Civil Rights

TIME for KiDS

During the American civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s, black Americans sought to end the effects of racism and discrimination by fighting for equal rights under the law. This text set explores the theme of civil rights by looking at some historical figures and events that brought about social justice reforms.

Essential Questions

1. What are civil rights?
2. What problems did the civil rights movement address?
3. Who played an important role in civil rights reform? What did they do? What was their impact?
4. Why is it important to learn about the civil rights movement? How can we apply lessons from that historical period today?

Introduction to the Theme

Have students watch the video *Little Rock Nine* (which can be found at *timeforkids.com* at the bottom of the article "Justice for All"). Then have them write down what they've learned from the video, what questions they have about the video, and what else they'd like to learn about the time period covered by the video. Students should share their responses and questions with classmates.

After this, explain to the class that they'll be learning about the American civil rights movement and how different people (such as the Little Rock Nine) and events shaped this revolutionary period of our history.

Informational Text

These *TIME for Kids* articles can be used to discuss the theme of civil rights.

1. **"Martin Luther King Jr."** (September 6, 2018) Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership of peaceful protests helped end segregation during the American civil rights movement.
2. **"Lyndon B. Johnson"** (August 2, 2018) President Lyndon B. Johnson advanced equality with major civil rights legislation.
3. **"Fannie Lou Hamer"** (July 24, 2018) Fannie Lou fought to expand voting rights for African Americans and raise awareness of segregation's impact.
4. **"Ruby Bridges"** (May 25, 2018) The integration of public schools in the South began when a 6-year-old named Ruby Bridges walked into an all-white school.
5. **"Little Rock Nine"** (February 23, 2018) In 1957, the Little Rock Nine became among the first black teenagers in the U.S. to attend an all-white school.

Literary Texts

These fiction and nonfiction texts can be used to discuss the theme of civil rights.

1. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry,* by Mildred D. Taylor. Cassie Logan struggles to maintain her pride and independence as she and her family encounter racial injustice in Depression-era Mississippi.
2. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963,* by Christopher Paul Curtis. Ten-year-old Kenny visits his grandmother in Birmingham, Alabama. The visit takes a terrible turn Grandma's church is bombed.
3. *The Lions of Little Rock,* by Kristin Levine. Shy Marlee befriends Liz, a girl who knows how to speak her mind. But their friendship changes amid the segregation in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1958.
4. *Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly,* by Walter Dean Myers. This biography looks at how Malcolm X became a legendary civil rights leader. It addresses the full scope of his life, including his childhood in poverty, his imprisonment, and his assassination.
5. *Becoming Kareem: Growing Up On and Off the Court,* by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. In this autobiography, Abdul-Jabbar defies racism to become one of the NBA's all-time greats and a champion for social justice.

Optional Extensions

Have students write a poem based on an article or a book in this text set. The Poetry Foundation has a collection of civil rights poetry where students can see other poems on this topic (*poetryfoundation.org/collections/146367*). Students should be sure to describe their chosen text in their poem, and should include answers to the unit's essential questions. They should also include an illustration. When students have completed this project, gather the poems to make a poetry book that can be shared.