

LESSON

Introducing Freedom Dreams: Culminating Lesson

Overview

About This Lesson

In this lesson, students explore the concept of a “freedom dream,” coined by historian Robin D. G. Kelley to describe the power of imagination as a tool for individual and collective liberation. Students will create their own working definition of “freedom dreaming,” dissect the prompt for the final project, and journal initial ideas.

Essential Question

- How can I make real the ideals of freedom and democracy?

Guiding Questions

- What is a freedom dream?
- What dreams do I have for my community and for the world?

Learning Objectives

- Students will create their own definition of “freedom dreaming” after reading various definitions and a Langston Hughes poem.
- Students will dissect the project prompt in order to generate questions and initial thoughts.

What’s Included

This lesson uses the following texts and materials. Access materials in this [Google Folder](#).

- **Reading:** “I Dream a World” by Langston Hughes
- **Handout:** “My Freedom Dream” Capstone Project Prompt

Lesson Plan

Activities

Day 1

1. Explore the Meaning of Freedom Dreaming

Share with students that in this mini-unit, they will examine how the history they studied continues to influence our world today, and consider how they might choose to participate in bringing about a more just, equitable, and compassionate world.

Explain that as part of this learning, students will create a capstone project that involves sharing a “freedom dream” they have for their communities. To introduce the concept of a freedom dream to students, which was first coined by historian Robin D. G. Kelley, share these two quotes with the class:

“Freedom Dreaming [allows us] to visualize the future that we want to live in, and harness the necessary tools and resources to actively move that dream toward a reality.”

- [What is Freedom Dreaming?](#), Freedom Dreaming: A Call to Imagine, CUNY Academic Commons

“Without new visions we don’t know what to build, only what to knock down.”

- Robin D. G. Kelley

Then, have students discuss the following question, first in a [Think, Pair, Share](#) and then as a class: *What is the value of dreaming about the world you would like to live in?*

Next, have students work in pairs to create a working definition of the term “freedom dreaming.” To help students create their definitions, you might ask them to look at specific examples of their work from the year in which they explored various meanings of freedom.

Regroup as a class and have volunteers share their working definitions.

2. Share a Langston Hughes Poem

To dig deeper into the definition of a “freedom dream,” pass out the poem, **“I Dream a World” by Langston Hughes** and read it aloud as a class.

Next, ask student volunteers to read the poem out loud a second time. Point out that Hughes uses repetition of the line “I dream a world” and shares various dreams he has for a different world. Ask students to choose one dream that Hughes shares in this poem (e.g., “I dream a world where all will know sweet freedom’s way”) and share why it resonates with them. The following prompt can help get them started: *The line that stands out to me is “[insert line from the poem]” because. . . .*

- . . . of something about who I am. (What in particular?)
- . . . it reflects human nature or how people are in the world. (What human characteristics or ways of being?)
- . . . of how the poet expressed the idea. (What does the poet do that makes you feel this way?)

Ask students to share their selected line and their thinking with a partner.

3. Have Students Share Their Own Dreams for the World

Finally, have students draw on ideas from their journals and class discussion to complete the following sentence stem: *I dream a world. . . .* Have them share their sentences with the class using the [Lifted Line Poem](#) strategy. When everyone has come up with their sentence, ask the students to stand and form a circle. Next, pick one student to begin and a direction (clockwise or counter-clockwise). Each student should read their sentence in succession, in the direction you've picked.

Then, revisit the working definition of "freedom dreaming" students created in the opening activity. Give students the opportunity to add any new ideas to their working definitions based on what they explored in class today.

Day 2

1. Dissect the Prompt for the "My Freedom Dream" Project

Explain to students that in class today they will be continuing their exploration of the concept of "freedom dreams" by dissecting the prompt for their final project in this mini-unit. Print out the **"My Freedom Dream" Capstone Project Prompt** in a larger font, and tape it to the center of a piece of chart paper. Divide the class into groups of three to four students and provide each group with an enlarged printout of the prompt.

Briefly introduce and go over the prompt, which students will dissect in a moment.

Ask students to dissect the prompt in small groups of three to four students, making the following notations:

- Circle words they do not know or understand in the context of the prompt.
- Star words that seem to be the central ideas of the prompt.
- Underline all of the verbs that represent what they are supposed to do.
- Cross out any information that does not seem specifically relevant to the prompt.

Ask students to share their annotations, clarifying any unfamiliar vocabulary or misconceptions about the prompt.

2. Journal Initial Thoughts

Ask students to write a brief journal reflection on their initial thoughts in response to this prompt, which is a modified version of the "assess" section of the prompt:

Come up with one freedom dream you have for a community you belong to—your school, neighborhood, or another community that has personal significance. Why does your freedom dream matter to you?

Then, think about how your freedom dream can be achieved—what small, everyday steps would be required to achieve it?

Have volunteers share their "freedom dreams."