

Exploring Personal Connections to Social Justice Through Social Emotional Learning

Unit by Tracy Crowley

This short unit allows students to approach a variety of racial justice topics and connect those topics to themselves and their communities through a lens of social-emotional learning. Students will study journalism as a craft while exploring racial justice themes. After exploring different forms of art, students will choose one or more modalities to create an Amplifier art piece that expresses their personal connection to the theme of racial justice.

Objectives

- Students will learn about and identify underreported news stories.
- Students will recognize and name the feelings and perspectives of others.
- Students will consider societal factors when making decisions.
- Through art, students will contribute to the well-being of their school and community

Illinois Social/Emotional Learning Standards

2A: Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others

2B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences

3A: Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.

3C: Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.

Lesson 1 - Introducing Social Justice
<p><u>Objectives</u></p> <p>Students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Evaluate and discuss popular images of social justice● Explore journalism on racial justice
<p><u>Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Racial Justice Issue Portal● Exploring the Racial Justice Portal Worksheet● Racial Justice Article Search Organizer
<p><u>Warm up</u></p>

This unit was created by Tracy Crowley as part of the fall 2020 Pulitzer Center Teacher Fellowship program on Arts, Journalism, and Justice.

1. On a blank piece of paper or in Google Draw, students write and / or draw in response to the following question—
What does social justice mean to you?
2. As a class, students list social justice issues that they see in the news or in their communities.
3. Teacher scrolls through Google images of social justice [here](#) or does a Google search for “social justice.”
4. In small groups students discuss:
 - What do you see in these image results?
 - What images most resonate with you? What does not?
 - What is missing from these images?
5. Each group shares a summary of their discussion with the whole class.

Introducing the Racial Justice Issue Portal

Teacher reads the summary on The Pulitzer Center’s [Racial Justice Issue Portal](#). While listening, students [sketchnote](#) new reflections on the theme of racial justice using the following guiding questions:

- What are some new facts you learned about racial justice?
- What groups of people are facing racial injustice?
- In what ways are people facing inequality?
- What questions do you have about racial justice after reading this summary?

Exploring the Racial Justice Issue Portal

Students explore the articles on the Racial Justice Issue Portal using the [Exploring the Racial Justice Portal Worksheet](#)

After exploring at least three articles, each student can submit one article that they found the most interesting on the [Racial Justice Article Search Organizer](#).

Choosing Class Articles

Teacher reviews student submissions in the [Racial Justice Article Search Organizer](#) and chooses three to five articles for the class to explore together based on popular vote.

Educator Notes: For use during an SEL unit, letting the students choose interesting and current articles would be most effective.

At the time of this writing, the articles below were used:

- [In Appalachia, People Watch COVID19, Race Issues from Afar](#)
- [Come What May, 63106 Resident Kim Daniel Will Vote First Thing in Person on Election Day](#)
- [Video Narrative: Recovery II](#)
- [AP Road Trip: Racial Tensions in America's 'Sundown Towns'](#)

Reflection Questions

Students can journal and/or discuss their responses to the following questions:

- Which article are you most excited to read and why?
- Which article focuses on a subject, theme, or idea that DOES reflect your personal experiences?
- Which article focuses on a subject, theme, or idea that DOES NOT reflect your personal experiences?

Lesson 2 - 4 Connecting with Racial Justice Reporting

Objectives

Students will be able to

- Read and annotate Pulitzer Center reporting that explores the theme of social justice
- Discuss the decisions, actions, and experiences of communities and individuals captured in the reporting
- Make personal connections to communities and individuals whose stories are explored in the reporting
- Consider potential civic action in response to racial injustice explored in the reporting

Resources

- [Social Emotional Learning Discussion Question List](#)
- [Racial Justice Article Search Organizer](#)
- [Role-Playing as an SEL Teaching Tool.](#)

Warm up

Teacher reviews the selected articles from the [Racial Justice Article Search Organizer](#).

Introducing the activity

In consistent small groups, students explore each article chosen by the class and answer the same comprehension questions and rotating discussion questions assigned by the teacher.

For a list of SEL discussion questions to assign to students review the [Social Emotional Learning Discussion Question List](#).

Teacher explains norms and guidelines for group discussion.

- One student should be assigned as a note-taker
- One student should be the question-asker
- The roles should rotate with each article.

Discussing Racial Justice Articles

In small groups, students explore each of the chosen articles and respond to a set of comprehension and discussion questions.

Each group responds to the following comprehension questions for every article:

- Provide a 2 to 5 sentence summary of the article.
- What are the issues explored in this article?
- Why is this article in the Racial Justice portal?

Students respond to the SEL discussion questions assigned by the teacher from the Social Emotional Learning Discussion Question List.

SEL Extension Activity

After all of the articles have been read and discussion questions answered, students can choose 1-2 scenarios to role-play in small groups.

For more guidance on how to facilitate role-playing for social emotional learning, review [Role-Playing as an SEL Teaching Tool](#).

Reflection Questions

Students can discuss or journal on the following questions:

- After reading the articles, what issues and stories are the most interesting to you?
- Do you see any themes, ideas, or events described in these news stories in your own community?

Lesson 5 - Visualizing Justice

Objectives

Students will be able to

- Describe how art amplifies social and racial justice issues
- Choose a racial justice issue or theme to explore through art
- Identify symbols and images connected to a racial justice issue or theme

Resources

- [Word Art Generator](#)
- [Amplifier Instagram Account](#)
- [Amplifier Free Downloads](#)
- [Amplifier “In Pursuit” Workshop video](#)
- [Amplifier “In Pursuit” Workshop resources](#)

Warm up

Students journal on the following question—

After reading racial justice news stories, how would you describe racial justice and why is it important for us to support racial justice?

Students should look at the short paragraph they wrote and cut their small paragraph down to 20 words. Then 10. Then 5. Then one.

Teacher collects student words and types them into a [Word Art Generator](#). Use images that symbolize racial justice (ie. hands, hearts, birds, etc). Once the class word art is complete, share the image with students.

Students answer the following questions:

- What do you feel when you see this image?
- What impact does the image have on the words?
- What connection does this image have to the stories we read about racial justice?

Introduce Amplifierart

Teacher shares the [Amplifier Instagram Account](#) and scrolls through the images.

Students discuss the following questions after scrolling through the images on the instagram feed:

- How do you feel when you see these images?
- What images stand out to you? Why?
- What are these images communicating to their audience?
- Why would someone create this image?

Teacher can also choose five pieces of amplifier art to explore with students. Free downloads from Amplifier are available [here](#).

Students discuss the following questions after looking at each of the chosen examples of Amplifier art:

- What issue is this image “amplifying”
- What symbols did this artist choose to use? Why?
- What other symbols could this artist have chosen instead?
- What words did this artist choose to use? Why?
- What words could this artist have chosen instead?

Watch the intro (0:00 to 1:55) [to this video](#) by Aaron Huey, Amplifier Founder. After watching the video, students develop a group definition for Amplifier.

Introduce Performance Task

Students will create Amplifier art using words, illustrations, and symbols that relate or amplify racial justice themes.

Facilitation note: Amplifierart has a free online workshop for educators. The workshop is a 4-lesson unit intended to support students who want to explore the artistic process of creating Amplifierart and are more interested in incorporating photography than illustration. The workshop materials can be found [here](#).

Creating Amplifier Art

Students consider the following questions before beginning their project:

- What racial justice issue would I like to focus on when creating my Amplifier art?
- What symbols or images come to mind when I think of this issue?
- What key words or phrases capture the spirit of my racial justice issue?

Students should take the rest of class to create their art piece.

Lesson 6 - Developing Rubrics

Objectives

Students will be able to

- Discuss and identify what makes strong amplifier art
- Create and agree upon a group rubric to evaluate their art pieces

Resources

- [Teaching Tolerance Political Art Rubric](#)

Warm up

Students should brainstorm in small groups around the following question—

Think about all the examples of amplifier art we reviewed. What did all the examples art successful? What did they include?

Students should share their responses with the class.

Introducing Rubrics

Teacher shares examples of rubrics that evaluate art with students. Consider [this rubric from Teaching tolerance](#) on political art.

Students review the list of competencies that they generated in the warm up. The class selects 3 to 5 topics to focus on and agrees upon an assessment scale (ie. Excellent - progressing - developing. Great - good - bad. etc).

Educator note: Rubric should include quality of the work, original messaging, and SELconnections.

Creating Rubric for Performance Task

In small groups, students develop the assessment scale for *one* topic. Once they are done, they should share their assessment scale with the class.

Students review the final, collaborative rubric whole class and agree on any modifications before the teacher finalizes the rubric. This is the rubric the class will use to assess the amplifier art.

Work on Amplifier Art Independently

Students finish working on their amplifier art. Once they are finished, they can submit their artwork to the teacher.

Final Notes for Facilitation

- Students may take additional time to finish their illustrations and it may be necessary for students to take artwork home to complete for homework.
- Giving students the opportunity to present and showcase their art can be a powerful way for them to connect with racial justice issues and feel agency around these issues.
- Students are encouraged to submit their artwork to contests. Amplifier often conducts [open calls, contests, and campaigns for artists](#).