



White Flour

Lesson Plan



White Flour Lesson Plan

Author: Sarah Mahoney

Subject: Social Studies

Grade Level: 5th

Class Time Required: Three class periods of 30-45 minutes

Lesson Title: White Flour and the fight for racial equality

Background Information for Teacher:

White Flour is based on a true story about a white-supremacist march and a creative, non-violent response to that march by local protestors in Knoxville, TN in 2007. For details about the actual event, see the inside back cover of the book.

The story illustrates that humor can be powerful in deflecting hatred, and offers a modern example of nonviolence, or the Third Way. It is natural to respond to aggression with ‘fight’ or ‘flight,’ but often the most constructive response is neither one of these — neither resorting to violence oneself nor running away, but engaging creatively. This was practiced by lunch counter sit-in participants in the Civil Rights era, by salt marchers in Gandhi’s time, and by clowns in Tennessee in 2007.

Lesson Plan Objectives:

NCSS Standards: 5.3, 5.5, 4.15, 5.20

Materials Needed: (Print and Non-Print)

1. *White Flour*, by David LaMotte (available at whiteflourbook.com or from Amazon)
2. *White Flour* audio version, read by the author (optional; available at <http://www.whiteflourbook.com/teachers/>)
3. *White Flour* video version (optional; available at <http://www.whiteflourbook.com/teachers/>)
4. Chart paper with poem written out



Materials Needed: (Continued)

5. Copies of timeline template (spanning entire US history--at least 1400 to present)
6. Library of Congress pictures of Columbus, Washington, Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, KKK, Martin Luther King
7. Dry erase markers
8. Reference/research materials available in the classroom
9. Way to indicate group role assignments:
 - a. **Investigator** (Person who leaves the group to research information needed for the activity)
 - b. **Facilitator** (Person who talks and guides group through activity)
 - c. **Scribe** (Person who writes down questions the group needs to answer in order to complete activity)
 - d. **Presenter** (Person who reports back to whole class or represents the group's ideas in conference)

Words to Clarify/Define:

taunted

erroneous

brayed

hoisted

Appalachia

retreated

mirth

sullen





Lesson:

ENGAGE (DAY ONE)

Students work in groups of 3-5. Each group has a timeline, LOC laminated photos (EXCEPT KKK photo if doing extension activity described below), and access to all related school/art supplies necessary.

Students will use dry erase markers to mark the beginning and ending of the United States on the timeline. Students then place the LOC photos “building our nation” on the timeline. If students are unfamiliar with the people in any of the pictures, then the investigator should research them.

Wrap-up discussion about those figures who fought for racial equality and if that fight is all “in the past.”

Preview *White Flour* book, discussing pictures and making predictions. Do students recognize the hooded figures? Do the pictures look like they are past or present?...

Teacher will be circulating through groups making suggestions about possible adjustments to make the timelines more accurate. Teacher may also suggest the students alternate who has what job, so they aren't sitting around waiting for the investigator.

20/30 min.





Lesson:

EXPLORE (DAY TWO)

Have the text of *White Flour* available in multiple modalities at various “stations” throughout the classroom: 1) written on poster board/chart paper and posted on wall, 2) text printed on colored paper 3) copies of the book itself and 4) the audio of the poem available on headphones, 5) video of the book available on the in-class computer. Allow the students to experience the poem/book at the different stations.

Transition with a brief discussion afterward of effectiveness/appeal of different modalities (is there a strong preference for the audio because the text is so rhythmic, or the book because of the colorful illustrations?).

20 min.

EXPLAIN (DAY TWO)

Read text again (group or individual, as preferred).

Guide students (in whole group) to recall and list on the board the counter protesters’ “alternative rhymes” to white flour. Instruct each small group to come up with one more rhyme than there are groups (4 groups=5 rhymes).

The presenters from each group conference with one another to make sure each group has one unique rhyme to work with.

Allow time for initial thoughts if questions appear.
The second reading by a peer is to personalize the lesson.
Transitioning into the “silly” is intentional.
Teacher reading is a natural ending.

20/15 min.



Lesson:

ELABORATE (DAY THREE)

Read text again (group or individual, as preferred).

Guide students (in whole group) to recall and list on the board the counter protesters' "alternative rhymes" to *white flour*. Instruct each small group to come up with one more rhyme than there are groups (4 groups=5 rhymes).

The presenters from each group conference with one another to make sure each group has one unique rhyme to work with.

20/15 min.

EVALUATE

The presenter goes back to his/her group and lets them know which rhyme they will be illustrating. The group illustrates their unique rhyme in the style of the book. When they are done illustrating, they post their rhyme on the wall. Presenters explain their additional rhymes.

20/15 min.





Possible Extension Ideas for Teachers:

Ask students to look at their timelines. Ask them to put the KKK on the timelines. Show the Jailhouse/KKK scene from *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the lynching scene from *The Great Debaters*. When did these happen? What were the responses of those involved? Why were the responses different?

30 min

Explain the “Third Way” Ask the students, ‘Why write a silly book about such a serious idea?’ Can you think of other ways to meet a “hate group” that would demonstrate the Third Way? Journal or quick-write about your ideas. Volunteers can share.

15 min

Internet Resources:

whiteflourbook.com

americanrhetoric.com



What Really Happened

On May 26, 2007 members of a white supremacist groups went to Knoxville, Tennessee to hold a rally in a public park there. They held signs that insulted not only African-Americans, but Jews as well. One sign had a picture of a noose, with the words “insert neck here” written beside it. As is usually the case at such racist rallies, the counter-protesters outnumbered the racists by far. In this case, though, they didn’t try to shout them down. They didn’t meet anger with more anger. Rather, the local activists met hatred with humor. The Coup Clutz Clowns had prepared carefully for the day, rehearsed, and brought plenty of props and costumes. All of the ‘misunderstandings’ that the clowns in the poem chant were actually part of that day’s shenanigans, and there were others, too.

I took some artistic license in the poem in at least a couple of ways—notably, the supremacists were not wearing robes and were not only Klansmen, but Neo-Nazis as well. Klan robes are visual shorthand to represent those beliefs and values, though, and it seemed like the best vehicle to tell the story.

Beyond mere Facts, though, there is Truth in this story, and I’m happy to share it with you. That Truth, it seems to me, is that there are more than two ways to respond to aggression. ‘Fight or flight’ responses are natural. It is understandable to think they are the only two options. The best option, though, is often a ‘third way.’ A third way must be creative enough to find ways to disarm hatred without either retreating or yielding to aggression and hatred ourselves. If we can do this, we often find that unpredictable positive outcomes suddenly become possible.

In this case, the racist group did not get what they wanted. No one got worked up about their threats and machismo. The counter-protesters simply refused to take such foolishness seriously. The hate group had reserved the square for several hours that day, but they gave up and left an hour and a half early, apparently not knowing how to respond. It is true that the only arrest that day was of one of the leaders of the white supremacists, who rushed at the clowns. It is also true that the police offered the clowns an escort after the Klan and Neo-Nazis left.

I wouldn’t suggest that clown actions are always the way to respond to such events, though it worked that day. What is needed is creativity, solidarity and a refusal to become that which we abhor. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Of all the exciting things that have happened to this book and because of it, there is one that stands out. A few months after *White Flour* was released, another white supremacist march very similar to the one in Knoxville took place in Charlotte, North Carolina. A different group of clowns showed up this time, and they, too, were successful in shifting the mood of the event, countering hatred with humor. Their real-life strategies were inspired by *White Flour*. Here’s to those who march on,

David LaMotte

About the Author

David LaMotte is a dad, husband, peace activist, poet, shutterbug and very bad racquetball player. He makes his living as a singer/songwriter and a public speaker, sometimes at the same time. He has led workshops, keynoted and performed well over 2000 concerts on four continents, and put out ten CDs over the last twenty years. He is also a Rotary World Peace Fellow with a masters in International Studies, Peace and Conflict Resolution from the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia and a B.A. in Psychology from James Madison University. For hobbies, he is the co-founder and unpaid director of PEG Partners, a small non-profit that supports schools and libraries in Guatemala, and the Clerk (chair) of the AFSC Nobel Peace Prize Nominating Committee, which chooses a nominee to put forward each year on behalf of Quakers, who were awarded the Prize in 1947.

White Flour is his second children's book. *S.S. Bathtub*, based on his award-winning song by the same name and illustrated by Carrie Patterson, is a rhyming book for younger children. He is currently working on a non-fiction book for adults, tentatively titled *Worldchanging 101: Challenging the Myth of Powerlessness*, which is also a frequent topic for his talks. He has lived in Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, France, Australia and India, but he likes everywhere else, too. Currently, he lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, with his wife and their four-year-old son.

David is available for classroom visits and school assemblies, or, as a cheaper alternative, can Skype into classrooms for a talk on either Creative Writing, Practical Dream Following, or Worldchanging 101, along with question and answer sessions. For more information or to get in touch, visit davidlamotte.com or whiteflourbook.com.

About the Illustrator

As a child Jenn Hales spent her time reading books and examining bumble-bees in the front yard. Her family didn't have a tv, so she drew the creatures she saw in nature and in her imagination. Later, Jenn moved to Ohio where she graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in Industrial Design. She's worked as a toy designer, a footwear designer, a design researcher, and a welder at SAS institute. Nowadays, Jenn lives in Raleigh, NC and works as a full time illustrator and artist. When she's not painting she spends her time with her partner Graymon and her dog Totoro. You can find more about Jenn Hales and her work at www.jennhales.com

There is a free video version of White Flour available at www.whiteflourbook.com, as well as bulk order book purchase deals for teachers and information regarding how you could have David LaMotte as a guest in your classroom, either in person or via video link.

For more information,
please visit whiteflourbook.com
or call Lower Dryad Music at (919) 923-8494.