

Title of Lesson: “Scottsboro Boys”: A Trial Which Defined an Age
(Suggested grade level: 11)

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Background Information:

Background information for teacher:

- Several documents are available on the Alabama Department of Archives and History Web site that teachers and students may be interested in reading in preparation for this lesson or for their assignment.
 - [“Death Penalty for Crime” Birmingham Reporter, April 25, 1931](#)
 - [“Judge J. A. Hawkins Undaunted By Threatening Telegrams from International Labor Defense” The Huntsville Daily Times, April 13, 1931](#)
 - [“Death Penalty Properly Demanded in Fiendish Crime of Nine Burly Negroes” The Huntsville Daily Times, March 27, 1931](#)
 - [“Negroes Riot in Gadsden to Protest Doom” The Huntsville Daily Times, April 10, 1931](#)
 - [“Revolting in Last Degree in Story of Girls” The Huntsville Daily Times, March 26, 1931](#)
 - [“How the Nine Arrests in Scottsboro Were Effected” The Huntsville Daily Times, March 26, 1931](#)
 - [Letter from Judge W.W. Callahan in Decatur, Alabama](#) to Governor Benjamin Miller in Montgomery, Alabama, November 14, 1933
- *The Encyclopedia of Alabama* has an article on the [Scottsboro Trials](#).
- Extensive information about the [Scottsboro Trials](#) can be found at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) School of Law.
- PBS produced a film, [Scottsboro: An American Tragedy](#), which has activities, an interactive timeline, and additional primary sources.

Overview of lesson: This lesson could be part of a unit study on the Great Depression. The students will view an introductory [PowerPoint](#) on the events leading up to the arrest and trials of the nine black teenagers accused of raping two white women on a train traveling through north Alabama. The students will conduct independent research on the trials and then meet in groups to compile the information gathered. Each group will produce a newspaper focusing on the underlying elements of the trials.

Content Standards

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)
Eleventh Grade: Standard 6, p.77

[National Standards for History](#), 1996

Standards in History for Grades 5-12 (p. 117)

Era 8, Standard 1 – The causes of the Great Depression and how it affected American society

1B – The student understands how American life changed during the 1930s.
Analyze the impact of the Great Depression on the American family and on ethnic and racial minorities. [Consider multiple perspectives]

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, (Bulletin 111, 2010)

Standard V – Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, High School, p. 139

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individual, groups, and institutions.

Primary Learning Objective(s):

The student will analyze the conduct and outcomes of the trials of the “Scottsboro Boys” by taking into consideration the political, social, economic, and religious developments of the 1920s and 1930s.

Time allotted: 90 minutes or two (2) 60 minute classes

Materials and Equipment:

- If student computers are unavailable, use library resources related to the “Scottsboro Boys” trials.
- Newsprint, pens, pencil
- Print and reproduce the document packet:
 - [“For Higher Wages! For Unemployment Insurance! For Recognition of Labor Unions!” Flier for May Day rally sponsored by the Communist Party in Birmingham, Alabama, May 1, 1934](#)
 - [“Workers - - White and Negro Unite to Win” Flier for May Day rally sponsored by the International Labor Defense to be held in Birmingham, Alabama, May 1, 1934](#)
 - [“Death Penalty for Crime” *Birmingham Reporter*, April 25, 1931](#)
 - [“Judge J. A. Hawkins Undaunted By Threatening Telegrams from International Labor Defense” *The Huntsville Daily Times*, April 13, 1931](#)
 - [“Death Penalty Properly Demanded in Fiendish Crime of Nine Burly Negroes” *The Huntsville Daily Times*, March 27, 1931](#)
 - [“Negroes Riot in Gadsden to Protest Doom” *The Huntsville Daily Times*, April 10, 1931](#)
 - [“Revolting in Last Degree in Story of Girls” *The Huntsville Daily Times*, March 26, 1931](#)
 - [“How the Nine Arrests in Scottsboro Were Effectuated” *The Huntsville Daily Times*, March 26, 1931](#)
 - [Letter from Judge W.W. Callahan in Decatur, Alabama](#) to Governor Benjamin Miller in Montgomery, Alabama, November 14, 1933
- Rubric for completed project
- PowerPoint: [*The Threads of the 1920s Weave a 1930s Tragedy: “Scottsboro Boys” Trials*](#)
- Questions for Study and Reflection

Technological Resources:

- Computer with digital projector
- PowerPoint (v. '97-2003) – If you have a newer version, [a viewer](#) (free) can be downloaded from the internet.
- Printer
- Student access to computers with internet access

Background/Preparation:

Students should have studied the decade of the Twenties and be familiar with:

- Racism
 - Ku Klux Klan

- Jim Crow laws
- Anti-Semitism
 - Leo Frank lynching
 - Henry Ford (*Dearborn Independent*)
- Communism
 - Red Scare
 - Palmer Raids
- Sectionalism
 - States' rights
- Classism
 - Uneven distribution of wealth.
- Students should be able to explain the effects of the Great Depression.
- Students should be familiar with online research strategies.

Procedures/Activities:

Engagement/Motivation Activity:

Ask, “How would you feel if you were falsely charged with a crime for which you could be executed? What resources would you have with which to defend yourself?”
 Allow students to discuss.

Step 1	Show the <i>PowerPoint</i> . Allow time for discussion during the presentation. Have students write the “Questions for Study and Reflection” in their notebooks.
Step 2	Tell students that the products of this assignment will be group-constructed newspapers which report on the “Scottsboro Boys” trial(s). Each newspaper will include each of the following five underlying elements of the trials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Racism ● Anti-Semitism ● Communism ● Sectionalism ● Classism
Step 3	Assign each student one of the five underlying elements of the trials. The students will research his/her element independently using the internet, attached document packet, and/or library resources.
Step 4	Assign students to groups so that each element is represented by a student in the group.
Step 5	Each group will create a newspaper reporting the events of the arrest and trials. Groups may report objectively or from a particular viewpoint. The newspaper must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● name for the newspaper ● a motto ● at least four articles with titles and bylines ● at least one editorial ● at least two letters to the editor ● at least one political cartoon. Display these instructions for the duration of the newspaper assignment. (Rubric attached)

Step 6	At the conclusion of the time allotted for the project, the groups will share their newspapers.
Step 7	Conclude the lesson by conducting a class discussion based on the “Questions for Study and Reflection.”

Assessment Strategies:

- Evaluate student-created newspaper using attached rubric.
- Suggested essay topic:
 - Explain four ways in which the Scottsboro Boys trial reflected the time period.

Extension:

- Have students read *To Kill a Mockingbird* and compare the fictional trial of Tom Robinson to that of the nine teenagers charged with the rape of Ruby Bates and Victoria Price.
- Have students analyze the media coverage, mostly newspaper, of the trial.

Remediation:

- The student could be given a copy of *PowerPoint*.

Accommodation:

- For the research activity, assign partners and pair students who need additional help with stronger students (peer tutoring).
- Suggest Web sites or other resources which will provide the student with the information needed to complete the assignment.

Modification:

- Review Individualized Education Plans, 504 Plans, and Gifted or ELL Plans for instructional and assessment accommodations or modifications.
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate comprehension and mastery of appropriate learning objectives.

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Questions for Reflection and Study

- How did the trials exacerbate the social, sectional, political, religious, and racial divisions in America?
- How would teens be treated differently by today’s court system?
- How do you think the trials influenced the lives of each of these young men, and of the two young women?
- How do you think the trials affected the national perception of Alabama?
- How did the trials polarize Alabamians?
- What role did the Communist organization International Labor Defense (I.L.D.) and the N.A.A.C.P. play in the trials?
- What elements of the trials do you consider to be the most unjust?

Student Name _____ Date _____

“Scottsboro Boys” Research Guide

Directions: You will research the assigned underlying element of the Scottsboro Trials independently using the internet, attached document packet, and/or library resources. You must complete the chart below and identify the source being used. You may include a bibliographic entry for each source used. You may use *Citation Machine* at <http://citationmachine.net/> to assist you with your bibliographic entry.

Underlying element being researched: (circle one)

- Racism
- Anti-Semitism
- Communism
- Sectionalism
- Classism

Example of the Element Found in the Trials	Source/Bibliographic Entry

"Scottsboro Boys" Trial Newspaper

Name _____

Directions: You must complete your research guide independently. You will be assigned to a group. Each group will create a newspaper reporting the events of the arrest and trials. Groups may report objectively or from a particular viewpoint.

The newspaper **must** include the following articles or elements:

- a masthead for the newspaper
- a motto
- at least four articles with titles and bylines
- at least one editorial
- at least two letters to the editor
- at least one political cartoon.

CATEGORY	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Score
Layout - Headlines , Captions , Masthead, & Motto	All articles have headlines that capture the reader's attention and accurately describe the content and have a byline. The name of the newspaper is centered and in a font that makes it stand out. The motto appears below the name in a smaller font.	All articles have headlines that accurately describe the content. All articles have a byline. The name of the newspaper is in a font that makes it stand out from other content. The motto appears below the name in a smaller font.	Most articles have headlines that accurately describe the content. All articles have a byline. The name of the newspaper is in a font that makes it stand out from other content. The motto is missing.	Articles are missing bylines or many articles do not have adequate headlines. The name of the newspaper does not stand out and/or the motto is missing.	
Articles/ Editorial	All articles establish a clear purpose in the lead paragraph and demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic. The editorial represents a valid view based upon accurate information.	Three of the articles establish a clear purpose in the lead paragraph and demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic. Most of the information used in the editorial is accurate and represents a valid view.	Two of the articles establish a clear purpose in the lead paragraph and demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic. Most of the information in the editorial is inaccurate and a valid view is expressed.	The articles do not establish a clear purpose in the lead paragraph and do not demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic. The information was inaccurate in the editorial and does not represent a valid view.	
Required Elements	All of the required elements are included in the newspaper.	All but one of the required elements is included in the newspaper.	Two or three of the required elements are missing.	More than three of the required elements are missing.	
Political Cartoon	The political cartoon is well-drawn and presents a valid viewpoint.	The political cartoon is well drawn but the viewpoint is unclear.	The political cartoon is messy and the viewpoint is unclear.	The political cartoon is messy and does not relate to the "Scottsboro Boys" trial(s).	
Contributions of Group Members	Each person in the group has contributed at least two or more articles or elements.	Each person in the group has contributed at least one article and one element.	Each person in the group has contributed at least one article or element.	One or more students in the group have no byline in the paper or have not contributed an element.	

TOTAL _____