

A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

LESSON PLAN SIX



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 12



OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to accompany the *Black Americans in Congress* website, history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/. Students have the opportunity to analyze historical photographs associated with Black Americans who served in Congress and with the history of civil rights in the United States. Students are encouraged to think more about the role historical photographs can play in the study of past events and people.



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. History, American Government, African-American Studies, Social Studies, Art
- Reconstruction Era, Great Migration, World War II, Civil Rights Movement



OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to describe and analyze historical photographs.
2. Students should be able to analyze the relationship between photographs and the historical record.
3. Students should be able to analyze the relationship between historical photographs and African Americans who have served in Congress.



LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. What are historical photographs?
 - b. Who takes them and why?
 - c. What are some commonly photographed historic events? People? Places?
 - d. How can historical photographs be utilized by historians to study past events and people?
2. Divide the class into small groups and assign each group one of the four eras from *Black Americans in Congress*, history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/. Each group will choose, or be assigned, one of the historical photographs for its era of *Black Americans in Congress*.
3. Each group should read the *Black Americans in Congress* historical essay for its particular era to develop a better understanding of the significant people and events of the time period.
4. Write the following statement on the board, “A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words.” Ask students to explain the meaning of this adage. Distribute the “Photograph Analysis” worksheet (p. 1 of Student Activity). Review the directions and ask students to complete the worksheet.
5. Have students present their findings in a five-minute presentation to the class. Each group should provide an overview of its photograph analysis and should choose one historical image to highlight during its presentation. As a group, compare and contrast the historical photographs from the four eras.
6. As a class activity, or using the earlier assigned groups, have students create a historical scrapbook entitled, “Justice and Equality.” Students should go to their local library or historical society and research images relating to the themes of justice, equality, and civil rights. Students can combine the photographs used in this activity with the images they collected at the library and with pictures from their own families and friends. Organize the historical photographs thematically or chronologically and add captions to provide relevant information for the photos such as dates, names, and explanations of events.
7. If time permits, conduct one of the **Suggested Extended Activities**.



SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Plan a trip to a museum or historical society to view an exhibit of historical photographs.
2. Conduct photograph research at a local library, museum, or historical society to document the history of your school or city/town. Take current photographs and design a visual timeline.
3. Design an exhibit of historical photographs of African Americans to display at your school or city/town hall.



ONLINE RESOURCES

History, Art & Archives | U.S. House of Representatives

A collaborative project between the Office of the Historian and the Clerk of the House's Office of Art and Archives. Together, the offices serve as the House's institutional memory, and a resource for Members, staff, and the general public.

history.house.gov

Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

bioguide.congress.gov

Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Congress.gov | Library of Congress

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

congress.gov

GPO Federal Digital System

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

gpo.gov/fdsys

PHOTOGRAPH ANALYSIS

STUDENT ACTIVITY

1. Carefully examine the photographs from the essay of the *Black Americans in Congress* era you have been assigned, history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/. Make sure to enlarge the image and to look at each section of the photograph.
 - a. What details—such as people, objects, and activities—do you notice? Write your answers in the table below.
 - b. What other information—such as time period, location, season, and purpose—can you gather from the photograph? What are the clues? Do you recognize any of the people in the image? Write your answers in the table below.

People	
Objects	
Activities	
Other Information	