Free but Not Free: Life After the Emancipation Proclamation

GRADE LEVEL: 9-12

TIME ALLOTMENT: Two 45-minute class periods

OVERVIEW
In this lesson, students explore the realities of life after the Emancipation Proclamation and learn about courageous individuals who fought against the inequalities African Americans experienced. In the Introductory Activity, students discuss what a “proclamation” is and examine what the Emancipation Proclamation promised African Americans. In the Learning Activity, students view video segments from The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross to learn about what life was like during the Jim Crow era. Finally, in the Culminating Activity, students watch a video segment about Charles Hamilton Houston and Victor Hugo Green, two men who took courageous action against the inequalities African Americans faced. Students discuss the actions these men took and then, either as an in-class activity or for homework, students research and write a short essay about a historical African American figure who fought for equality during the Jim Crow era.

SUBJECT MATTER: Social Studies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain what a proclamation is and outline what the Emancipation Proclamation promised African Americans.
- Describe what Jim Crow laws were, including how they were reinforced and how they affected African Americans.
- Describe some of the reasons why tension existed between white people and African Americans after the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Discuss some of the people who made an impact in the fight for equality for African Americans, including the ways these individuals made a difference.

STANDARDS
From the Common Core Standards: Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, available online at http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy:

Common Core Standards, now adopted in over 40 states, are designed to help educators prepare students for success in college and careers by focusing on core knowledge and skills. The English Language Arts standards reflect the need for young people “to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas” including history/social studies. This curricular resource developed to accompany The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross aligns most closely with the following Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5 Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5 Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

From the National Standards for United States History for grades 5-12, available online at http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/us-history-content-standards:

Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction
- Standard 3: How Various Reconstruction Plans Succeeded or Failed
  - Standard 3B: The student understands the Reconstruction programs to transform social relations in the South.
    - Grades 7-12: Analyze how African Americans attempted to improve their economic position during Reconstruction and explain the factors involved in their quest for land ownership.

MEDIA COMPONENTS

Video

The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross, selected segments.

Access the video segments for this lesson at the Video Segments Page.

Segment 1: Life After the Emancipation Proclamation
This video describes the continued oppression of African Americans following the Emancipation Proclamation.
*Note: This video contains graphic images of lynchings.

Segment 2: The Great Migration
This video explores the Great Migration and the idea that the Emancipation Proclamation did not live up to its promises.

Segment 3: The Subjugation of African Americans
The segment provides an overview of the demonization of African Americans following the Emancipation Proclamation and the propaganda campaign that served to reinforce Jim Crow.

Segment 4: Resenting Prosperity and Equality
This video segment describes how white people’s resentment of African Americans’ prosperity and their alleged achievement of equality bred violence.
Segment 5: The Realities of Separate But Equal
Learn about the efforts of Charles Hamilton Houston and Victor Hugo Green, both of whom fought for equality for African Americans.

Websites
- PBS LearningMedia: Emancipation Proclamation (1863) and Resource Materials
  Note: This website contains a transcript of the Emancipation Proclamation, which you will be using in the lesson. The site also contains an image of the original document and a background essay that you may want to use in further activities.
- PBS LearningMedia: The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow

MATERIALS
For the class:
- Computer, projection screen, and speakers (for class viewing of online video segments)

For each student:
- One copy of the Emancipation Proclamation (1863): Transcript
- One copy of the Historical Figure Assignment

PREP FOR TEACHERS
Prior to teaching this lesson, you will need to:
Preview all of the video segments used in the lesson. Prepare to watch them using your classroom’s Internet connection.

On each computer in your classroom, bookmark the website “The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow” (web address listed above).

Using a social bookmarking tool such as del.icio.us or diigo (or an online bookmarking utility such as portaportal) will allow you to organize all the links in a central location.

For each student, print out and make copies of the Emancipation Proclamation transcript (accessible via the PBS LearningMedia website listed above – see the “For Teachers” section at the bottom of the page) and the Historical Figure Assignment.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY
1. Begin by asking students to define “proclamation.” If no one volunteers or if students do not know, tell them that according to Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, a “proclamation” is “the act of saying something in a public, official, or definite way: the act of proclaiming something.” It is also defined as “an official statement or announcement made by a person in power or by a government.”
2. Ask students what they think of when they hear the word “proclamation.” (Students will likely respond with the Emancipation Proclamation. If they do not, suggest this answer yourself.)
3. Tell students that today you will be discussing the Emancipation Proclamation. You will be looking at what it means, as well as whether or not it has lived up to its promises.
4. Distribute copies of the Emancipation Proclamation Transcript.
5. Have students take turns reading the Proclamation aloud until you reach the end. Make sure students circle any words or phrases they don’t know or understand, and help clarify for them what these words/phrases mean.
6. Next, read the Proclamation aloud yourself and have students follow along, underlining key words or phrases they think outline promises made.

7. When you have reached the end, ask students to share some of the words and phrases they discovered. **Answers may include:**
   - “…all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free
   - “…the executive government of the United States...will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.
   - I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are, and henceforward shall be, free; and that the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.
   - I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all case when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.
   - “…such persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed service of the United States

8. Lead a discussion around some of the key phrases in the Emancipation Proclamation. Ensure students understand that the Proclamation aimed to free all slaves; said the government would not repress slaves seeking freedom; President Lincoln discouraged violence unless in self-defense and ordered that newly freed people earn “reasonable” wages; and that freed slaves would be allowed to enlist in the military.

9. Ask students to read through the Emancipation Proclamation silently one final time. During this reading, students should pay close attention to key words or phrases that develop the tone of the Proclamation.

10. Once students have finished reading, ask them to share what they found. **(Accept all answers.)** Ask: What is the tone conveyed in the Proclamation? **(Accept all answers but suggest: strength, power, eminence.)**

11. Transition to the next activity by asking students what they think life was like for African Americans in the South after the Emancipation Proclamation. **(Answers will vary, but students will likely know that it wasn’t until the Civil Rights movement that African Americans were truly “free” as outlined in the Emancipation Proclamation).**

**LEARNING ACTIVITY**

1. Tell students that they will be watching selected video segments from the PBS series *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* to learn more about what life was like for African Americans after the Emancipation Proclamation. Tell students that, as they watch each video segment, they should consider whether the Emancipation Proclamation lived up to its name.

2. Ask students if they know what “Jim Crow” laws were. **(Jim Crow wasn’t a person, but instead referred to the laws and oppression faced by African Americans after the Emancipation Proclamation.)**

3. Focus the viewing of the first video segment by asking students to note some of the ways African Americans were oppressed. **Play “Life After the Emancipation**
Proclamation.” Pause after author Isabel Wilkerson says “it had an overlay over every single thing they could do or imagine themselves being.”

4. Ask students: What were some of the ways African Americans were oppressed? *(There were separate bibles for white people and black people to take their oaths in court; it was illegal for white people and black people to play checkers together).*

5. If it is not discussed, reinforce the point made by Wilkerson: that while these laws were bad enough as they were, perhaps more importantly the laws “had an overlay over every single thing they could do or imagine themselves being.” Ask students what she meant by this. *(Accept all answers, but students should understand that the laws themselves were unfair, but they had larger implications for African Americans in terms of viewing themselves as equals.)*

6. Resume playing “Life After the Emancipation Proclamation.” Provide a focus for the rest of this segment by asking students to note what the larger implications of Jim Crow laws were and how these “rules” were reinforced. *(Note: the rest of this segment contains graphic images of lynchings.)*

7. Ask students: What were the larger implications of Jim Crow laws? *(Jim Crow laws essentially relegated African Americans to second-class citizens, ensuring they believed and were treated as if they weren’t as good as white people. It meant that while African Americans were “free,” they didn’t truly have freedom.*) Follow up by asking students how white people enforced Jim Crow laws. *(Jim Crow was enforced through fear – lynchings were prevalent.)*

8. Ask students to describe what lynchings were and how they were treated. *(They were treated almost as entertainment – people traveled from miles away and even brought picnics.)*

9. Provide a focus question for the next segment by asking students to think about what the Emancipation Proclamation was supposed to mean and whether or not it fulfilled its promises.

10. Play the video segment “The Great Migration.”

11. After the segment has finished playing, ask students: Based on what you saw in the video segment, did the Emancipation Proclamation live up to its name? Why or why not? *(Accept all answers, but suggest that the southern economy was dependent on African Americans to do the jobs that no one else wanted and for much cheaper. Though they were no longer technically enslaved, the dynamics between former slaveholders and their former slaves was still more or less the same, as was the financial exploitation.)*

12. Provide a focus for the next segment by asking students what a caricature is. Ask students if they have ever seen a caricature – what are they usually like? *(Answers will vary, but should note that while some caricatures are good-natured, for the most part they emphasize stereotypical or negative parts of people and can be very offensive and used in cruel ways.)* Tell students that during the next video segment, they will see extremely offensive caricatures and images; they should note how these images make them feel and also why, according to the video segment, these caricatures were developed.

13. Play the video segment “The Subjugation of African Americans.”

14. Ask students: How did the images make them feel? According to the video segment, what are some of the main reasons white people embarked on the propaganda campaign against African Americans? *(The caricatures and negative images reinforced the African American as the “second-class citizen.” They also legitimized violence against African Americans and helped reinforce Jim Crow.)*
15. Provide a focus for the next video segment by asking students to identify one of the reasons white people took violent action against African Americans.

16. Play the video segment “Resenting Prosperity and Equality.”

17. After the video has finished playing, ask students: What is one of the reasons white people took violent action against African Americans? *(According to the video segment, violence often broke out when white people resented the prosperous African American middle class. This reinforces the idea that white people still felt like African Americans were second-class citizens, and made sure African Americans were treated accordingly.)*

18. Revisit the question asked at the beginning of the lesson: Based on what students learned from the video segments, do they think the Emancipation Proclamation lived up to its name? Students should support their conclusions with evidence from the segments. *(Answers will vary, but will likely conclude that while the Proclamation freed slaves, African Americans were not truly free. They did not have the same rights as white people; their interactions with former slaveholders were largely unchanged; white people took violent action against them, and many times it was because of resentment.)*

**CULMINATING ACTIVITY**

1. Tell students that you will now be looking at courageous individuals who stood up for the rights of African Americans and who fought for equality.

2. Provide a focus for the final video segment by asking students to note some of the actions taken to fight for equality and how these actions made a difference.

3. Play the video segment “The Realities of Separate but Equal.”

4. Revisit the focus question: What were the actions taken by Charles Hamilton Houston and Victor Hugo Green? How did each man’s actions make a difference? *(Houston fought for educational equality. He made a documentary comparing white schools and African American schools – emphasizing “separate and unequal.” Houston began building a legal case against Jim Crow. His actions ultimately led to the groundbreaking Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court case. Victor H. Green created The Negro Motorist Green Book, which listed safe places for African Americans to get service, including hotels, restaurants, etc. The book also represented insurance against indignities African Americans faced every day. In a larger sense, the book also helped liberate African Americans – they could more easily travel and leave the South because of the book.)*

5. Tell students that there were many other African Americans who fought for equality during the Jim Crow era. Either as an in-class assignment or for homework, students will research and write a short (1-2 page) essay about one of these individuals. Distribute the Historical Figure Assignment.

6. Collect the students’ essays to evaluate the assignment.