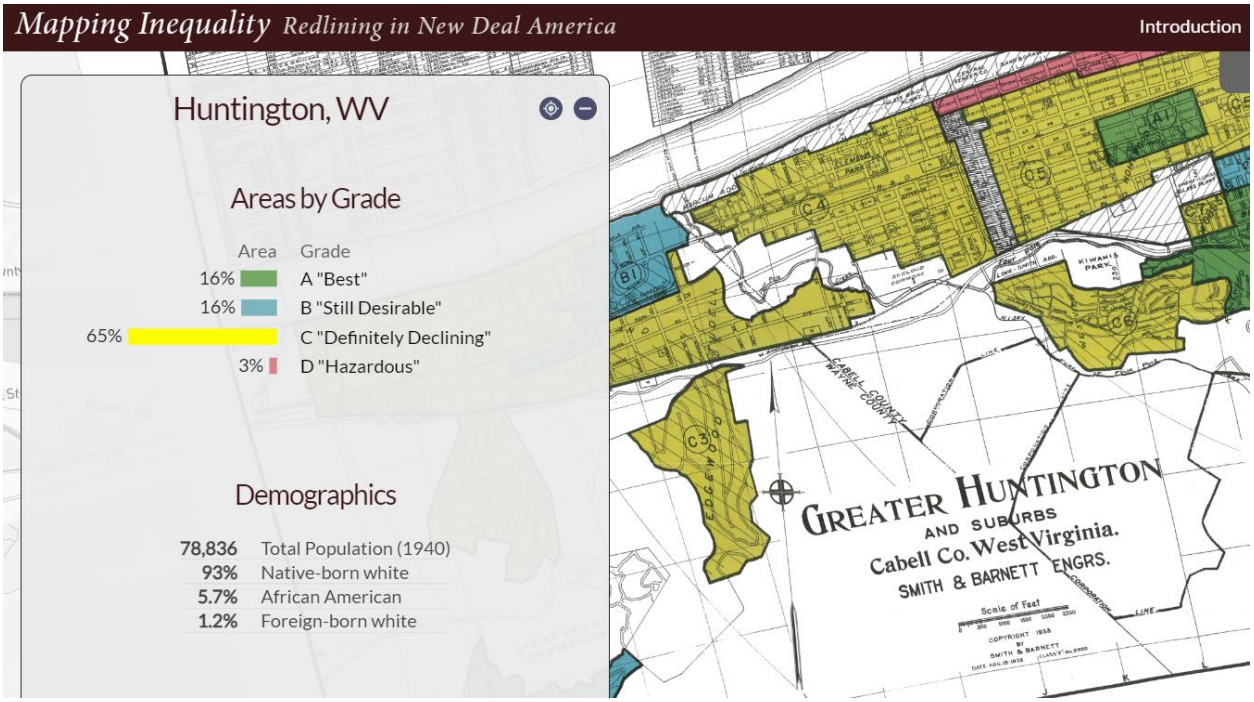

Lesson Plan and Reflection Packet

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Table of Contents

Lesson Plan: Teaching Black History with Digital Tools

Introduction

As technology becomes increasingly integrated into our students' lives, the approaches we use to teach must integrate the types of tools that are most relevant to our students. By using these tools, students will be exposed to the potential educational uses of digital tools for learning history.

This set of lesson plans uses digital humanities projects that document three content areas within the broader topic of Black American history as a focus for student learning:

- Forced migration of enslaved people within the United States after the 1808 cessation of the importation of enslaved people (1810-1860)
- Nineteenth century actions of Black people who sought to combat racism and increase their civil and human rights (1830-1899)
- The concept and impact of redlining on Black people (1930-1940)

These content areas explore topics that remain relevant today: the legacy of legalized dehumanization and discrimination against Black people and how marginalized individuals organize despite significant societal challenges.

Subject and Level

Social Studies and Civics/Government, Grades 9-12

Objectives/Goals

- Students will explore, understand, and analyze digital projects that make use of primary sources to communicate historical topics
- Students will be able to:
    - Express the nature of the forced migration and internal trade of enslaved persons for the period in which importation of enslaved persons was illegal (The Forced Migration of Enslaved People in the United States, 1810-1860)
    - Understand the ways that Black people organized throughout the nineteenth century in support of expanding civil rights (Colored Conventions Project)
    - Discuss the impact of redlining on Black property ownership, including long-term financial and social implications (Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America)

Duration

Four days, or more if using the optional extension questions.

Content Resources

All resources required as part of this lesson plan are digital projects that are available online:

- The Forced Migration of Enslaved People in the United States, 1810-1860 (https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/forcedmigration)
- Colored Conventions Project (https://coloredconventions.org/)
- Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America (https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/)

Because these tools are digital, students will ideally have a tablet or Chromebook at their disposal. If students do not have their own devices, teachers can conduct an instructor-guided version of the activities using a personal computer and projector.

Instructional Plan and Sequence

In this section are instructional plans and sequences for each project linked in the Content Resources section. Each project includes notes on why the project was included and information about the project for teacher use.

Should teachers want additional prompts to promote more in-depth inquiry to extend the activities outlined for each project, more questions are available below:

1. What content is available on the site? Does your personal background and knowledge impact how you understand and use the site? What information is prioritized? Why is the content selected to be available important? What can we learn from the content?

2. Who created the original materials? Who is depicted or described in the materials? Who made the materials available online? Who created the site? Who is the target audience of the site?

3. Why were the original materials created? Why was the site created? Why do you think the site looks the way it does? Why do you think we're looking at the site?

4. When were the original materials created? When were the materials made available online? When was the site created? Why do those dates matter?

5. Where did the information about the original materials come from? Where did the information on the site come from? Do you think the people who added information or made the site are biased in any way?

6. How does the site present the sources? Does the way the sources are presented prioritize certain views or ways of understanding the sources? Is there anything left out or not mentioned?

Day 1 - The Forced Migration of Enslaved People in the United States, 1810-1860 (50 minutes)

One of the central issues of the Civil War was slavery. However, between 1808 and 1861 when the Civil War began, it was illegal to import enslaved people from outside of the United States. This project makes students confront the devastatingly brutal actions of forced migration of enslaved Black people during this period in America. This project also integrates local contexts as well as the narratives of enslaved persons for more relevant impact.

Briefly introduce the project and provide a short overview of how to use the project's major features. Specifically:

- Clicking on decades to see the changing data of in and out migrations over time
- Reading excerpts of narratives of enslaved people and how they change over time

Then, choose a county as a focus for the lesson. Split students into five groups: one each for the 1810s, 1820s, 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. Have students become the "five-minute expert" on their decade and share with the class the following information about the county:

- How many enslaved persons are in the county?
- In the following decade, how did the population of enslaved persons change? Did it increase or decrease? What does it mean for the number to increase or decrease?
- What can you learn about from the summary text and narratives of enslaved people from this time period, and does what you learned impact how you understand the numbers you discussed in the previous set of questions?

Have groups share their responses to the questions. Serve as a note taker and ask students what commonalities and differences there are between the time periods and ask them to link their responses to the summary text and narratives. Push students to think critically about these answers and connect them to existing content knowledge.

Day 2 - Colored Conventions Project (50 minutes)

This project has been included because it documents a narrative of resistance and organization of Black people throughout the 19th century in pursuit of civil rights. It demonstrates the high level of organizational sophistication of individuals across the United States.

Split students into groups of three to four and have each group become the "five-minute expert" and share with the class the following information about a convention of their choice. Consider having students discuss conventions from differing time periods or geographic areas. All conventions can be found here: https://omeka.coloredconventions.org/convention-by-year.

- When and where did this convention take place?
- What subject was this convention focused on?
- Why were these conventions held?
- Do you think the time and place where the convention occurred impacted what was discussed? What else was happening during this time period?

Have groups share their responses to the questions. Serve as a note taker and ask students what commonalities and differences there are between the conventions, emphasizing the differences between time periods and geographic differences as relevant.

Day 3 - Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America (50 minutes)

This project has been included to demonstrate some of the historic structural and systemic ways in which Black people were marginalized by financial institutions and to communicate the long-lasting impact of these restrictions on Black individuals in the present.

Introduce students to the project by talking about the content on the "Introduction" (https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=14/38.393/-82.486&city=huntington-wv&text=intro) page of the project. Then, split students into groups of three to four and have each group become the "five-minute expert" and share with the class the following information about a neighborhood of their choice.

- What information is on the survey?
- What is the "grade" of the neighborhood you are examining?
- What are the reasons given for certain grades?
- Who collected or created the information on the site?
- Why did they collect or create the materials?

Have groups share their responses to the questions. Serve as a note taker and ask students what commonalities and differences there are between the different grades and consider possible motivations for why different neighborhoods were given different grades based on the information provided in the survey.

Day 4 - Conclusion (50 minutes)

Using the notes from the previous days, foster a discussion around similarities and differences between the projects. Then, to tie everything together, facilitate a discussion with students on the following questions. Be sure to encourage student input over simply going through all of the questions.

- Were you surprised by any of the things we've seen or learned over the past three days? If so, what surprised you?
- The Forced Migration of Enslaved People in the United States, 1810-1860
    - What do you think the implications of forced migration were during the time it occurred?

    - What do you think are the modern implications of forced migration?
- Colored Conventions Project
    - Are there any modern events that are similar to these conventions? If yes, what events and why are those events held?
- Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America
    - What do you think the implications of redlining were in the 1930s?
    - What do you think are the modern implications of redlining?
- Why do you think I asked you to look at these projects?
- These projects showed the systematic discrimination against Black people and the ways in which Black people sought to resist the societal barriers created. Are there any aspects of these projects that still occur in the present day? Why or why not?

Daily Institute Reflections

Day #1

Like last year, I greatly enjoyed Dr. Tucker Edmonds' presentation before and after lunch--he continually challenges teachers to work within systems that are created to prioritize history as understood and told by the dominant culture. This is an approach I have sought to bring to my work in archives, and I made some additional edits to my presentation on Monday thanks to his presentation as well as Dr. Johnson's as a result. Dr. Johnson's presentation on signifying language has contemporary implications surrounding methods of communication that will allow me to connect historical literary and primary source analysis to the present more concretely. The edits I made to my presentation include additional thoughts around ways that we can broaden the timeline and situated perspective within our teaching within existing limitations (such as, as Dr. Tucker Edmonds noted, state curricula and parents) and acknowledging the value of varying ways and means of communication. For my lesson plan I am considering creating a series of activities around a resource that I began teaching with earlier this year, Mapping Inequality, which is composed of insurance maps. My favorite types of activities to conduct with students often end up centering around government or business documents. While these materials *seem* boring at first, they provide a fantastic illustration of some of the things we began discussing today--these seemingly objective records are created in a way that privileges certain perspectives in a long-lasting systemic way. In the Mapping Inequality example, you can map neighborhoods with low property values in the present with values ascribed by a 1930s insurance company. When I worked with students in the past, they have responded with shock that a neighborhood would have been unabashedly described as declining in value and quality exclusively because of the number of Black and foreign-born residents.

Day #2

I was inspired in terms of how I deliver my lectures and activities, particularly the framing and contextualizing portions, by Dr. Dan Hollis' presentation today. Setting a scene for how activities are staged can be as critical as the activity itself to ensure maximum student engagement and learning outcomes. This same principle also holds true when you are creating lesson plans that will be shared with teachers who may be dispersed throughout the state and teaching in radically different contexts. Something that was emphasized in Dr. Hollis' presentation that I plan on emphasizing tomorrow is that we must always remember that people, whether they are people of the past that we are studying or ourselves, need to continually examine what we are studying and why. I think this core motivation for studying history, especially Black and African American history, is best summed up by a famous George Orwell quote from *1984:* "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past."

Karen Nance's detailed presentation on the Barnett Hospital, the nursing school, and the individuals who ran it provided an excellent case study for ways that students might use assignments as opportunities to recover the stories that are underrepresented within the historical narrative of African Americans in West Virginia. In Special

Collections, we just received a donation from the Huntington Herald Dispatch consisting of more than 200 boxes of subject files for groups, places, events, and more that were used to research news stories. Subject files include everything from materials regarding "Concerned Black Citizens of Huntington" to recruitment initiatives designed to increase diversity at the Huntington Police Department in the 1970s. Even a single folder on a relevant topic could serve as an excellent foundation for an assignment. Digitizing these materials and placing them in the same context as a research assignment might be one avenue for my lesson plan, though I'm still very much interested in working with the Mapping Inequality resource.

Day #3

Today's presentations, especially those of Carrie Eldridge and Jessica Lucas, really delved into the rich local African American history in the region. They each offered detailed information about the region that students may find useful context to fill in the gaps of the narrative they already study. Dr. Tucker Edmonds was, as always, incredible. His presentation reminded me to consistently re-center the narrative on individuals who have been marginalized in the traditional historical narrative. We must also, as noted by Lucas, not take away the agency of the people and cultures under study even when they are oppressed. We need to emphasize the role of resistance rather than inevitability and make the narrative we teach more nuanced and complete. History is, fundamentally, the study of people and stories--I don't think any one of us would argue that a person or event could be condensed down into a single way of study or a single way of understanding. After all, if that were the case, we wouldn't have multiple history books. There would simply be a single, very, very lengthy book that brooked no argument.

Day #4

The conversation we watched between Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham was particularly poignant to me as an archivist who frequently works with genealogists. Our archival collections at Marshall are disproportionally filled with scanned copies of original primary sources now used for genealogical research because of the priorities of former department heads, indicating something about the perceived value of a knowable familial past. While I recognized, in an abstract way, the importance of genealogy in individual identity formation, the conversation between Gates and Higginbotham made me more aware of the systemic implications of millions of individuals with an inability to conduct the research so many take for granted. Foregrounding the history and legacy of African American and Black individuals allows us to not only teach a better, and more complete history, but also serve to repair in some small sense the incalculable loss of individual talent, intellect, and potential of so many who were forced into circumstances against their will. This work also allows us to highlight the resistance, triumph, and accomplishment of so many, and begin to approach the goal Carter G. Woodson spent so much of his life striving toward.

Day #5

The fundamental message I took away from today's speakers, and the institute as a whole, is the critical importance of non-performative and consistent praxis when it comes to teaching. We (as teachers and individuals) have to fundamentally shift our personal understanding and consistently advocate to change at a larger level how people understand and frame the study of the past. Teaching Black history is not, as so many detractors seem to think, a threat that inexplicably erases hundreds of years of prioritizing the history and legacy of a select few. As noted by Dr. Menzise yesterday, what we choose to teach and who we choose to foreground has a real psychological impact on the students we teach and an impact on society in the present and future. This work is not optional--it is required if we are to consider ourselves as good educators and fundamentally do right by our students.