

Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 3-5

Freedom Farm

Science, Math, Social Studies, Black History, Women's History, US History, Literacy

Lesson example provided at 5th grade level, but is adaptable for grades 3-5.

This is a three-part lesson plan that requires several class sessions spread out over the course of several months.

Learning Objectives:

- To understand the life cycle of crops such as tomatoes, beans, corn, and squash
- To understand the processes of photosynthesis, as well as soil and water conservation
- To practice observation, measuring data, and graphing
- To formulate conclusions about how matter works together to make plants grow
- To recognize needs in our own communities and to imagine ways to give back to those communities

Necessary Materials:

- Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode. Available for free on the Find Your Voice website.
- [Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement](#) by Carole Boston Weatherford. Available for purchase [here](#).
- Model supplies: graphing paper and pencils, as well as craft sticks, cardboard containers, twine, scissors, and tape.
- Planting supplies: containers, soil, seeds, fertilizer, water, buckets, shovels, and parent volunteers.
- Observation supplies: A Freedom Farm journal for each student to record the steps of, and reflect upon, the planting process
- Consider bringing in members of the community to talk about growing crops, nutrition, and/or food pantry programs (e.g. farmers, nurses, food pantry employees).

Background Knowledge:

You may wish to enhance/refresh your own knowledge by consulting this [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before introducing the "Freedom Farm" unit. Further still, John T. Edge recently wrote an Op-ed in The New York Times that discusses the contemporary relevance of Fannie Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm, see [The Hidden Radicalism of Southern Food](#). You should also research food banks/community outreach programs

in your area so the class has a clear goal in mind for their produce. Last, if you're not already aware of which plants grow best in your area during the time of year you have to devote to this lesson, do a bit of research to set your class up for success.

Instruction Steps:

Part One: Preparing to Plant

Anticipatory Set

Step One: To pique student interest in Fannie Lou Hamer, and to provide general background information about her, view the Fannie Lou Hamer BrainPOP episode. This episode is available for free through the Find Your Voice website.

Direct Instruction

Step Two: Read Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement. After reading this book, focus the class discussion on the final pages, "No Rest," wherein Weatherford discusses Hamer's efforts to provide food for her community. Then explain that the students will follow in Hamer's footsteps to become community helpers by planting container gardens that will yield actual produce. If the project is successful, the class can donate whatever has been yielded to a local food bank or other outreach program.

Group Work

Step Three: Break students up into teams, for example: "Team Tomatoes," "Team Corn," "Team Carrots," and "Team Squash." Provide each team with a seed packet and a large piece of graphing paper. Encourage the students to study the seed packets, noting the seed's specific growing needs such as water, sunlight, seed depth, and soil. It might be helpful to either introduce or review the process of photosynthesis.

Step Four: Based on their observations, lead students in the process of designing a model container to hold ten plants of the same kind. Remind students that each container must have enough length and width for their

plants, as well as enough depth for each seed. Note that these models will become a “blueprint” for the real containers that will be used for the plants the class will soon grow. If possible, provide craft materials such as small cardboard boxes, craft sticks, glue, and twine for students to create three-dimensional models of the containers.

Closure

Step Five: Collect the blueprints and/or models from each group and invite students to share with the class what they created and why. Have students reflect on the process of creating their model containers within their Freedom Farm journal. Close this portion of the unit by reminding students that they will soon be creating real containers to provide food for people in their communities, just as Mrs. Hamer did. (If possible, have students volunteer to bring buckets for water and small shovels to school for the planting exercise).

Part Two: Planting Day

Guided Instruction

Step Six: On planting day, model the planting process by following the directions on the seed packet and assign a parent volunteer to each planting group. Guide students through the process of preparing, planting, and watering their containers.

Independent Reflection

Step Seven: Encourage the students to reflect on the planting process by describing it, step by step in their Freedom Farm journal.

Long-term Engagement

Step Eight: The weeding, watering, and observation part of the process will take place over the course of several months. During this time, activities such as weekly photo logs to capture the growth and life cycle of the plants; tracking of plant life and contributions

of soil, water, and light that helps the plant to grow; experimenting with plants grown with different types of soil and sunlight; brainstorming, formulating, and what might be contributing to the growth or deterioration of plants; as well as journaling or writing based on success or failure of container garden will help enrich the process.

Throughout the process, you can also return to core concepts like photosynthesis, soil, and water conservation, all the while connecting the class community garden back to Mrs. Hamer and her contributions to her community.

Part Three: Sharing the Plants' Produce

Step Nine: If the growing process is successful, engage the students as much as possible in the donation of their produce. If it is not possible for the class to all physically travel to the donation site, take pictures of the donation and solicit a thank you letter or statement from the organization so the students can better understand how their plants will actually make a difference in the lives of people in their communities.

Step Ten: If the growing process is unsuccessful, that's ok! That, too, is a learning process. Students can reflect on what went wrong and make a plan to improve their models and process next time. Students could also be encouraged to seek out other ways to contribute to their community.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Students are inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer to recognize needs within their own community and to see themselves as community helpers, who can take action and help those in need.

Assessment of Student Learning: Students will design model containers. Those model containers will become blueprints for the actual containers they plant seeds in. Students will record the planting process, as well as reflect upon the gardening process, in their Freedom Farm journals. Students will either donate their produce (if the garden is successful) or reflect upon what went wrong with the gardening process (if the garden doesn't yield produce).

Lesson Plan Author: Danielle Creel Martin

Danielle Creel Martin is an elementary teacher from Yazoo City, Mississippi. Ms. Martin began her journey with Mrs. Hamer through a history workshop where she found herself surrounded by wonderful educators discussing Mrs. Hamer. Ms. Martin began to research Mrs. Hamer and developed a passion for spreading the word about Mrs. Hamer's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, her hometown in the Mississippi Delta, and to the young college age students she encountered from all over the country. Ms. Martin has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education as well as a Master's degree in Reading Literacy from Belhaven University. She lives in Pearl, Mississippi with her two dogs and husband to whom she is newly married.

