



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2020 Volume I: American History through American Lives

American History through American Lives

Guide for Curriculum Unit 20.01.01, published September 2020
by Emmett Till: A Historical Inquiry

In this unit, students will learn about the life, times, and legacy of Emmett Till through excerpts of recommended biographical readings and other visual texts. Emmett Till was a 14-year-old African American from Chicago who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955, after being accused of affronting a white woman. His mother's choice to display his corpse in an open casket funeral shocked many Americans. His death has been frequently revisited in the context of other injustices perpetrated against African Americans. This unit explores Till's relation to the broader civil rights movement and prepares the teacher reader with content-area knowledge to support a historical inquiry into Till. By the end of the unit, students should be able to answer the following question: What is Emmett Till's legacy and how is it relevant today?

This unit is designed for sixth grade students to build historical knowledge by using a guided inquired approach. The unit could be used in middle school or high school humanities or English classes. It assumes little-to-no background knowledge of the civil rights movement or of an inquiry approach to teaching history content.

(Developed for Reading, Writing, and Social Studies, grade 6; recommended for English Language Arts, History, and Social Studies grades 6-12)

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