

Democracy for All, Grade 10

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Lesson Plan Summary:

Students will read Langston Hughes “Democracy,” and discuss the idea that some Americans have been denied the right to participate fully in American democracy. Students will rely on previous learning and research to compile a list of such groups, and produce a bio poem that expresses the values and condition of one group.

Objectives:

Students will identify a group of people who have, at some point in America’s history, been denied the right to full participation in society by writing a bio poem that reflects the experiences, values, and opinions of that group.

TEKS §110.32. English II. (b) 3, 8, 14(B), 26

Introduction:

Throughout history, many groups have been denied the freedom to express their own ideas, practice their own beliefs, and even exist as a people. The TIDES Database contains many images of groups of people who have, at some point in U.S. History, been denied full participation in our democratic way of life.

Procedures:

1. Read and discuss the poem “Democracy” by Langston Hughes. The poem is included in many anthologies, and can also be found at <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/democracy> and other poetry sites.
2. To what group is the poet referring?
3. Have students brainstorm a list of other groups who have been oppressed. Examples might include a character from Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, from a short story such as Kurt Vonnegut’s “Harrison Bergeron,” or from a novel such as *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Write the list on the board or overhead.
4. Examine and discuss the following images, found on the TIDES database:
<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u?Newton,2266>: Sketches of Asians
<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u?Newton,1691>: Sketch of African American
<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u?Newton,151>: Sketch of Native American
<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u?Digital,1764>: Mural in Chapultepec Castle, Mexico
<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u?Newton,2460>, Sketch of a woman
These images portray other groups which have been denied equal participation in democracy at one point or another.

5. Have students search the TIDES database to select other images of people who have been denied full participation in society. Ask them to identify the reasons for this denial and at least two of the freedoms or rights that were denied to that group.
6. Explain to the class that they will produce a bio poem together on Hughes or on a member of another group they have recently studied, including a figure from the literature or history who they are studying.
7. Once students have chosen an oppressed group, have them write down the values and opinions of the group.
8. Place a copy of the “Suggested Bio-Poem Form” on the board. Write a bio poem that includes all of this information through suggestions from the class.

Materials:

Copy of “Democracy” by Langston Hughes

Images from TIDES including:

<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u/?Newton,2266>: Sketches of Asians

<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u/?Newton,1691>: Sketch of African American

<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u/?Newton,151>: Sketch of Native American

<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u/?Digital,1764>: Mural in Chapultepec Castle, Mexico

<http://tides.sfasu.edu:2009/u/?Newton,2460>: Sketch of a woman

Democracy

by Langston Hughes

[\(http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/democracy/\)](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/democracy/)

**Democracy will not come
Today, this year
Nor ever
Through compromise and fear.**

**I have as much right
As the other fellow has
To stand
On my two feet
And own the land.**

**I tire so of hearing people say,
Let things take their course.
Tomorrow is another day.
I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.
I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.**

**Freedom
Is a strong seed
Planted
In a great need.**

**I live here, too.
I want freedom
Just as you.**

Hughes, Langston. "Democracy." Selected Poems of Langston Hughes. New York: Alfred A Knopf, Inc., 1959.

Suggested Bio-Poem Form

Line 1: Group or Individual's Name

Line 2: Who is...(Use a word or words that describes the group)

Line 3: Who is associated with...

Line 4: Who loves...(three ideas or objects the group loves)

Line 5: Who feels...(three words that describe how the group feels)

Line 6: Who needs...(three ideas or objects)

Line 7: Who gives...(three ideas or objects)

Line 8: Who fears...(three ideas or objects)

Line 9: Who would like to see... (some goal or wish of the group)

Line 10: Who shares...

Line 11: Who is...(another word to describe the group)

Line 12: Who lives ...

Line 13: Another name for the group