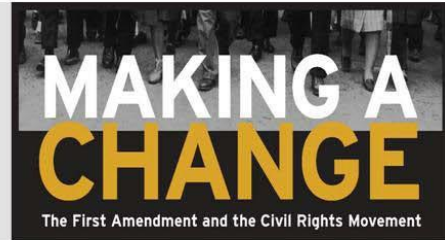


Civil Rights: Turning Points



Rationale/Main Concept:

What events changed the course of the civil rights movement — and our nation’s history? How did the First Amendment play a role in shaping these pivotal moments? In this exercise, students will explore historical turning points and use this important concept to deepen their understanding of the civil rights movement. By considering the consequences of milestone events and citing evidence of their impact, students develop their knowledge of this key chapter in America’s story and exercise critical thinking and communication skills. A wrap-up discussion focuses on the importance of the First Amendment to the course of history as we know it.

Essential Questions:

- What were the key turning points in the civil rights movement?
- How did these events affect the course of history?
- How do historians identify and explain turning points in history?
- How was the First Amendment important to this movement?
- When and how did its participants use the five freedoms, and what strategies proved most effective?

Objectives — Through this lesson, students will be able to:

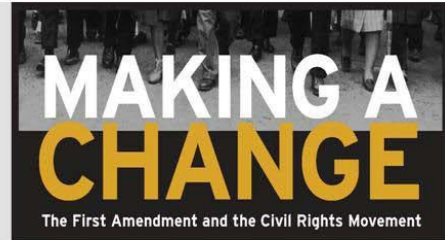
- Discuss the concept of a historical turning point and cite examples.
- Analyze civil rights milestones to determine their impact.
- Use primary and secondary sources as evidence to support their arguments and conclusions.
- Explain the importance of the First Amendment to the civil rights movement.

Time: 30 minutes of class discussion, additional time to complete group or individual assignments, 50 minutes to share and discuss work

Materials:

- Lesson Plan
- Access to the Internet for research and viewing the interactives
- “Before and After” chart
- “Civil Rights Turning Points” worksheet
- Note-taking materials

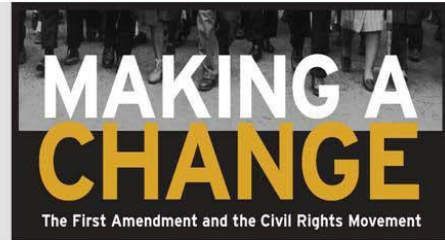
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Procedure:

1. Ask your students, what is a “turning point” in history? *An event (or set of events) that, had it unfolded differently, would have changed the way history played out. In other words, an event with an impact that shapes the events that follow.* There is no single, exact definition of a turning point — historians continue to debate exactly how we should define a turning point. In deciding if something is a turning point, finding evidence that shows the impact of the event is more important than applying a strict definition.
2. Turning points can be big or small, and they can affect individuals, groups, nations or even the whole world. Ask students to give you some examples of turning points from their own lives to help clarify the concept; write their ideas on the board, being sure to note how their lives were different before and after. You may wish to use the “Before and After” chart (included at the end of this lesson plan) to organize their ideas. Possible examples:
 - a. **Turning point:** Moving to a new house
Before: I lived in a small house in town.
After: We moved to a farm where I learned to ride horses, and now I compete at horse shows.
 - b. **Turning point:** Birth of my little sister
Before: I was an only child and my parents were able to do things whenever I needed them.
After: My parents need me to help them and my sister, and I have a lot more responsibilities.
 - c. **Turning point:** Taking AP Biology
Before: I liked science, but I wanted to be a photographer or a journalist.
After: I’m taking as many science classes as I can because I decided I want to be a marine biologist.
3. After discussing personal turning points, brainstorm some historical turning points (examples need not come from the civil rights movement) to further illustrate the idea. As with the personal examples, be sure to note the key difference(s) before and after the event. Possible examples:
 - a. **Turning point:** Signing of the Declaration of Independence
Before: The 13 colonies belonged to England.
After: The signing sparked a rebellion that led to the creation of the United States and a new model for democratic government.
 - b. **Turning point:** Invention of the telegraph

Civil Rights: Turning Points

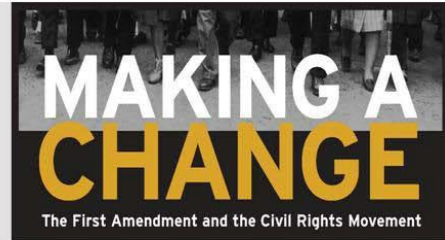


Before: People had to physically deliver messages, which could take a long time.

After: It was possible to send messages instantly across long distances, changing the way business was conducted, wars were fought, etc.

4. Tell students they are now going to focus on finding and analyzing turning points in the history of the civil rights movement. Have students work individually or in groups to choose an event from the interactive timeline that they believe is a turning point, and use the worksheet included with this lesson plan to collect evidence supporting their choice. Their evidence should include at least one primary source.
5. Have students turn their notes and evidence into a multimedia slideshow that explains what life was like before and after the turning point. The slideshow should include at least one slide for each piece of evidence and one for the turning point itself. For higher-level students, assign the use of additional resources beyond the timeline and have them write an essay to accompany their slideshow.
6. Have students present their slideshows to the class and discuss their findings.
7. Ask students, what is the First Amendment? *Five freedoms (speech, press, religion, assembly and petition); part of the Bill of Rights; ratified in 1791.* Go through what each of the freedoms means.
 - a. **Religion:** You are free to believe what you please, belong to any religion or no religion at all.
 - b. **Speech:** You are free to voice your opinions through words, symbols or actions.
 - c. **Press:** The media and individuals are free to publish information without censorship by the government.
 - d. **Assembly:** You are free to gather together with other people.
 - e. **Petition:** You are free to criticize the government and to ask for change.

Civil Rights: Turning Points



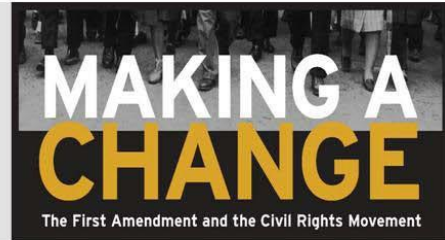
8. Make a list of all of the turning point events identified by your students and discuss the role of the First Amendment in each one. Possible discussion questions:
 - a. Would these turning points have been possible without the First Amendment?
 - b. Who used their First Amendment rights? How did they exercise these rights?
 - c. Which freedom or freedoms seem to be the most important to the civil rights movement?
 - d. How would history have been different had these turning points not taken place? What changes would not have occurred? Would other events have ultimately led to the same changes?
 - e. Look back at your class's original definition of a turning point. Having completed this assignment, is there anything you would change?

Extension Exercise:

Constitutional Comparison: Which constitutional amendment — the First, 13th, 14th or 15th — was the most important to the success of the civil rights movement? Divide your class into four groups, and assign each group an amendment. Have the groups research their amendment and its impact on the civil rights movement, using the timeline as a point of reference for major events and their impact. Then hold a four-way debate over which amendment had the biggest impact on the movement.

Reflections: As a class, discuss the following questions. At the beginning of this exercise did you agree that the amendment assigned to you was the most important amendment to the success of the civil rights movement? Why or why not? After the class debate, which amendment do you think was the most important to the success of the civil rights movement?

At the Newseum: Visit the “Civil Rights at 50” exhibit. Have students think back on the civil rights turning points they researched for this lesson. Students should write short essays using this exhibit as further evidence of how their turning point changed history. Why did these events have to take place before the turning point or, alternately, why could they only take place after? Ask students to incorporate at least three of the events profiled in the exhibit in their argument.



Civil Rights Turning Points

Name:

1. Choose an event from the timeline that you believe represents a turning point in history.

Event name:

Date:

2. Write a short (two to three sentences) description of the civil rights movement and/or society in general before and after this event to show the impact of this turning point. Note changes in legal rights, social status, quality life and more.

Summary:

3. Gather at least four pieces of evidence from the timeline that supports your description. "Before — Evidence" should answer the question "How does this evidence support your description of the civil rights movement and/or society in general before your turning point?" "After — Evidence" should answer the question "How does this evidence support your description of the civil rights movement and/or society in general after your turning point?" At least one "Before" and one "After" evidence should be from the interactive timeline.

Before — Evidence 1:

After — Evidence 1:

Title:

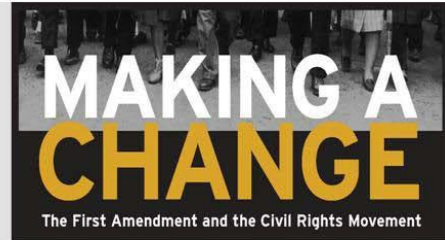
Title:

Source:

Source:

Explanation:

Explanation



Civil Rights Turning Points

Before — Evidence 2:

Title:

Source:

Explanation:

After — Evidence 2:

Title:

Source:

Explanation:

Before — Evidence 3:

Title:

Source:

Explanation:

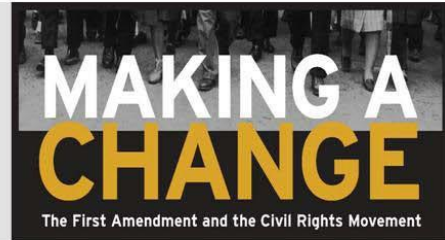
After — Evidence 3:

Title:

Source:

Explanation:

Civil Rights: Turning Points



Example: Civil Rights Turning Points

1. Choose an event from the timeline that you believe represents a turning point in history.

Event name: Brown v. Board of Education

Date: May 17, 1954

2. Write a short (two to three sentences) description of the civil rights movement and/or society in general before and after this event to show the impact of this turning point. Note changes in legal rights, social status, quality life and more.

Summary: Before this Supreme Court decision, in many states had legalized segregation in schools. These states argued that the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause allowed them to provide separate schools that were equal in quality, but in reality, the blacks' schools were much worse than the whites'. After the decision, blacks legally had the opportunity to go to whites' schools and began to have better educational opportunities.

3. Gather at least four pieces of evidence that support your description. "Before — Evidence" should support your description of the civil rights movement and/or society in general before your turning point "After — Evidence" should support your description of the civil rights movement and/or society in general after your turning point. At least one "Before" and one "After" evidence should be from the interactive timeline.

Before — Evidence 1

Title: Farmville Student Strike

Source: Timeline Photo

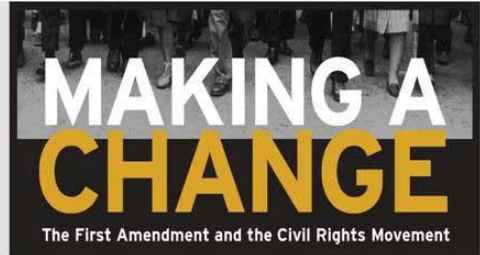
Explanation: It's hard to see, but this photo shows that the black students didn't have a school with proper facilities, like windows or a gym.

After — Evidence 1

Title: School Segregation Banned

Source: Timeline Article

Explanation: This article quotes the Supreme Court decision, which says, "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Therefore, "segregation in public schools is unconstitutional."



Before and After Chart

Before	Turning Point	After
In many states, African-American students could not go to the same public schools as white youth.	Brown v. Board of Education	Segregation in public schools was illegal.