

Moral Leadership in Times of Crisis: An Analysis of Robert Kennedy's Speech Following the Death of Dr. King

Name: Group Lesson Plan	Moral Leadership in Times of Crisis: An Analysis of Robert Kennedy's Speech Following the Death of Dr. King
Content Area: United States History	Grade Level(s): Middle School

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.

- **This lesson will focus on the moral and emotional effects of Robert Kennedy's speech on the city of Indianapolis following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr and connect it to the larger themes of nonviolence and unity in times of crisis.**

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.**
- **Develop and refine guiding questions based on primary source evidence.**
- **Connect historical events to contemporary issues of civic responsibility and service.**
- **Demonstrate understanding of civic action by proposing a small-scale service project linked to lesson.**
- **Practice state, national, and local map reading skills in the context of the movements of MLK and RFK during this time period of the speeches at Notre Dame, BSU, Indianapolis and assassination of MLK.**
- **Compare and Contrast the themes, tone, delivery, and effectiveness between the BSU speech and the speech in Indianapolis following the death of MLK.**

Steps in the Lesson	Detailed Instructions
Prompt (5 minutes)	<i>Prompt on board: what role should leaders play in keeping the peace during times of strife or crisis? 5-minute class discussion.</i>
Set the Scene (10 minutes)	<i>Set the scene, explaining the political and cultural climate of 1968 America. Explain the events of April 4, 1968, including Kennedy's primary efforts in Indiana and Martin Luther King's assassination. (5) (Show image of DC riots, skim History article regarding riots)</i>
Materials (5 minutes)	<i>Discussion: (10)</i> <i>i. What quotes or sections of the speech stood out to you?</i> <i>ii. Look at the crowd. What are the demographics like? Young/old? Black/white? Why does this matter? Or why does it not?</i> <i>iii. What does Kennedy specifically do/say that, in your opinion, contributed to his successful effort to prevent violence/rioting?</i> <i>iv. Why do words matter in times of crisis?</i>
Observe (30 minutes)	<i>Show Ball State speech section video and provide excerpts. Introduce assessment questions and describe success criteria for written responses. Emphasize the difference in messaging and tone. Allow work time for written responses.</i>
Extend	<i>Potential extension activity: Students compose a 5-minute speech addressing empathy, national unity, and cohesiveness in the face of modern political or social polarization. Speech should acknowledge at least one modern divisive issue (Israel/Palestine, abortion rights, LGBTQ+ issues, general political polarization)</i>

Primary Sources for Lesson

[Leffler, W.K. (1968, April 8) D.C. riot. April '68. Aftermath. [Photograph]. Library of Congress.

Retrieved from: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003688168/>

Robert Kennedy Speech in Indianapolis (video) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2kWla8wSC0>

Robert Kennedy Speech in Indianapolis (transcript) - <https://kennedykingindy.org/full-rfk-speech>

Robert Kennedy Speech in Muncie, IN - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2pGs7hGJ->

[E&pp=ygUhYnN1IHNwZWVjaCBYb2JlcuQga2VubmVkeSBhcHJpbCA0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2pGs7hGJ-E&pp=ygUhYnN1IHNwZWVjaCBYb2JlcuQga2VubmVkeSBhcHJpbCA0) (SECONDARY) - <https://www.history.com/articles/mlk-assassination-riots-occupation>
<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/mourning-death-martin-luther-king-jr>

Assessment

Students will choose from a list of writing prompts and compose a written response utilizing sources from the unit.

-Specifics: Academics write at least a 250-word response. Honors write at least 500 words. Be sure to include a works cited page with general citations of provided sources.

Prompt one: How does Kennedy relate to his audience in Indianapolis? Who was his target audience? How does he show empathy? Refer to quotes from the speech. You may refer to pictures as well.

Prompt two: Refer to the speech and write a summary of the main points Kennedy made. Using a highlighter, highlight at least three main ideas within Kennedy's Indianapolis speech. Finally, explain how you think you would have reacted if you were in the audience that night. Would you be moved to participate in protests? Would you embrace Dr. King's nonviolent approach to change? How could your race/background play into your thinking/actions?

Prompt three: Using the speeches made at Ball State University and Indianapolis, compare and contrast the speeches. What were his goals for each speech? Who were the target audiences? In your opinion, were the speeches effective? Explain. How do the message and tone differ between each speech?



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