

Grade
Level:
Adaptable,
grades 6-8

Who is Fannie Lou Hamer?

Social Studies, US History, Black History, Women's Studies, American Government

Learning Objectives:

- To introduce and cultivate an appreciation for the significant, but lesser-studied, human rights activist, Fannie Lou Hamer
- To gain experience analyzing primary source documents, including a sound recording and an autobiography
- To examine the interconnection between movements for social and political change: The Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War Movement.

Provided Materials:

- [Video Clip of Fannie Lou Hamer at Vietnam War Demonstration](#) (play 0:21-1:18 only)
- National Archives, ["Analyzing a Sound Recording" Worksheet](#)
- [To Praise our Bridges](#), Hamer's Autobiography
- National Archives, ["Analyzing a Written Document" Worksheet](#)
- Maegan Parker Brooks, [Timeline of Fannie Lou Hamer's Life](#)

Background Knowledge:

Depending upon your familiarity with Fannie Lou Hamer, you may wish to consult this brief [Biographical Sketch of Fannie Lou Hamer](#) before leading this lesson. Excellent book-length biographies have also been written about Hamer, including: Kay Mills' *This Little Light of Mine*, Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, and Maegan Parker Brooks, *A Voice that Could Stir an Army*.

Instruction Steps:

Anticipatory Set

Step One: Open this introductory session, "Who is Fannie Lou Hamer" by enabling your students to experience her powerful public speaking firsthand. Play the short speech Hamer gave at a 1971 demonstration against the Vietnam War.

Guided Practice

Step Two: Distribute the National Archives', "Analyzing a Sound Recording" worksheet and play the speech again. Provide students the time to work through the questions on the sheet individually before guiding them through the questions in a large group setting.

Step Three: Ask how many students know who Fannie Lou Hamer is and then ask those students to share what they already know about her, recording their observations on the board.

Step Four: Distribute Fannie Lou Hamer's autobiography pamphlet (if it's not possible to make copies for the whole class, you can also read this aloud or have students take turn reading sections of it aloud).

Step Five: Once students have had a chance to read the autobiography, divide them into small groups and distribute the National Archives', "Analyzing a Written Document" worksheet. Encourage students to complete the worksheet in small groups.

Step Six: Return to the large group and ask student to help expand the class's knowledge of Fannie Lou Hamer based upon what they learned in her autobiography. Record their observations on the board.

Activity

Step Seven: Note here that Hamer's autobiography was recorded in 1965. She died in 1977, so much of her activist career is missing from this primary source. To fill in the later years of Hamer's life, divide the *Timeline of Fannie Lou Hamer's Life and Legacy* into three sections (you may wish to start on page 3, where her autobiography leaves off). Distribute those sections to students working in small groups and ask them to review the particular period in Hamer's life and ask them to creatively present it to their peers. Presentations could include a poem, song, skit, or story, but should not consist of simply reading the timeline back to the class when their turn arrives.

Closure

Step Eight: Close the lesson by asking students to record three facts about Fannie Lou Hamer’s life and one question. This could be a question about a new vocabulary term, historical event, person or practice related to Hamer’s life. Collect these and use them as the basis to begin the next lesson on Fannie Lou Hamer, if time permits you to extend this unit.

Assessment of Student Learning: The “Who is Fannie Lou Hamer” lesson assesses student learning at three key points. First, through their analysis of a sound recording. Next, through their analysis of a written document. And, finally, through their analysis of a timeline and creative presentation of the facts within.

Find Your Voice Highlights

Within this lesson, students are inspired by Fannie Lou Hamer’s emphatic opposition to the Vietnam War and they are empowered to creatively present a portion of Hamer’s activist career through the timeline presentation activities.

Lesson Plan Author: Mrs. Ervin-Rawls

Mrs. Alicia Ervin-Rawls is the Social Studies Content Specialist at T.L. Weston Middle School, in which she has been a seventeen-year educator of the Greenville Public School District. She was first the district’s Social Studies Instructional Coach from 2012-2017. Prior to that time, she was a high school social studies teacher for ten years. She is responsible for guiding the development and coordination of curriculum and instructional services in her content area. Additionally, she guides the development, implementation, and evaluation of pre-service and in-service training programs regarding test data analysis for professional and paraprofessional personnel in her assigned content area. She is one of the authors who helped with writing the Mississippi Social Studies Curriculum Framework. She is a graduate of Delta State University where, Mrs. Ervin-Rawls received both her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Social Science Education. She also commits her energy to economic and cultural development initiatives such as the Fannie Lou Hamer Project.

