FACING HISTORY & OURSELVES

LESSON PLAN

Lesson 9: Equality for All

Essential Question
What can we learn from the history of Reconstruction as we work to strengthen democracy today?

Guiding Question
What does it mean to be equal? Is equality essential for democracy?

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand that when some members of society attain new rights, others are often inspired in their efforts to achieve justice.
- Students will recognize that democracy is an aspiration that nations strive toward. Nations can successfully become more democratic without fully achieving the goals of equality and justice.

About This Lesson

In the previous two lessons, students examined the landmark legislation and amendments of the Radical Reconstruction era, and they learned about the debate over women's rights that occurred then. In this lesson, students will learn about some of the limits to the transformation of American democracy at this time and about several groups who demanded that the promise of equality be made a reality for them.

Additional Context and Background

While the rights of African Americans were greatly expanded under Radical Reconstruction, many forms of discrimination remained unregulated by law. Additionally, the limited rights of many Americans—including women, immigrants, workers, and Native Americans—remained untouched by Radical Reconstruction in the 1860s and 1870s. Yet the spirit of equality, newly enshrined in the Constitution by the Fourteenth Amendment, prompted many of these Americans to demand new rights. This lesson provides students with a survey of American voices demanding to be included, each in their own way, in the universe of obligation of the nation that emerged from the Civil War.

Some of these voices envision an equal society, while others express a belief that some Americans deserve more rights than others. Some of these voices envision an integrated society, while others express a desire to live apart, and in the case of Native Americans to have their sovereignty respected by the US government and people. By learning about these demands, students might consider some of the challenges of democracy:

- How can a democracy balance the competing demands of its inhabitants for rights and power?
- How can it achieve equality when not all of its inhabitants believe in equality?
- How can it achieve a harmonious society when not all of its inhabitants wish to live together?

While the histories of each of the groups represented in this lesson deserve extended study in a course on American history, the goal of this lesson is to show how the revolutionary changes that Radical Reconstruction brought to Southern society invigorated the desires of Americans everywhere to have their voices heard and their rights respected.

The following paragraphs provide context for the groups that are represented in this lesson.

African Americans: While Radical Reconstruction legislation and amendments dramatically changed the lives of African Americans, many forms of discrimination based on race were not explicitly forbidden by law. In 1874, Congress debated a new civil rights bill, written by Republican senator Charles Sumner from Massachusetts, which banned racial discrimination in public accommodation and transportation. The bill became law in 1875, and it was the last piece of Reconstruction legislation passed by Congress. It was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in the Civil Rights Cases of 1883.

Women: Women's rights advocates had a long history as part of the coalition demanding the abolition of slavery, but after the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, some women and African Americans diverged in their efforts for equality (refer to Lesson 8 for more information about this conflict). As compromises in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments left women's suffrage off the agenda, some women's rights advocates, such as Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and Lucy Stone, continued to support the amendments, while others, notably Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, strongly opposed them. Gage and Stone argued that any expansion of rights, even if inadequate in scope, ought to be supported because it would make society more democratic. Anthony and

Stanton argued that women deserved the franchise before African Americans and other groups. Although women had not been extended the franchise, Anthony voted in the 1872 election anyway, and she was arrested for committing a crime. She was convicted and fined $100 for "the crime of having voted," a common topic in her speeches thereafter.

Labor: The 1870s are known as the beginning of the Gilded Age (a term coined in 1873 by Mark Twain and fellow writer Charles Dudley Warner), a time of expanding industrialism, economic inequality, graft, and corruption. At the same time that the federal government continued to deny the provision of land to freedpeople in the South, it was granting free land to railroad corporations in the West. This policy facilitated the rapid expansion of railroads and the economic development of the West, but it also encouraged land speculation as corporations sold for enormous profit the land they were given for free. Workers across the country decried such policies that favored the wealthy and resulted in enormous economic inequality. The title of one pamphlet from the decade sums up this sentiment: "The Rich Are Growing Richer, While the Poor Are Growing Poorer." American laborers began to organize into unions to demand higher wages, better working conditions, and government policies more favorable to workers. The ideas of socialism and communism also arrived in the United States from Europe in the 1870s, fueling the demands of some workers for economic equality. Labor groups such as the Workingmen's Party of California not only demanded economic equality but also sought to exclude immigrants from employment, viewing them as competitors for jobs.

Immigration: After the Civil War, Congress passed laws to encourage immigration from Europe. According to Census Bureau statistics, between 1860 and 1880, the number of foreign-born Americans from Europe grew by 2 million, a 50% increase. During the same two decades, the number of foreign-born residents of the United States from China tripled, from roughly 35,000 in 1860 to nearly 105,000 in 1880. Chinese workers were crucial to the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and many others worked in manufacturing jobs. While Chinese immigrants represented less than 2% of the total immigrant population in the United States, some Americans, including members of the Workingmen's Party of California, perceived them as a threat to jobs and economic security. By 1875, there was enough anti-Chinese sentiment to prompt Congress to pass the Page Act, the first law to limit immigration of groups considered "undesirable." In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act further restricted Chinese immigration. It is in this context that a group of Chinese immigrants wrote to President Ulysses S. Grant in 1877 defending their value to American society and asking for protection from discrimination.

Policies toward Native Americans: The circumstances of Native Americans during Reconstruction were complex and frequently dire. The American government's policies toward Native Americans at this time were the culmination of several centuries of oppression and what many scholars have labeled genocide. Westward expansion, including the extension of railroads, was the goal of national economic policy during the 1860s and 1870s. As a result, the United States confiscated the western lands of a variety of American Indian nations. The army was sent to battle the nations that resisted. Under President Grant's American Indian policies, many Native Americans were encouraged (and often forced) to attend schools that would teach them how to assimilate into the culture of white America, while others were confined to reservations. In the excerpt included in this lesson, Sioux leader Sitting Bull responds to this policy by maintaining that all creatures have an equal right to inhabit the land. He pledges to fight if the Americans claim the land "for their own, and fence their neighbors away."

Notes to the Teacher

1. **Deepening Historical Context**
   The histories of each of the groups represented in this lesson deserve extended study in a course on American history. The documents in this lesson provide little in the way of historical context, so we encourage you to connect the arguments and ideas in these texts to themes in your course, and also consult the context section in this lesson to provide additional background information for students.

2. **Assigning Reading: Heterogeneous or Leveled Groupings of Students**
   In this lesson, students will use the Jigsaw strategy to examine documents from several groups who demanded that the promise of equality be made a reality for them. The sources vary in length and reading level, so you might consider in advance how you will group students for this activity. One option is to create heterogeneous groupings of readers so that the stronger readers can assist struggling ones with pacing, vocabulary, and comprehension. Alternatively, you might group students by level and work more closely with struggling readers to target specific literacy skills while allowing the more confident readers to tackle the content independently.

3. **Teaching Strategies**
   These teaching strategies are referenced in this lesson's activities. You may wish to familiarize yourself with them before teaching this lesson.
   - Think, Pair, Share
   - Jigsaw
   - Head, Heart, Conscience

Materials

- **Reading:** They Fence Their Neighbors Away
- **Reading:** Platform of the Workingmen's Party of California
- **Reading:** Chinese Immigrants Write to President Grant
- **Reading:** Is It a Crime for Women to Vote?

Activities

Day 1

1. **Reflect on the Concept of Equality**
   Ask students to respond to the following prompt in their journals:
   - What is equality? How do you know if you are an equal member of a group or nation?

2. **Read a Primary Source from Sioux Chief Sitting Bull**
   Tell students that over the course of the next two days, they will be considering the perspectives of a variety of groups across the continental United States who demanded that the principles of justice, freedom, and equality apply to them. Begin by passing out **They Fence Their Neighbors Away**, a speech from Sioux chief Sitting Bull.

   Read the source aloud to the class, and have students annotate the text using the following key:
   - Write an exclamation mark (!) in the margin alongside information that surprises you.
   - Write a question mark (?) in the margin alongside passages in which the author assumes you know or understand something that you don't.
   - Write a "C" in the margin alongside information that challenges your thinking.

When students have finished reading and annotating, ask them to go back to the text and underline one word or phrase that resonates with them or that they would like to discuss with a classmate. In a Think, Pair, Share, have students share with a partner the phrase they selected, and discuss why it resonated with them. Then discuss the following questions as a class:

- According to Sitting Bull, what is the Sioux philosophy toward land ownership and the proper treatment of animal and human neighbors? How does this philosophy differ from that of white Americans?
- What does this source illustrate about how some American Indian nations responded to American expansion and colonialism during the Reconstruction era?

3. **Explore Primary Sources about the Status of Various Groups during Reconstruction**

For the remainder of class, students will be using the Jigsaw teaching strategy to examine primary sources related to the status of different groups of Americans.

To help students acquire some knowledge about the status of all of these groups, use the Jigsaw strategy with the documents in this lesson. Each group will receive one of the following documents:

- **Platform of the Workingmen's Party of California**
- **Chinese Immigrants Write to President Grant**
- **Is It a Crime for Women to Vote?**

This strategy asks a group of students to become "experts" on a specific document Each "expert" group should discuss its assigned document and record the following pieces of information:

- The name of the group of Americans represented in the document
- The extent to which that group enjoyed equality and freedom in the United States
- The rights or opportunities that, if enjoyed by the members of that group, would show that they are equal members of society

Let students work up until the last ten minutes of class, but let them know that they will have additional time in the following class period.

3. **Complete a Head, Heart, Conscience Reflection**
   Give students the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned in this lesson using the Head, Heart, Conscience strategy, which is designed to help students apply intellectual rigor, emotional engagement, and ethical reflection to their object of study.

   Ask students to respond to the following prompts on binder paper as an exit card:
   - **Head:** What new information did you learn in this lesson?
   - **Heart:** What emotions does this lesson raise for you? Are there particular images or quotes from the reading that stand out to you?
   - **Conscience:** What questions about fairness, equity, or justice does this lesson raise for you?

   Ask students to submit their exit cards at the end of class.

Day 2

1. **Acknowledge Exit Cards**
   Open the class by acknowledging students' exit cards from the previous day. You might want to point out patterns in students' emotional responses, questions, or in the material that stood out to them.

2. **Complete the Jigsaw Activity by Transitioning into Teaching Groups**
   Complete the activity students started on the previous day by asking students to leave their "expert" groups and form "teaching" groups. (Note that you might need to give students additional time to complete their assigned reading before switching into "teaching" groups.) Teaching groups should be 3–5 students and be composed of one or two members from each expert group. Experts should take turns presenting the following information that they recorded on the previous day:
   - The name of the group of Americans represented in the document
   - The extent to which that group enjoyed equality and freedom in the United States
   - The rights or opportunities that, if enjoyed by the members of that group, would show that they are equal members of society

   Students should take notes while each expert presents.

3. **Revisit the Question of Reconstruction's Impact on the Health of Democracy**
   Finally, regroup as a class and ask students to revisit their newspaper headlines from Lesson 7, which captured how the Radical Reconstruction laws and amendments affected the health of democracy in the United States.

   Give students a few moments to expand or revise their thinking on this topic in their journals. Then lead a class discussion on the following question, asking students to cite material from this lesson as the basis for their arguments:

   > Based on what you have learned so far, how did the expansion of citizenship and voting rights during Reconstruction affect the health of democracy in the United States?