

Miracle in Mississippi: Laurence C. Jones

K-8 Lesson Plan

This document is addressed to the instructor. Other documents in this lesson packet are addressed to students.

Overview:

Laurence C. Jones traveled to rural Mississippi looking for a way to serve poor Blacks, who experienced a greater degree of racism than he had ever known as a boy growing up in Missouri. In 1909, after teaching at a school outside of Jackson, MS, he decided his calling was to start his own school in the “piney woods” region of Rankin County. Today, his vision for The Piney Woods School is alive, prospering on 60 acres as the oldest Black boarding school in the nation, where the motto “Head, Heart, Hands” encourages students to uphold the values of the founder.

The Woodson Center’s lesson on the life of social entrepreneur and education reformer **Laurence C. Jones** and his founding and sustaining of **The Piney Woods School** (a.k.a. “Piney Woods”) in Mississippi gives teachers a good deal of flexibility in its presentation to the class.

Lesson Objectives:

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to describe the:

- Family heritage and early life of Jones that shaped his interests;
- Social and economic forces that impacted poor, rural Blacks in the “Jim Crow” South;
- Growth of relationships between Jones, local Blacks and Whites, and wealthy, influential funders across the nation;
- Meaning of the motto “Head, Heart, Hands”;
- Impact of Piney Woods, its founder, and its students on American culture;
- Vision of education that guides The Piney Woods School.

Prompt:

Begin by asking students to think about how and why they learn. You can start with:

“Imagine our classroom being logs instead of desks, a campfire to keep us warm, and trees to protect us from the sun: would learning be easier for you or harder in these conditions? How does a person start a new school? What are the different ways people can help the poor?”

This lesson contains a prepared PowerPoint slide deck, and the accompanying Activity Pack which includes a range of grade-appropriate activities to promote and measure basic comprehension and prompt deeper thinking. Short, school-appropriate video selections are included for additional learning and presentation opportunities.

Select activities from the accompanying Activity Pack according to your time allowance and student appropriateness. Some of the supplemental materials can be used to spark group discussion and allow independent classwork.

Lesson Supplements

Included in the Activity Pack are:

[Activities and Assignments](#)

[Critical Thinking Questions](#)

[Multiple Choice Questions](#)

[Crossword Puzzle](#)

[Crossword w/ Word Bank](#)

[Crossword Answer Key](#)

[All Case Studies](#)

Note: Case Studies for high school students are available here for K-8 lesson engagement. Teachers can shape the materials according to grade-level or lesson-time needs. Teachers can read aloud or distribute the case studies to middle school grades with minor changes.

Vocabulary: alma mater, boarding school, booster, charter, commendation, industrious, insurrection, jubilant, nominally, pneumonia, prominent, porter, stigma, suffragist, tentative, underserved

Recommended Videos

[The Piney Woods School](#) (3 min 48 sec) All grades

[Piney Woods School](#) (1 min) All grades

[Origins of the Jim Crow Era](#) (1 min) All grades

[Booker T Washington](#) (3 min) Grades 3 - 8

[This is Your Life: Laurence C. Jones \(1954\)](#) (17 min 39 sec) Grades 3 - 8

Additional Woodson Center Lessons

Covert, Michigan: Like the community around Piney Woods, the settlers in this midwestern village came together to solve common problems. But they also rejected racial segregation of any kind, building an integrated community where all its people shared schools, churches, and civic life – a century before the Civil Rights Movement.

Booker T. Washington and the Rosenwald Schools: Another story of a groundbreaking education project, the vision of Jones' inspiration, Booker T. Washington, who sought to bring education to Black children in the rural South with the help of Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald. For decades, a Rosenwald grade-school was actually part of the Piney Woods campus, and one of its many sources of public funding.

Standards of Learning (SOLs)

Mapped to The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

Grades K-2

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.3.K-2. Explain the need for and purposes of rules in various settings inside and outside of school.

D2.Civ.6.K-2. Describe how communities work to accomplish common tasks, establish responsibilities, and fulfill roles of authority.

D2.Civ.9.K-2. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions while responding attentively to others when addressing ideas and making decisions as a group.

D2.Civ.11.K-2. Explain how people can work together to make decisions in the classroom.

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

Economics

D2.Eco.1.K-2. Explain how scarcity necessitates decision making.

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.

Geography

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

D2.Geo.9.K-2. Describe the connections between the physical environment of a place and the economic activities found there.

History

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

ELA

D4.1.K-2. Construct an argument with reasons.

D4.2.K-2. Construct explanations using correct sequence and relevant information.

D4.8.K-2. Use listening, consensus-building, and voting procedures to decide on and take action in their classrooms.

Grades 3-5

Civics

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.7.3-5. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school settings.

D2.Civ.14.3-5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

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.

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.5.3-5. Explain connections among historical contexts and people's perspectives at the time.

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

ELA

D4.1.3-5. Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.

D4.2.3-5. Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data.

D4.4.3-5. Critique arguments.

D4.5.3-5. Critique explanations.

D4.6.3-5. Draw on disciplinary concepts to explain the challenges people have faced and opportunities they have created, in addressing local, regional, and global problems at various times and places.

D4.7.3-5. Explain different strategies and approaches students and others could take in working alone and together to address local, regional, and global problems, and predict possible results of their actions.

D4.8.3-5. Use a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions about and act on civic problems in their classrooms and schools.

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.2.6-8. Explain specific roles played by citizens (such as voters, jurors, taxpayers, members of the armed forces, petitioners, protesters, and office-holders).

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

D2.Civ.7.6-8. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school and community settings.

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.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.

ELA

D4.1.6-8. Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of the arguments.

D4.2.6-8. Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

D4.6.6-8. Draw on multiple disciplinary lenses to analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.

D4.8.6-8. Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in their classrooms and schools, and in out-of-school civic contexts.