

"Words of Empathy and Leadership: A Comparison of RFK's Word Choices in His Speech on the Eve of MLK's Assassination"

Name: Group 4 Lesson Plan	"Words of Empathy and Leadership: A Comparison of RFK's Word Choices in His Speech on the Eve of MLK's Assassination"
Content Area: ELA (high-ability focus)	Grade Level(s): 5th grade

Lesson Content

Background Information/ Relevance/ Context/ Rationale (Purpose) – Please be clear about how this particular lesson is situated within the current instructional sequence (i.e., unit), why this content is important for students to learn, and how you will convey the relevance and significance of this lesson to students.

- **Students will examine the word choices of RFK's speech of April 4, 1968, in Indianapolis; the focus will be on word choices that promote unity and peace, contrasted with word choices highlighting negative connotations, and how these word choices may have led to different outcomes in the city compared to unrest elsewhere. Themes of connection and empathy will be examined in a historical context. Students will then create their own dual-path model of a personal issue using vocabulary to illustrate the choices.**

Learning Targets

As a result of this lesson, students will...

Objectives: Students will be able to...

- **Analyze and interpret primary sources using observation, reflection, and inquiry.**
- **Identify varying word choices in a speech, contrasting the two and evaluating how these led to behavioral outcomes in the given audience.**
- **Connect historical events to contemporary issues and create a dual-path model of a personal issue to present.**

Steps in the Lesson	Detailed Instructions
<i>Background (10 minutes; longer if students do not have much prior knowledge)</i>	<i>Overview/review of MLK's works and death (student-led with prior knowledge) and the death of JFK and connection to RFK (teacher-led); also briefly review the Civil Rights movement from previous lessons/knowledge</i>
<i>Engage (5-10 minutes)</i>	<i>Play the video of RFK's April 4 speech. Ask students: "What first captures your</i>

	<i>attention? What emotions or ideas emerge? What words or phrases stood out to you?" Discuss in small groups, then share out ideas.</i>
<i>Observe (5-10 minutes)</i>	<i>Using the transcript of the speech, work in small groups to highlight words of unity and peace with one color of highlighters and words of division and violence with another color. Share out as a class to create a large class chart.</i>
<i>Reflect (10 minutes)</i>	<i>Students write 2–3 inferences: Why did RFK choose to use this language? What point was he trying to make? How can you tell what path he wants the audience to take? Share out together. Examine images of the aftermath of MLK's death in other cities. Discuss why the speech may have contributed to the different outcomes?</i>
<i>Question (10 minutes)</i>	<i>How did RFK use his own personal tragedy to connect to his audience? Why was this an effective strategy to create a connection? How might the crowd have reacted if this connection had not been present?</i>
<i>Extend (30-50 minutes)</i>	<i>Students will choose a situation in their own lives, either a personal issue or a community one. They will draft words and phrases that illustrate the two "paths." They will then create posters showing their two paths, superimposed with these words/phrases and images/drawings that illustrate their choices. Present these to the class. Give peer feedback, including how the audience can choose the "right" path using prompts from the word choices and images.</i>

Sources for Lesson

Primary Sources:

Robert F. Kennedy's April 4, 1968, Indianapolis speech (transcript and speech recording)

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/the-kennedy-family/robert-f-kennedy/robert-f-kennedy-speeches/statement-on-assassination-of-martin-luther-king-jr-indianapolis-indiana-april-4-1968> <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/statement-on-the-death-of-martin-luther-king-jr-april4-1968>

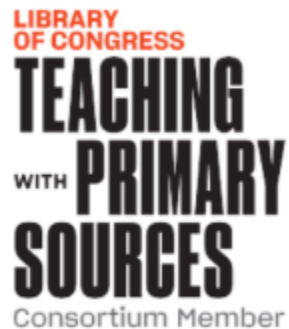
Secondary sources:

Photographs from April 1968 events <http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.04301/> <https://www.history.com/articles/mlk-assassination-riots-occupation>

Assessment

Informal: discussion participation

Formal: dual-path image and writing



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