



Lesson Plan

Through the Eyes of Medgar Evers: Catalysts of the Civil Rights Movement

Objective(s):

- Explore the **catalysts** of the civil rights movement through the life of Medgar Evers.
- Create a sequential timeline of significant events

Grade Level: Middle Grades (4th-6th)

Subject: History/Social Studies

Standards:

Mississippi College and Career Readiness Standards for Social Studies	4.MS.8 - Analyze the Civil Rights Movement to determine the social, political, and economic impact on Mississippi.	5.8.5 - Compare and contrast the treatment of African Americans, Native Americans, and women regarding the principles in the Bill of Rights.	6.12 - Analyze the rights and responsibilities of American citizenship. 6.14 - Describe how civil rights and citizenship roles vary based on the culture and government of various nation-states.
College, Career, and Civic Life: C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards	D2.His.1.3-5. Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to compare developments that happened at the same time.		D2.His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.
Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies	4 RI.2. 4 RI.3. 4 RI.4. 4 RI.7.	5 RI.2. 5 RI.3. 5 RI.4. 5 RI.7.	6-8 RH.2. 6-8 RH.3. 6-8 RH.4. 6-8 RH.7.

Introduction Narrative:

Medgar Wiley Evers was born on July 2, 1925, in the small town of Decatur, Mississippi. Throughout his youth, Evers's parents emphasized education, religion, and hard work.

Evers was one of four children; he was closest to his older brother Charles, who protected him while teaching him to fish, hunt, swim, and more. Medgar went on to attend all-Black schools in Newton County, schools with limited resources and supplies for students. During his childhood and teen years, Medgar occasionally saw the violence Black people throughout the state experienced. He witnessed the violent capture of Willie Tingle, his father's friend, who was shot and hanged.

In 1942, Medgar took a brave step as he volunteered to join the United States Army. His brother Charles had **enlisted** the year before, and Medgar wanted to follow him and see the world. While in the military, he was relegated to a **segregated** support unit as Black soldiers were seen as "**inferior**" in combat. While fighting in the war, Evers was frustrated by the treatment Black servicemembers received, which worsened when he fought for the rights of others he did not have back in America. After returning home, Medgar and Charles led a group of Black veterans in an attempt to register to vote. Although they ultimately failed, it started Medgar's path of activism.

After returning from the war, Medgar finished high school and went to Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College, now known as Alcorn State University. It was there that he met his wife, Myrlie Beasley. While Evers was unsuccessful in this attempt, it set the stage for his future activities. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) noticed and made him Mississippi's first NAACP field secretary.

Evers was particularly moved to **activism** by the 1955 murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till. After Till's brutal murder, Medgar urged the NAACP's national leadership to get involved by investigating the case. Under Evers' leadership, the organization conducted a secret investigation to look for Black witnesses willing to come forward and speak. Medgar's work investigating Till's murder made him a target for white supremacists. Evers continued his work in Mississippi, forming local chapters of the NAACP, organizing protests, and leading voter registration drives. He was also instrumental in James Meredith finally **desegregating** the University of Mississippi. He was also a vocal supporter of Clyde Kennard, a Black man who unsuccessfully attempted to desegregate the University of Southern Mississippi.

Evers faced several instances of attempted violence and intimidation by white supremacists, including death threats and the firebombing of his home. The violence came to a head on June 12, 1963. At roughly 12:20 AM, Medgar returned home from a church meeting and exited the car with his arms filled with "Jim Crow Must Go" T-shirts. As he walked towards the kitchen door, he was shot and killed by a White **supremacist** hiding in the woods. After Medgar Evers's **assassination**, his work continued and could be seen in landmark events like the 1963 Freedom Vote, 1964's Freedom Summer, and

the civil rights work continued by Myrlie Evers. Medgar Evers's work has stood the test of time as he is one of the pioneers of Mississippi's Civil Rights Movement.

Definitions:

- **Activism** - to promote or make a difference in laws and policies.
- **Assassinate** - murder for political reasons.
- **Catalyze** - to cause, begin, or accelerate.
- **Desegregate** - to end the separation of races.
- **Enlist** - to join.
- **Inferior** - being less than others, not as good.
- **Segregate** - to separate by race.
- **Supremacist** - to believe someone is better than others.

Sources:

- <https://www.nps.gov/memy/index.htm>
- <https://mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/issue/medgar-evers-and-the-origin-of-the-civil-rights-movement-in-mississippi>
- <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/emmett-impact-emmett-tills-murder/>
- <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/civil-rights-leaders/medgar-evers>
- <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/medgar-evers>
- <https://www.mec.cuny.edu/history/life-of-medgar-evers/>
- <https://www.thenmusa.org/biographies/medgar-w-evers/>
- <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2021/07/medgar-evers-a-hero-in-life-and-death/>
- <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/medgar-evers-us-army-veteran-and-civil-rights-leader>

Materials:

- Lecture Google Slides
- Option A: Digital Timeline
 - Electronic device (laptop/tablet)
 - Digital Timeline Creation - <https://timeline.knightlab.com/#make>
 - Example:
https://cdn.knightlab.com/libs/timeline3/latest/embed/index.html?source=1y1Zu58xFkpWICcn6rTax8ZdcIGjP4_kVAR4PUFYv1Cw&font=Default&lang=en&initial_zoom=2&height=650
- Option B: Physical Timeline
 - Paper (construction, butcher, poster)
 - Pencil
 - Markers, Crayons, or Colored Pencils
 - Blank Timeline Template

Activity Procedures:

- Anticipatory Set (Bellringer): The teacher will present students with the question: What was one event that may have catalyzed the civil rights movement?
 - The teacher may need to define “catalyzed” for students.
 - Catalyzed - to cause, begin, or accelerate
- The teacher will introduce the lesson and its objectives to students, explaining today they will explore the three major events that “catalyzed” the civil rights movement through the perspective of Mississippi civil rights leader Medgar Evers.
- The teacher will use the introduction narrative and Google Slides to guide a brief lecture on Medgar Evers and the events that started the civil rights movement.
- The teacher will explain that students will use information from the lecture/Google Slides and additional information from the above sources to create a timeline of sequential events in Medgar’s life that catalyzed the civil rights movement.
- The teacher will distribute the rubric and address the five assessed categories.
 - At this time, the teacher should present the digital timeline example to students or a physical example (created by the teacher).

Option A: Digital Timeline

- Students will use a digital device (laptop/tablet) and the digital timeline website (<https://timeline.knightlab.com/#make>) to create the digital timeline using the sources, lecture, and rubric as their guide.

Option B: Physical Timeline

- Students will use paper, scissors, markers, crayons, and/or colored pencils to create their physical timelines. A blank white paper can be used or the timeline printout

Adaptions

- Students can work independently or placed in groups of 2-3 to complete the project.
- The teacher can reduce the number of timeline events for younger or less experienced learners.
- The teacher can require older or more experienced students to use the timeline as a visual aid for classroom presentation. Rubric for presentation not included.

Continued Learning/Reading:

- <https://mississippencyclopedia.org/entries/medgar-wiley-evers/>
- <https://mississippencyclopedia.org/entries/myrlie-evers-williams/>
- Myrlie Evers-Williams with William Peters, For Us, the Living (1967)
- Myrlie Evers-Williams and Manning Marable, The Autobiography of Medgar Evers: A Hero’s Life and Legacy Revealed Through His Writings, Letters, and Speeches (2005)
- Michael Vinson Williams, Medgar Evers: Mississippi Martyr (2011)

Rubric:

Category	5 - Distinguished	4 - Proficient	3 - Apprentice	2 - Novice
Content (Quality)	The events included are important and interesting. No major details are excluded.	Most of the included events are important or interesting. One or two major events may be missing.	Some events included are trivial, and major events are missing.	Many major events are excluded, and too many trivial events are included.
Content (Quantity)	The timeline contains at least 8–10 events related to the studied topic.	The timeline contains at least 6–7 events related to the studied topic.	The timeline contains at least 5 events related to the topic being studied.	The timeline contains fewer than 5 events.
Accuracy	Facts are accurate for all events reported on the timeline.	Facts are mostly accurate for events reported on the timeline.	Facts are accurate for most (~75%) of the events reported on the timeline.	Facts are often inaccurate for events reported on the timeline.
Order	All events are placed in proper order with an accurate and complete date.	Events and dates are mostly placed in proper order and correctly labeled.	Most (~75%) events and dates are correctly ordered and labeled.	Most events and/or dates are incorrectly ordered and labeled.
Spelling and Grammar	Made only one or two spelling, punctuation, or grammar errors.	Made less than five spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors.	Made ten or fewer spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors.	Made more than ten spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors.