

Do the Founding Principles Apply in Our Communities?

Unit plan by Tania Mohammed and Nina Kogut-Akkum

This mini-unit relates to the fellowship themes including arts, journalism, and justice since students will take a look at photo stories that reveal how the rights of certain marginalized groups in the U.S. have often been denied by government policies and negligence. As a result of the government's actions, people in marginalized groups such as Black Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants have been suffering from unemployment, housing, poverty, lack of healthcare, their lands being stolen, and racial injustice.

For the final project, students will be asked to use the examples of photo essays as inspiration to take journalistic photos and write a short essay about injustices they notice in their own communities. Their topic for the project can, but does not have to, relate to Black Americans, immigrants, or Native Americans as long as it focuses on an issue that questions whether the U.S. is living up to its founding principles and ideals!

Since this unit was planned for remote instruction, the teacher utilized [Pear Deck](#) and [Padlet](#) to make slides interactive and more engaging, as it allows for immediate student responses and enables teachers to provide instant feedback. Teachers implementing this unit can use tools appropriate for their classroom and setting.

Essential Questions:

1. What are some of the issues that marginalized groups face in the U.S.?
2. How does the United States treat its marginalized groups?
3. How should marginalized groups effectively deal with the injustices they face?

<u>Lesson Plan 1</u> How do images of Black Americans reflect the country's founding principles?
<u>Objective</u> Students will be able to analyze how Black Americans have been photographed throughout American history.
<u>Resource(s)</u> Day 1 presentation slides Day 1- 4 homework assignments
<u>Warm up</u>

This unit was created by Tania Mohammed in collaboration with Nina Kogut-Akkum as part of the fall 2020 Pulitzer Center Teacher Fellowship program on Arts, Journalism, and Justice.

Students discuss the following question in partners, small groups, or whole class—
Why are photos a powerful tool or method to tell a story?

Introducing the lesson

Teacher introduces the unit: students will explore the experiences of marginalized groups in the U.S by reviewing photo essays from the Pulitzer Center that capture how Black Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants are treated and whether our country's founding principles apply to everyone.

Students will create their own photo essays that respond to the question: *How do the founding principles apply or not apply to your community?*

Discussion questions

- What does “marginalized” group mean?
- Who are marginalized groups in the US?
- What do you think are the biggest challenges that marginalised groups in the United States are struggling with?
- What is the most common narrative or story that you have heard about Black people in the United States?

Independent Activity- Gallery Walk

Students review images of Black Americans (slides 7 - 22) and record what they see, think, and wonder. As students review images, they should consider the following question:

- What narrative or story do these photos tell about Black people in the United States?
- How have Black people been portrayed throughout American history?
- How do these photos relate to the founding principles?

Review Homework

Teacher introduces the video [Photojournalism: Journalist's Toolbox](#) and the accompanying questions for homework.

Conclusion & Exit Ticket:

Students share two memorable takeaways from today's lesson.

Lesson Plan 2 Annotating Photo Essays

Objective

Students will be able to read and annotate a photo essay about Black Americans, Native Americans, or immigrants using the Issue Portals document

Resources

[Day 2 presentation slides](#)

[Day 1- 4 homework assignments](#)

[“A Mother Gets COVID, Her Son Gets Surgery”](#)

[Issue Portal Worksheet](#)

Warm up

Students respond to the following question—

If you could learn more about issues that one of the following marginalized groups face in the United States, which of the following groups would you explore and why?

- Black Americans
- Native Americans
- Immigrants

Introducing the Lesson

Students will read an article together about an immigrant family’s struggle during the pandemic. This article will serve as a model / mentor text referred to throughout the lesson.

After reviewing the article and discussing accompanying comprehension questions, students will explore The Issue Portal Worksheet, choose their own article, and answer comprehension questions.

Exploring the resource

Students examine the first photo from [A Mother Gets COVID, Her Son Gets Surgery](#) on slide 4 and share what they see, think, or wonder with the class.

Students read “A Mother Gets COVID, Her Son Gets Surgery” together in class. The story can be read whole group using slide 5 - 11.

Comprehension questions

After reading the article, students can respond to the following questions:

- What is the central idea of this article?
- What questions do you have after reading this article?

Modelling photo essay annotation

Teacher introduces the following set of comprehension questions:

1. Which topic / article piqued your interest? Why?
2. What are some questions you have about your topic?

3. What is the central idea of your chosen article?
4. What are key pieces of evidence that others need to know after reading your article?
5. Why is this evidence important? Make sure to analyze.

Teacher reviews example responses to the comprehension questions using “A Mother Gets COVID, Her Son Gets Surgery.”

Students will be responding to these questions using a different, self-selected article for homework.

Independent Activity

Students can explore the [Issues Portal Worksheet](#) which includes 9 articles on three marginalized communities (Black Americans, Native Americans, and Immigrants). Students should choose one article that explores a topic that they find most interesting.

Review Homework

Teacher reviews the reflection questions based on the student’s selected article.

Conclusion and Exit Ticket

After reviewing the articles on the Issue Portal document, students share their response to the following question—

Which topic have you decided to focus on? Why?

Lesson 3

Discussing The Experiences of Marginalized Communities

Objective

Students will be able demonstrate comprehension of Pulitzer Center articles by discussing how the US treats marginalized groups.

Resource(s):

[Day 3 presentation slides](#)

[Padlet](#)

[Issue Portal Worksheet](#)

[Day 1- 4 homework assignments](#)

Warm up

Students respond to the following question –

What are the three of the most important details you learned from the article you read yesterday?

Introducing the lesson

Students will have time to share what they are reading about on Padlet and respond to peer comments. Ultimately, feedback from their peers will help students respond to the following questions:

- How does the U.S. treat its marginalized groups?
- Which marginalized group did you choose as your topic?
 - Black Americans
 - Native Americans
 - Immigrants

Group Activity

Students discuss their chosen articles using digital tools (like [Padlet](#)) or small group discussion.

Teacher note: Padlet Activity outlined in slides and small group discussion outlined on day 3 in [student assignment day 1-4](#)).

Option 1: Padlet Interactive Activity

1. Students answer the following questions based on their article:
 - What is the central idea of your article? Make sure to include the title and author of the article.
 - Based on the article you read what are some of the issues that the marginalized group you chose to read about face in the U.S.?
2. Students provide feedback for a peer who read a different article by commenting on their post by clicking “add comment” and answering the following question about their article—
What connections can you make between your topic and another student's topic?
3. After reviewing peer comments on their post, students respond to the following questions:
 - How does the United States treat its marginalized groups?
 - How should marginalized groups effectively deal with the injustices they face?

Option 2: Small Group Discussion

1. Students answer the following questions individually to prepare for group discussion:
 - Which article did you choose? Why?
 - What is the central idea of this article?
 - What are key pieces of evidence that others need to know after reading your article?
 - Why is this evidence important? Make sure to analyze.
 - What part of this article do you want to learn more about? Why?
2. Break up into small groups. Have students choose one person who will moderate the discussion- this person will ask the following questions to every member of the group and

be the last member of the group to answer:

- What are some of the issues that marginalized groups face in the U.S.?
- How does the United States treat its marginalized groups?
- How should marginalized groups effectively deal with the injustices they face?

Conclusion and Exit Ticket

Students respond to the following question—

What are 2 important details you learned from listening to another person share?

Lesson 4

P.E.A.L paragraphs

Objective(s)

Students will write two well-organized P.E.A.L paragraphs about their selected article
Students will explore how marginalized groups are treated in the United States through written response
Students will use evidence from their chosen news article to support their claim

Resources

[Day 4 presentation slides](#)

[P.E.A.L paragraph organizer](#)

[Day 1- 4 homework assignments](#)

Warm up

Students respond to the following question—

Do you think the U.S. can solve the issues that the government has with various marginalized groups? Why or why not?

Introducing the lesson

Students will spend the majority of class writing their article.

Teacher will model how to craft a P.E.A.L paragraph. Students will independently write two P.E.A.L paragraphs in response to one of the following questions:

- How does the United States treat marginalized groups?
- How do marginalized groups deal with the way the U.S. government treats them?

Review of P.E.A.L Paragraph and

Teacher will review an example of two strong P.E.A.L paragraphs that respond to the article [A Mother Gets COVID, Her Son Gets Surgery](#)

Teacher will review the components of a P.E.A.L paragraph using the checklist on slide 4.

P.E.A.L. Checklist

- Point:** Make the **first statement/point** that answers the topic question
- Evidence:** Explain your point using evidence from the text
- Analysis:** Analyze the evidence that supports your point
- Link:** write a concluding sentence that ties back to your point

Independent Activity

Students write two P.E.A.L paragraphs in class responding to one of the following questions:

- How does the United States treat marginalized groups?
- How do marginalized groups deal with the way the U.S. government treats them?

Homework

Students finish their paragraphs for homework.

Lesson 5 National Identity and Power

Objective

Using their chosen Pulitzer Center article for inspiration, students will draft an outline for their own photo essay.

Resource(s)

[Day 5 presentation slides](#)

[Homework Assignment Day 5 - 8](#)

[Photo Essay Task and Rubric](#)

Warm up

Students respond to the following question—
What is a photo or visual essay?

Introducing the lesson:

Teacher will introduce the photo essay performance task to students. Students will review

examples of photo essays and begin to plan their own.

Review of Photo Essay Task

Teacher reviews the photo essay task, presentation calendar, and rubric with students.

Exploring Pulitzer Center Photojournalism

Give students to choose and closely analyze ONE photo essay from the list below.

- [Pulitzer Center- A life protecting the aquatic creatures of the Amazon](#)
- [Pulitzer Center- Photo Essay: Behind Veil and Breathing Mask](#)
- [Mother Jones- When a Kid's Bedroom Isn't a Room](#)
- [Al Jazeera- Photo essay: The uncouncted Syrian tragedy \(Warning- Some images may be disturbing\)](#)
- [New York Times- Did the Pandemic Destroy Halloween? Here's What We Found](#)

Students respond to the following questions about the photo essay they chose to review:

- What do you notice about the photo essay? What stands out to you?
- What are some aspects of the photo essay that you found really interesting and that you would want to include in your own essay? Explain.
- Why are photo essays so powerful? How do photos help tell a story

Students respond to the following questions about the photo essay they are planning:

- What are some ideas that you have for your own photo essay?
- What do you want the subject/focus of your photo essay to be about? Why?

Review Homework

Students respond to questions in preparation for crafting their photo essay

Conclusion and Exit Ticket

Students share their feelings about the assignment.

Lesson 6 Taking Photographs

Objective

Students will be able to draft an outline of their photo essay
Students will be able to determine whether a photo essay is narrative or thematic
Students will be able to list and explain six elements for a strong photo essay

Resources

[Day 6 presentation slides](#)

[Homework Assignment 5 - 8](#)

[Format Magazine](#)

[A life protecting the aquatic creatures of the Amazon](#)

[Photo Essay: Behind Veil and Breathing Mask](#)

[25 of the most iconic photographs](#)

Warm up

Students set goals for the day by responding to the following question—
What do you want to get done for your project by the end of the day?

Introduction to Lesson

Teacher will review the six elements that make a photo essay great according to [Format](#), an online magazine. Then, students will evaluate two photo essays to identify whether they could be categorized as thematic or narrative. Students will then review iconic photos to determine what makes a really good photo and finally, students will brainstorm about their own photos for their photo essays.

Students should plan to take their photos today so they can edit, caption, and title them for their essays.

Six Elements of a Great Photo Essay

1. Choose a specific topic or theme for your photo essay
2. Consider your photo subjects
3. Aim for a variety of images
4. Put your emotions aside
5. Edit your photo selection
6. Give your photo essay a title and add a concise, written statement

Review two examples of photo essays

Students review the photo essays, "[A Life Protecting the Aquatic Creatures of the Amazon](#)" and "[Behind Veil and Breathing Mask](#)."

After reviewing each photo essay, students identify whether the photo essay is thematic or narrative.

In - Class Activity - reviewing iconic photos

Teacher introduces taking great photos by reading Steve McCurry's statement on slide 14.

Students review all the photos in [25 of the most iconic photographs](#) and respond to the following questions:

- From these 25 photos, choose 3 that really stand out to you.
- Why did these photos stand out?
What did the photographer do to draw you in?
- Did they use light, capture an important moment in history, convey an emotion or message, a clear focus, or a beauty in simplicity?

Planning to take photos

Students share their responses to the following question about photo technique—
How do you plan to take a captivating photo? Which of the techniques do you want to try for your photo essay? Why?

- Light
- Capture an important moment in history
- Convey an emotion or message
- Have a clear focus
- Capture beauty in simplicity

Students reflect on their next steps for creating their photo essays by responding to the following questions:

- What do you feel confident about?
- Where do you feel stuck or that you need help?

Review Homework

Students should start taking pictures and can caption them if they choose. After taking photos, students respond to reflective questions.

Conclusion and Exit Ticket

Students write a one-minute reflection on the most important thing they learned from today's lesson.

Lesson 7 Writing Captions

Objectives

Students will explore a teacher-constructed photo essay
Students will be able to write meaningful captions for their photos
Students will continue to work on their photo essays

Resources

[Day 7 presentation slides](#)

[Sunset Park's Struggling Businesses on loom.com](#)

[Sunset Park's Struggling Businesses presentation pdf](#)

[Poynter- 6 Tips for writing photo captions](#)

[Homework Assignment 5 - 8](#)

Warm up

Students respond to the following questions:

- How much progress have you made so far?
- What do you hope to get done today?

Introducing the lesson

Teacher reviews an example of a teacher-created photo essay. Then students will work on writing captions for the photos they've taken and organizing their slides.

In-Class Activity - Captioning

Teacher defines and explains the purpose of a caption

Students review the teacher-created photo essay, "[Sunset Park's Struggling Businesses](#)" and consider the following question(s):

- What information has been included in the captions?
- What did you learn from the photo essay by reading the captions?

Students review [6 tips for writing photo captions](#) independently and respond to the following question—

What information do you plan to include when you write your captions to help explain the narrative of your photo essay?

Independent Activity

Students open their homework activity from last night (their photographs) and begin or continue captioning their photos.

Homework

Students write captions for each image that they are using for their photo essay. The captions should help tell your story.

Conclusion and Exit Ticket

Students respond to the following reflection questions:

- Did you meet your goals for today? If not, what happened?
- What would you like to work on after class today?

Lesson 8

Giving and Receiving Feedback

Objectives

Students will be able to give and receive feedback on each other's final work in class

Resources

[Day 8 presentation slides](#)

[Homework Day 5 - 8](#)

Warm up

Students respond to the following questions:

- What is one part of this assignment that you feel confident about?
- What is something you still want to work on or need help with today?

Introducing the lesson

Teacher explains that before the final project is due, students will get feedback on their photo essays from their peers. The first half of class will include independent work time and the second half of class will include peer feedback.

Independent Work Time

Students work on adding the following elements to their photo essay project:

- 7 to 10 images
- captions
- a title
- an introductory slide
- a reflection

Peer Feedback Group Activity

Student pairs review each others' photo essays using the Peer Feedback Sheet. Students should share their feedback with each other and respond to questions if time allows.

Closing and Exit Ticket

Students should review the feedback that they received on their photo essay and reflect by answering the following questions:

- Was the peer-feedback session helpful? Why or why not?
- What are some aspects of your project you plan to revise as a result of receiving feedback?

Review Homework

Students should complete the checklist under Day 8 Feedback, Revision, Reflection, Practice.

Lesson 9 - 12 Student Presentations

Objective

Students will be able to present their work to their peers
 Students will be able to provide feedback on class presentations
 Students will be able to listen to feedback as well as respond to questions

Resources

[Day\(s\) 9 -12 presentation slides](#)

[Homework Day 9 - 12](#)

Warm up

Students participate in a whole group discussion on what makes a good presentation.

Introduction to the lesson

Teacher introduces any guidelines and expectations around student presentations

Teacher explains that students will write feedback for one presenter each day for homework using the following questions:

1. What did you enjoy most about this presentation
2. What did you learn from watching this presentation
3. What is one suggestion you have for the presenter to improve this presentation?

Student Presentations

Teacher facilitates student presentations of completed photo essays

Unit Conclusion

Group reflection

Teacher reviews the quote from Barack Obama's book, The Promise Land with students and poses the following questions for student reflection—

Are we working to create a society where there is equality of opportunity and equality before the law or is it an empty promise?