

Lesson Two: A Freedom Rider's Journey

Objective

Students will learn about the 1961 Freedom Rides, the riders, the challenges faced along the way, the impact of the rides on the civil rights movement, and the nation's awareness of segregation in the south.

Materials: *Put Yourself in Their Shoes* – handout; *Plan Your Protest* – handout; *Freedom Rides Revisited: How Far Would You Go?* Online Interactive Challenge. (Level 1 – grades 4-8 & Level 2 – grades 9-12)

Activity One: *Put Yourself in Their Shoes*

1. Hand out the worksheet to the students (grade appropriate)
2. Have them write their feelings on the situations presented.
3. Discuss their findings and ideas on the way things happened.

Activity Two: *Equal Justice: Plan Your Protest*

1. Break students into groups and hand out one sheet per group.
2. Read over the introduction, the situation, and instructions with the students.
3. Have the students present their plan to the class.

Activity Three: *Freedom Rides Revisited: How Far Would You Go?*

1. Have students access the *Freedom Rides Revisited: How Far Would You Go?* Online Interactive Challenge at <http://mdah.state.ms.us/freedom> . This activity may be done in pairs if necessary.
2. Have the students complete the journey as they feel they would if they were in the situation.
3. Discuss the events along the journey and the determination of the riders as they faced the challenges on the journey..

Extension Activities

Elementary: Pretend you are a reporter covering the Freedom Rides. How and what would you report about their journey? - *Have students use Who? What? Where? When? Why? to write their "articles."*

High School: The ordeal for the Freedom Riders did not end when they were arrested in Jackson. Have the students research the Freedom Riders' experiences at Parchman Penitentiary.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Put Yourself in Their Shoes (Level 1)

Imagine yourself in the situation that is described below and write down your honest reactions and thoughts about it. *If you need more room, you may continue your answer on the back of your page.*

You are heading out to recess. When you get outside the teacher tells you that you are not allowed to play on the new playground equipment because you do not have the right eye color.

How does this make you feel? _____

Why do you think they made this rule? _____

Would you try and change this rule? How? _____

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Put Yourself in Their Shoes (Level 2)

Imagine yourself in the situation that is described below and write down your honest reactions and thoughts about it. *If you need more room, you may continue your answer on the back of your page.*

You and your friends go out for lunch one Saturday. You are sitting at a table and notice that the waitress won't serve you. You finally get her attention and she stops to speak to you. You ask her if you could order, and she tells you "No, we do not serve their kind here," pointing to your blue-eyed friend as she walks away.

How does this make you feel? _____

Why do you think they made this rule? _____

Would you try and change this rule? How? _____

Plan Your Protest Intro (Levels 1 & 2)

To help the students realize that the Freedom Riders did not just board a bus and undertake a dangerous journey without careful planning and preparation, please read the following to them. This will help them in the exercise to plan their protest.

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) founded by a group of students from the University of Chicago in 1942, was organizing force behind the 1961 Freedom Rides. This was not the first freedom ride that CORE had sponsored. In 1947 the *Journey of Reconciliation* made its way through the upper south, but avoided a trip through the Deep South.

Individuals who made the decision to embark on the 1961 Freedom Rides were required to complete an application process before they could even prepare for the ride. They were instructed on how to dress, and behave. They were to undergo several days of non-violence training. This training was based on Gandhi's method in order to change the hearts and minds of individuals without the use of violence. Training and role-playing took place on how to protect one's self physically and emotionally when encountering certain situations.

The CORE organizers knew they would meet resistance, but they were unsure of how it would present itself. They wanted all their riders to be aware of the situation that they were fighting against and the resistance they might encounter. They tried to prepare the riders for anything they might come across.

When you are planning your protest take into consideration the situations that your riders/protesters could encounter. How will you prepare for any resistance, violence, law enforcement, harassment, etc.? Remember there only needs to be one little thing and you could be arrested. In Mississippi you could be considered a vagrant if you did not have \$.50 on your person. If you strike out in defense you could be beaten or hauled off to jail. Think about how you would get your message across without resorting to the violence that you are trying to end.

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Plan Your Protest (Level 1)

Plan your steps in fighting the injustice of the segregation in bus and train stations and airports. You are part of the non-violent movement and your group must decide the best way to change the situation. *If you need more room, you may continue your answer on the back of your page.*

You have learned that segregation continued in the south, even after the U.S. Supreme Court said that it is illegal to segregate public transportation under the *Interstate Commerce Act*.

What are your goals? _____

What steps will you take to reach your goals? _____

What will you do if you meet resistance? _____

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Plan Your Protest (Level 2)

Plan your steps in fighting the injustice of the segregation in bus and train stations and airports. You are part of the non-violent movement and your group must decide the best way to change the situation. *If you need more room, you may continue your answer on the back of your page.*

You have learned that segregation in the south, continued even after the U.S. Supreme Court said that racial segregation in public transportation was illegal. Segregation violates the Interstate Commerce Act, which forbids discrimination in interstate passenger transportation. The Court said that because bus transportation was related to interstate commerce, the United States federal government could forbid racial discrimination in the industry.

What are your goals? _____

What steps will you take to reach your goals? _____

What will you do if you meet resistance? _____
