

Bessie Coleman

Lesson Plan

Overview:

This lesson provides an overview of the world's first African American female pilot, who overcame multiple barriers (racial, gender-based, historical, socioeconomic) in order to become a celebrated aviator and daredevil performer who thrilled both Black and White audiences. It is suitable for a lesson in history class, and would make an enriching addition to courses dealing with technical or scientific fields connected with aviation.

Lesson Prompt:

Can you name any famous pilots from history? What did they achieve in flight that makes them memorable? What kind of education, training, and experience does it take to become a great pilot?

Share the prepared PowerPoint slide deck with students. The presentation includes discussion prompts to reinforce the material.

Select activities from the accompanying Activity Pack according to your time allowance and student appropriateness. Included in the Activity Pack are:

- Multiple Choice Questions (Grades 2-8)

- Critical Thinking Exercises (Grades K-5 with guidance; Grades 6-8 unassisted)

- Word Puzzle (Grades 4-8)

- Coloring Page (Grades K-3)

- Additional Reading/Viewing (Grades K-8 - varies by video)

Vocabulary:

Aviatrix
Aeronautical
Barnstorming
Biplane
Cockpit
Daredevil
Exhibition
Expatriate
Lacerations
Manicurist
Parachutist
Sharecropper

Recommended Resources:

Several online videos of varying length are recommended on the Bessie Coleman Lesson Videos supplement. A number of biographies appropriate for young adult audiences are available, including *Queen Bess: Daredevil Aviator* by Doris L. Rich, with an afterword by astronaut Mae Jemison (Smithsonian Books, 1993).

The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum hosts a good deal of material about Bessie Coleman on Black American contributions to aerospace on its website, including:

- Black Wings: African American Pioneer Aviators (Overview of Early Black Aviators)
<https://airandspace.si.edu/explore-and-learn/topics/blackwings/index.cfm>
- Bessie Coleman (Online Exhibit on Her Life and Legacy)
<https://airandspace.si.edu/learn/highlighted-topics/womens-history/bessie-coleman>
- Pioneers of Flight (Material on Bessie Coleman & Bessie Coleman Aero Club)
<https://pioneersofflight.si.edu/content/bessie-coleman-aero-club>

Standards and Learning Objectives

Mapped to the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards published by the National Council for the Social Studies

Grades K-2

English Language Arts:

D1.3.K-2. Identify facts and concepts associated with a supporting question.

Civics:

D2.Civ.1.K-2. Describe roles and responsibilities of people in authority.

D2.Civ.2.K-2. Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community.

D2.Civ.8.K-2. Describe democratic principles such as equality, fairness, and respect for legitimate authority and rules.

D2.Civ.10.K-2. Compare their own point of view with others' perspectives.

D2.Civ.14.K-2. Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.

Economics:

D2. Eco.2. K-2. Identify the benefits and costs of making various personal decisions.

D2. Eco.3. K-2. Describe the skills and knowledge required to produce certain goods and services.

D2.Eco.6.K-2. Explain how people earn income.

D2.Eco.10.K-2. Explain why people save.

D2.Eco.14.K-2. Describe why people in one country trade goods and services with people in other countries.

Geography:

D2. Geo.7.K-2. Explain why and how people, goods, and ideas move from place to place.

History:

D2. His.1. K-2. Create a chronological sequence of multiple events.

D2. His.2. K-2. Compare life in the past to life today.

D2. His.3. K-2. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped a significant historical change.

D2.His.4.K-2. Compare perspectives of people in the past to those of people in the present.

D2.His.9.K-2. Identify different kinds of historical sources.

D2.His.10.K-2. Explain how historical sources can be used to study the past.

Grades 3-5

Civics:

D2.Civ.4.3-5. Explain how groups of people make rules to create responsibilities and protect freedoms.

D2.Civ.6.3-5. Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.

D2.Civ.8.3-5. Identify core civic virtues and democratic principles that guide government, society, and communities.

D2.Civ.10.3-5. Identify the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others' points of view about civic issues.

D2.Civ.12.3-5. Explain how rules and laws change society and how people change rules and laws.

Economics:

D2. Eco.1.3-5. Compare the benefits and costs of individual choices.

D2. Eco.2.3-5. Identify positive and negative incentives that influence the decisions people make.

D2. Eco.3.3-5. Identify examples of the variety of resources (human capital, physical capital, and natural resources) that are used to produce goods and services.

D2.Eco.6.3-5. Explain the relationship between investment in human capital, productivity, and future incomes.

History:

D2. His.2.3-5. Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today.

D2. His.3.3-5. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.

D2.His.4.3-5. Explain why individuals and groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.

D2.His.11.3-5. Infer the intended audience and purpose of a historical source from information within the source itself.

D2. His.14.3-5. Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments.

D2.His.16.3-5. Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.

Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions:

D4.4.3-5. Critique arguments.

D4.5.3-5. Critique explanations.

Grades 6-8

Civics:

D2.Civ.1.6-8. Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a variety of governmental and nongovernmental contexts.

D2.Civ.6.6-8. Describe the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.

D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

D2.Civ.14.6-8. Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, "and promoting the common good."

Economics:

D2. Eco.1.6-8. Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.

History:

D2. His.1.6-8. Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

D2. His.2.6-8. Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

D2. His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

D2.His.4.6-8. Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.

D2.His.5.6-8. Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.

D2.His.6.6-8. Analyze how people's perspectives influenced what information is available in the historical sources they created.

D2.His.13.6-8. Evaluate the relevancy and utility of a historical source based on information such as maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose.

D2. His.14.6-8. Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.

D2. His.15.6-8. Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past.

Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions:

D4.4.6-8. Critique arguments for credibility.

D4.5.6-8. Critique the structure of explanations.