

Holiday House Educator's Guide

**Common
Core
Connections
Inside**



Freedom Summer

The 1964 Struggle for
Civil Rights in Mississippi

SUSAN GOLDMAN RUBIN

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Civil Rights in Mississippi**

Susan Goldman Rubin

Grades 5 up

HC: 978-0-8234 -2920-2 • \$18.95 • E-book available

Illustrated with photographs, historical documents, maps, and drawings.

Includes a time line with key dates, appendixes of original documents, source notes, a bibliography, and an index.

About the Book

In June 1964 volunteers from across the nation answered the call from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to spend the summer in Mississippi and help register blacks to vote. They accepted the task because they understood the relationship between human rights and civil rights, and they truly believed "all people are created equal."

At the time, Mississippi was a "closed society" and outsiders weren't welcome, especially those interested in helping blacks. The Ku Klux Klan was powerful in Mississippi, and most blacks lived in fear of it. Some who were brave enough to open their homes to the volunteers lost their jobs. Homes and churches were torched, and three volunteers were murdered. Still the volunteers worked to canvas voters and establish Freedom Schools so that blacks might learn and grow. Leading the way was Fannie Lou Hamer, a black woman who found her voice and let it be heard across Mississippi and all the way to the nation's capital.

"Freedom Summer" was a time of terror and hope, and was a pivotal event in the civil rights movement.



Pre-Reading Activity

Ask students to write a one-page paper that defines civil rights. Display and discuss the text of the Civil Rights Act (1964): <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=97>. Then have them write a second paper that discusses their understanding of civil rights after studying the provisions of the act. Have them share both papers in class.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in History/Social Studies: Key Ideas & Details RH. 6-8.2; Craft & Structure RH. 6-8.4; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 5-8.1; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-8.4, 5-8.6.

Questions For Classroom Discussion

- Explain why the book is dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer. Analyze the illustration under the dedication. Why is Hamer sitting off to the side? What might she be writing on her pad? Who are her friends in the illustration? What do they represent?
- Rubin is recognized for her impeccable research. In the Acknowledgments, she states that her research included a trip to Mississippi. Discuss the meaning of the phrase “walk a mile in someone else’s shoes.” How does this phrase apply to Rubin’s belief that an essential part of her research had to occur in Mississippi? What do you think she learned on this trip that she couldn’t have gained from other resources? Discuss how books such as *Freedom Summer* give readers the opportunity to walk in the shoes of those who lived the experience.
- The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. believed that the way to win equality was through “nonviolence.” Discuss how the Freedom Summer volunteers closely followed King’s teachings. Explain how they used “nonviolence” as a weapon. How were they victims of violence? Discuss how “nonviolence” continues to be the best weapon for dealing with bullies of any type.
- Explain what Mrs. Hamer meant when she said, “All we want is a chance to be part of America” (p. 1). Why did it take Mrs. Hamer so many years to discover her rights as a U. S. citizen? Discuss why the vote was so important to her. Why was the white population so threatened by blacks who tried to vote? How did Mrs. Hamer’s love of reading cause her to question? Discuss why she was the natural leader for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced “snick”).
- Andrew Goodman’s mother felt as though she was sending her son off to war when he joined the Freedom Summer volunteers. Why is the war metaphor an appropriate description for what was happening in Mississippi? Who were the enemies? How were they disguised? What rules of war did Goodman and other volunteers learn during their training in Ohio? Discuss how the following car sticker further explains the war metaphor: “You are in occupied Mississippi: Proceed with Caution” (p. 39). Discuss the casualties of the war. Explain how the civil rights volunteers won the war one battle at a time.

- Many of the volunteers admitted that they were frightened about going to Mississippi. How did their belief in the cause trump their fear? Charles McLaurin wore dark glasses to mask his fear. Why did he think it important to conceal his fear from the white attackers? How did people like Fannie Lou Hamer give the Freedom Summer volunteers courage? Discuss the courage of the black families who opened their homes to the Freedom Summer volunteers. What consequences did they face?

- Explain the symbolism of the uniform of the SNCC staffers: blue denim overalls and a white T-Shirt. What message did this send to government officials such as President Lyndon B. Johnson and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and to American citizens all across the country?

- Discuss the following warning that Bob Moses, the director of the Summer Project, related to volunteers: "Don't come to Mississippi this summer to save the Mississippi Negro. Only come if you understand, really understand, that his freedom and yours are one" (p. 5). How important is the "right motive" in effecting change? The volunteers suffered much brutality. How did it take a true understanding of "freedom for all" for the volunteers to live with fear and complete what they set out to accomplish? What message about individual freedoms should we learn from the efforts of civil rights volunteers?

- Cite evidence from the book that Mississippi earned its name as "the Closed Society." Why did Moses and other volunteers feel that the key to opening the locked door was the vote? How is the vote still the most powerful right afforded U. S. citizens? Discuss why voting is a civic responsibility.

- Discuss the attitude of the folks in Mississippi toward outsiders such as Mickey and Rita Schwerner and Andrew Goodman. Mickey Schwerner and Andrew Goodman came from Jewish families. Draw a parallel between the oppression of blacks in the South and the Jews in Hitler's Europe during World War II.

- Discuss the role of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in the deaths of Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Earl Chaney. Explain what Inspector Joseph Sullivan meant when he said, "In spirit, everyone belonged to the Klan" (p. 45). How is the KKK a terrorist organization? How did it terrorize the families of the three murdered volunteers? What was the attitude of Mississippi Governor Paul Johnson toward the murders? Why did it take the federal government so long to enter into the investigation of the deaths?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Key Ideas & Details RI. 5-8.1, 5-8.2, 5-8.3; Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 5-8.8; Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 5-8.1, 5-8.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-8.4, 5-8.6.

Curriculum Connections

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Mickey and Rita Schwerner, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) workers, turned an old house in Meridian into a Freedom House with a library. It quickly became a lively community center. Freedom Schools and Phyllis Wheatley Community Centers continue to make significant contributions to communities. Instruct students to make an annotated bibliography of ten fiction and ten nonfiction titles about the civil rights movement for a Freedom School or Phyllis Wheatley Center library. Ask them to identify and annotate five pertinent websites. Then have them write a letter to project directors recommending these materials in memory of Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Earl Chaney.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RL. 5-8.9; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-8.4

- Discuss the line from the pledge of allegiance: "With liberty and justice for all." Then ask students to write a guest editorial that Bob Moses, the Summer Project director, might have written for a national newspaper about Freedom Summer. Include the contributions of individuals such as Mrs. Hamer and the many volunteers and citizens who risked their lives "for liberty and justice for all." Encourage peer editing for clarity, spelling, and grammar.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-8.4, 5-8.5.

- Read about Marian Wright Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund: <http://www.childrensdefense.org>. What is the mission of the organization? Then write a paper that explains how the mission of the organization continues the focus of the Freedom Schools that were begun in the 1960s. How do the schools still rely on volunteers?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-8.7, 5-8.8.

- Students in some Freedom Schools started their own newspaper. As a class, brainstorm the subjects they might have explored and featured. Then have students write and publish a similar newspaper. Include: feature articles, a profile of one Freedom Summer volunteer, an editorial, a political cartoon, letters to the editor, and a feature about the activities of the school. If possible, make the newspaper available on the school's website.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-8.4, 5-6.6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-8.8.

SOCIAL STUDIES

- One of the main purposes of Freedom Summer was to register blacks to vote. Read about the Voting Rights Act (1965) on the following website: <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=100>. Discuss why this act was so important to minority populations. Ask students to locate and read articles about the 2013 Supreme Court decision to strike certain provisions from the act. Then sponsor a class debate about the pros and cons of the decision.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Speaking & Listening: Comprehension & Collaboration SL. 8.2, SL. 8.3; Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 8.6. Language: Convention of Standard English L. 8.1; Knowledge of Language L. 8.3.



Curriculum Connections *continued*

- Former Washington DC Mayor Marion Barry, Congressman John Lewis, and former NAACP Chairman Julian Bond were members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that was formed in the 1960s to organize voter registration for blacks in the southern states. Ask students to research these men and write a profile for an American history textbook that includes their work with SNCC and their continued service to the American people, especially America's minority populations.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.2; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-8.7.

- Rita Schwerner Bender, the widow of Mickey Schwerner, said, "We have to talk about the unfinished promise of the civil rights movement" (p. 99). Present current civil rights topics from the following website: <http://www.civilrights.org/issues>. Have students read at least five newspaper or magazine articles (including those delivered via the Internet) that further explore one topic. Then have them write an article called "(Supply specific topic): An Unfinished Promise." Cite sources at the end of the paper. Allow time to share papers in class.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.2; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-8.4; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-6.7, 5-8.8, 5-8.9.

- Ask students to study the map of Mississippi on page 20. Then have them plan a tour called "Revisiting Freedom Summer" for tourists and civil rights scholars who wish to visit the significant locations of the Freedom Summer activities. Briefly describe each location in an illustrated brochure of the tour.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Reading: Informational Text: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RI. 5-8.7; Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.2.

MATH

- Instruct students to survey twenty relatives and neighbors over age eighteen:

Are they registered to vote?
Do they believe that their vote counts?
Is it their civic responsibility to vote?
What is the last local, state and national election in which they voted?

Then report the data on a chart and graph, and write a statistical summary of the survey. Based on the survey, ask students to relay their opinion about attitudes toward voting.

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.1, 5-8.2.

VOCABULARY/USE OF LANGUAGE

- Ask students to jot down unfamiliar words and attempt to define them taking clues from the context. Such words may include: *deft* (p. 8), *desolate* (p. 24), *stoic* (p. 29), *vigilantes* (p. 35), *camaraderie* (p. 44), *cynical* (p. 48), *canvassed* (p. 53), *discernible* (p. 60), and *ludicrous* (p. 66). Use a dictionary to check the meanings. How well did you do?

Correlates to Common Core Language Arts Standards in Language: Vocabulary Acquisition & Use L. 5-8.4.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY

■ 2014 marks the 50th anniversary of Freedom Summer. Tape a class documentary that commemorates this event. Include the following:

- A memorial tribute to Fannie Lou Hamer, Mickey Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Early Chaney
- An interpretative dance to "This Little Light of Mine"
- A choral production of civil rights songs, including "We Shall Overcome" and "We'll Never Turn Back"
- Poetry readings that best convey the themes of Freedom Summer
- Posters that illustrate the provisions of the Civil Rights Act (1964)
- A news report of the day the bodies of the three murdered Freedom Summer volunteers were found
- A final segment that draws a parallel with issues related to civil rights today, especially in regard to prejudice and bigotry related to ethnicity, sex, and religious groups

Correlates to Common Core Standards Writing: Text Types & Purposes W. 5-8.3; Production & Distribution of Writing W. 5-8.6; Research to Build & Present Knowledge W. 5-8.7, 5-8.8, 5-8.9; Speaking & Listening: Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas SL. 5-8.4, 5-8.5, 5-8.6; Social Studies: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas RH. 6-8.7



About the Author

Susan Goldman Rubin is the award-winning author of more than thirty-five books for children including *Fireflies in the Dark: The Story of Friedl Dicker-Brandeis and the Children of Terezin*, which was a Sydney Taylor Award Honor Book, a SCBWI Golden Kite Honor Book, and a *Booklist* Top Ten Art Book for Youth. Her other books include a collaboration with Holocaust survivor Ela Weissberger, *The Cat with the Yellow Star: Coming of Age in Terezin*, an ALA Notable Children's Book. She lives in Malibu, California. For more about Susan, visit her online at www.susangoldmanrubin.com.

Guide prepared by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

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READING: INFORMATIONAL TEXT

Key Ideas & Details

RI. 5-8.1 – Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI. 5-8.2 – Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details, provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI. 5-8.3 – Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text.

Integration of Knowledge & Ideas

RI. 5-8.7 – Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

RI. 5-8.8 – Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

READING: LITERATURE

Integration of Knowledge & Ideas

RL. 5-8.9 – Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

SPEAKING & LISTENING

Comprehension & Collaboration

SL. 5-8.1 – Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussion (one on one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing for their own clearly.

SL. 8.2 – Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats and evaluate the motives behind its presentation.

SL. 5-8.3 – Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas

SL. 5-8.4 – Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically, and using appropriate facts and relevant descriptive details to support main ideas.

SL. 5-8.5 – Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

SL. 5-8.6 – Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, using formal English when appropriate to task and situation.

LANGUAGE

Convention of Standard English

L. 8.1 – Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Knowledge of Language

L. 8.3 – Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition & Use

L. 5-8.4 – Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade level reading and content.



WRITING

Text Types & Purposes

W. 5-8.1 – Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

W. 5-8.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

W. 5-8.3 – Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Productions & Distribution of Writing

W. 5-8.4 – Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

W. 5-8.5 – With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

W. 5-8.6 – Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing.

Research to Build & Present Knowledge

W. 5-8.7 – Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

W. 5-8.8 – Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

W. 5-8.9 – Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

Key Ideas & Details

RH. 6-8.2 – Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft & Structure

RH. 6-8.4 – Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

RH. 6-8.7 – Integrate visual information with other information in print and digital texts.