

Exploring the Legacy of Emmett Till, Holly Loranger, Chapel Hill High School, Chapel Hill, NC

This inquiry-based lesson is designed for high school students enrolled in American History II. This lesson will take place over multiple class periods, in 3 phases. Students will explore the events surrounding the death of Emmett Till, media coverage of those events, and the legacy of Emmett Till in American memory and culture. They will use their findings to draw personal connections to Emmett Till and his legacy.

Essential Questions:

1. To what extent was the murder of Emmett Till a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement?
2. What does the murder of Emmett Till reveal about race relations in America, north and south, in 1955?
3. What is the significance of Emmett Till's murder today?

Phase 1: Exploring the events surrounding Emmett Till's murder.

1. Students will explore and discuss the events surrounding the murder of Emmett Till through a photo lecture, with selected clips.
2. Students will work with a small inquiry group to analyze selected documents related to the murder and subsequent trial. Findings will be shared in a whole class discussion. Resources include:

-Trial transcript

-Jet Magazine article

-“The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi”, Look Magazine:

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/till/sfeature/sf_look_confession.html

-FBI Records: <https://vault.fbi.gov/Emmett%20Till%20>

-FBI Reports on the Till murder: <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/till/tillFBIreport.html>

-Selected Trial Testimonies: <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/till/tilltestimony.html>

-Selected Images related to the trial: <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/till/tillimages.html>

Phase 2: Exploring the legacy of Emmett Till in American historical memory and culture.

1. Students will work with their inquiry groups to examine the legacy of Emmett Till within a selected theme: Art, Music, Literature, Film, Activism, Interviews, Current events, etc. They will share their findings with the class through multimedia presentations.

Phase 3: Student Response: Students will answer the question: “What does Emmett Till mean to me?” Their responses may take a variety of forms, including but not limited to: visual art, performance art, spoken word, written response, musical response, personal letters, etc. These responses may draw from any aspects of the learning experiences related to Emmett Till. These responses will be ultimately be placed on display in a public setting, to be determined.

Please email hloranger@chccs.k12.nc.us for the final version of student handouts and the photo lecture, to be completed in fall 2015.