

## LESSON: Children’s Literature and the Fight for Justice

**GRADE LEVEL:** Grades 6-8

**SUBJECT:** History/Government/ELA

**TIME REQUIRED:** 45 mins

In this lesson, students will read two different books and gain new perspectives on Martin Luther King Jr. and the Mendez family and their fights for civil rights in school.

### RATIONALE

This lesson will provide multiple examples of the use of the First Amendment to help citizens protest unfair treatment by the government. It is also an opportunity to pair ELA and reading comprehension with government and history.

NOTE: This is a lesson specifically for middle schoolers, and the reading does not scale up easily unless the high schoolers are less-proficient readers.

This lesson plan and materials needed to teach it can be found at the Thurgood Marshall Institute: <https://tminstitutelfd.org/>

### OVERVIEW

This ELA/Social Studies lesson is a good opportunity to both test reading ability and to look at the use of the First Amendment by Dr. King and the Mendez family in their fights for justice.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How do we get what we want?
- How do people earn respect?

### OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

After the lesson, students will be able to discuss the Mendez case and the March on Washington and their relationship with the First Amendment, and they will have practiced and developed reading skills.

### PREPARING TO TEACH

Prior knowledge about the Civil Rights Movement may help but is not needed.

### SCAFFOLDS AND ACCOMMODATIONS TO SUPPORT LEARNERS

*Reading support...*

This reading is already appropriate for grade level. If support is needed, recommend reading together or out loud as a class.

### *Differentiation...*

For differentiation, give the actual text of the First Amendment to some students and summaries to others, or give out both for students, with some student assignments referencing unaltered text and some assignments referencing summary text.

### *Adjusting for high school grades...*

This assignment may be too easy for high schoolers. For very low-level readers, this may be a high school activity.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES SEQUENCE**

Begin the lesson with a review of the Civil Rights Movement if you have covered it already. If not, begin by directing students' attention to the essential questions, having them reflect and think about them to start class. Next, provide March On! The Day My Brother Martin Changed the World by Christine King Farris and Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation by Duncan Tonatiuh, as well as the attached handout that checks both reading comprehension and historical understanding. If it is easier to read out loud or to have students read silently or in groups, that is the instructor's decision, but the students should read both books. Once the reading is done, provide time to finish the worksheets. Finally, have students split into groups and have them identify the use of the First Amendment in each book and articulate how those protected rights helped them enact change. Provide either the First Amendment or a summarized copy for reference.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Assessment will be both the comprehension worksheet and the amendment analysis work the students do.

## **MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ENRICHMENT**

March On! The Day My Brother Martin Changed the World by Christine King Farris  
Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation by Duncan Tonatiuh

| Questions   | <u>March On!</u> | <u>Separate Is Never Equal</u> |
|---|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Who is the narrator of the book? Please give a full name.   |                  |                                |
| What is Martin/Sylvia fighting for? What are they trying to change?   |                  |                                |
| What are some of the actions they take to try and make change?  |                  |                                |
| What First Amendment right are they using? (ex. They are using the right to _____ to try and enact change.) |                  |                                |

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| <p>How do you think that Martin/Sylvia could have protested their unfair treatment in another way not mentioned in the book?</p> |  |  |
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