



Photograph of Martin Luther King with Vice-Chancellor Bosanquet. 1967, NUA/052589-1, University Archives, Newcastle University Special Collections, GB186.
Available at: <https://collections.newcastle.ac.uk/digital/collection/p21051coll2/id/121/rec16> (Accessed: 9 March 2023).
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Civil Rights in the USA

Teacher Resource Pack

The Role of Photography in the Civil Rights Movement

Suitable for use with A-level History Students



Photograph of Martin Luther King with Vice-Chancellor Bosanquet, 1967, NUA/052589-1, University Archives, Newcastle University Special Collections, GB186.
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In November 1967, Civil Rights activist Martin Luther King Jr travelled to Newcastle University to receive an Honorary Doctorate in Civil Law. Newcastle University was the only British institution to award King an Honorary Degree, and Newcastle was the only place in Britain King ever visited outside of London. Newcastle University's archival collection from his visit is a rich visual resource, and a great way to ground the history of the Civil Rights movement in a local context for British students, particularly those in the North East of England.

This teacher resource pack contains several activity suggestions for students who are studying the Civil Rights movement, centred around Civil Rights photography. There is also an image pack to use which goes with the activities, but feel free to use your own images alongside this, as well as images the students may bring as part of the activities. Using the images of King's visit to Newcastle as a springboard, these activities will encourage students to use analytical methods through the medium of photography to consider a wide range of themes within the Civil Rights movement.

These activities were recently used with great success during Black History Month workshops for A-Level students at Newcastle University. The students were particularly engaged with the use of primary sources and archives. They found that looking at a wide range of Civil Rights photographs allowed them to consider the variety of people and groups involved with the Civil Rights movement in ways they had not before, as well as considering the meaning and intention behind the photography and captioning of something so historically significant.

These activities work well together as a coherent resource, but most can be used as standalone class activities.

Activity 1: I See, I Think, I Wonder

Dive into the archival collection of Martin Luther King's visit to Newcastle

"I See, I Think, I Wonder" is a great technique when analysing images, which will encourage students to question the things they are observing and think more creatively, deeply and critically. In particular, this activity in relation to King's visit allows the students to consider a range of primary sources and their interaction with each other.

Explain that Martin Luther King visited Newcastle in 1967 to receive an honorary degree from Newcastle University.

You may wish to show students this video of Martin Luther King making a speech when he was receiving his honorary degree at Newcastle University: [MARTIN LUTHER KING HONORARY DEGREE CEREMONY AT NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY | Yorkshire Film Archive \(yfanefa.com\)](#).

You may also wish to use information from this digital exhibition about Martin Luther King's visit to Newcastle University: [To Honour a Great and Good Man: Martin Luther King at Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](#).

Ask the class to split into small groups of 3-4 and provide them with A3 paper and markers. Provide them with a selection of images from Martin Luther King's visit to Newcastle University from the image pack, and ask them to note down their thoughts on the following questions:

- What do you see?
- What do you think is happening?
- What does it make you wonder?

Allow the groups to consider this for 10 minutes or so, then present each group with copies of the newspaper article about the visit and ask them to consider for another 10 minutes if these add anything to the narrative they got from the images.

Ask each group in turn to discuss what they saw/thought/wondered and use the discussion to tell them about Martin Luther King's visit and discuss its significance. This activity also provides a good opportunity to discuss with students what an archive is, as many of them may not know.

Activity 2: Choose Your Own Image

Consider personal connections to historical images



For this activity, ask each student to bring an image to class which they feel represents the Civil Rights Movement in the USA. This will help them explore their own personal identification with aspects of various popular images from the era.

Ask the class to split into small groups of 3-4 and provide them with A3 paper and markers. Each student should then present their image to the other members of the group and explain what the image is and why they chose it. Together, the students should then discuss each image further and try to observe things the others may not have noticed, noting down their thoughts on the A3 paper. Here are some examples of good prompt questions:

- Are there particular things written on the signs? (if applicable)
- What might have happened before and after this image was taken?
- Can you read the body language of the subjects?
- Do you know the year they were taken?
- Have you all picked images with similar people, taken at similar times or places?

Each group should then hold up or pin up their A3 paper and present their findings in turn to the class.

Activity 3: Theme Identification

Explore the different themes of the Civil Rights Movement and their portrayal



Press photograph (1957) Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine, is harassed by white students after being prevented from entering the school by the National Guard. Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/halfmind/14410615108/in/photostream/> (Accessed: 6 March 2023). Licensed under Creative Commons — Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic — CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

This activity builds well upon the “Choose Your Own Image” activity. Looking at their own images and the thoughts they have recorded about them, students should now be asked to identify particular themes within the images. Ask the students to suggest a theme and note each one down on a board or something the students can see, forming what will look a bit like a word cloud of themes. Examples of common themes the students may identify include:

- Sacrifice
- Unity
- Racism
- Police oppression/brutality
- Class
- Violence
- Peaceful protest
- Diversity of participation
- Gender
- Equality
- Leadership

If you would like to do this as a standalone activity rather than as part of a whole lesson, you can simply provide the students with a wide variety of photographs on the topic and encourage discussion of themes from there, either as a class or in small groups.

Activity 4: Compare and Contrast

Consider similarities and differences between images of the civil rights movement



Trikosko, M.S. (1963) Demonstrators holding signs during the March on Washington. Available at: [Demonstrators holding signs during the March on Washington, 1963] / MST. | Library of Congress (loc.gov) (Accessed: 8 March 2023). Freely available in the public domain.

This activity is a short and simple one, but gets students thinking even more about groups of images and the complexity of the various occurrences within the Civil Rights Movement. Provide a variety of images from the Civil Rights Movement, and ask the students, in pairs or in groups of 3 or 4, to select two. The students should then discuss the similarities and differences in the images.

This will encourage the students to think about the Civil Rights movement as more than its buzzwords, for example the word “protest.” In the image pack, there is an image of sanitation workers taking part in a protest for their rights, using placards. There are also images of white supremacists protesting against integration, using placards. These images are very similar in a way – there are people protesting using placards – but also very different, in that one group is Black people protesting for basic human rights, and the other is white people acting in a racist manner. This kind of image comparison allows students to consider the nuances within the various themes of the Civil Rights Movement.

You may wish to use the Y-notes graphic organiser to help with this activity.

Activity 5: Juxtaposing Images

Consider what narrative can be portrayed by the juxtaposition of images



Sleet, M. (1968) Coretta Scott King at the funeral of Martin Luther King, comforting their 5-year-old daughter, Bernice.. This photograph won a Pulitzer Prize. Available at: [Search media - Wikimedia Commons](#) (Accessed: 8 March 2023). Freely available in the public domain.

This activity works well with the “Choose Your Own Image” activity, in which case the students can use their original photo as a starting point. If not, ask the students to select an image from the varied selection, which they find interesting. In pairs, the students should then pick another 2 (or more if the class is smaller) photographs which contrast or contradict their original photograph.

This activity encourages the students to consider the way an image builds a narrative. Does the juxtaposition of the images help to build a coherent narrative? Or does it raise more questions? Now that a juxtaposing image has been added, does this change or add to their initial choice of an important image from the Civil Rights Movement?

A good example from the image pack is the pictures of Coretta Scott King. In the first image, she is smiling with her husband and one of their daughters in a home photograph in 1956. In the second image, a photojournalist has captured her and one of her daughters mourning at her husband’s funeral in 1968. These are juxtaposing images, but they tell a coherent narrative about the journey of Martin Luther King’s family through the Civil Rights Movement.

Activity 6: Behind the Lens

Think about different types of photographs and their purpose



Photographer unknown (1950) Rosa Parks mug shot following her arrest, by Montgomery Police Department, February 21st, 1956. Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dillingard/2431055510/> (accessed: 8 March 2023). Licensed under Creative Commons – Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic – CC BY-NC 2.0

Provide a variety of photographs from the Civil Rights Movement and ask the students to get into pairs or groups of 3 or 4. Ask the students to then divide the photos into groups depending on what kind of photograph they think it is – essentially who was taking the photograph, and for what purpose – what is the story being told? Some examples of photo types and things to consider/prompt discussion are:

- Mugshots – police images of Civil Rights leaders. What do they show?
- Photojournalism – images taken by press photographers. Were these taken simply to document a moment, or to send a message? Might somebody who works for a publication run by white people perhaps come at things from a different angle to somebody working for a publication run by black people?
- Might there be outside influences on photojournalism – or ulterior motives? Might the police, for example, or the FBI, be trying to capture images of the Civil Rights movements for any reason?
- Official photographs – commissioned by, for example, leaders. Is the aim to make the subject look impressive? A Civil Rights leader, for example, or a president.
- Family or community photographs – are these images of people that may have been released accidentally or discovered later? Or if they were published at the time, might they have helped a cause?

Activity 7: Top Down, or Bottom Up?

Consider whose story different images tell



This activity builds really well on the “Behind the Lens” activity. The students have already considered who might have been taking the photograph and what story they were trying to tell. Now they should try to figure out whether the images are an example of “Top Down” or “Bottom Up” history.

- “Top Down” history tends to focus on the actions of the rich, powerful and wealthy, placing the historical significance on the actions of leaders. Ordinary people are not key players, but rather like “extras” – maybe passive, or for example perhaps a violent mob.
- “Bottom Up” history focusses on ordinary every day people as the key players in history – they are not passive, powerless or pawns, but instrumental in the narrative. They exist as significant historical actors, history is not merely happening to them.

This activity is a good further opportunity for the students to consider the intention in the creation and use of these images. It is also a good opportunity to discuss “Top Down” and “Bottom Up” as historical categorisations – do the students think they are a useful method? Does such a binary approach paint the ordinary person as unintelligent, or conversely might it demonise those in powerful positions?

Activity 8: the 5Ws

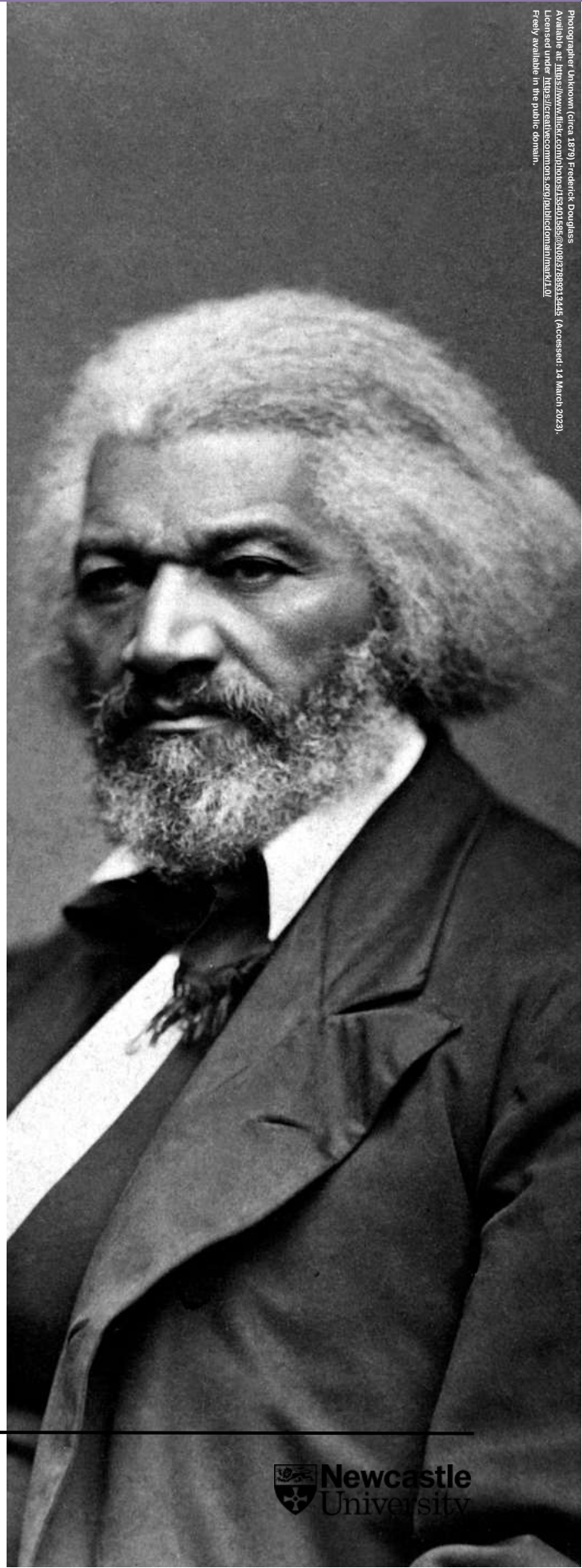
Dig deeply into an image using 5 key questions

This activity enables the students to dig deeply into Civil Rights Photography. This can be done using their own image if you have also done the “Choose Your Own Photo” activity, or using an image from the image pack. Split the class into pairs or groups of 3 to 4 and provide A3 paper and markers. The students should consider for their own photos and each other’s - Who? What? When? Where? Why? There are several variations of these questions which can be used – here are some examples:

- Who is in the photo? Who was the photographer? Who is its intended audience?
- What does it show? What happened before and after the photo was taken?
- When was it taken?
- Where was it taken? Where might it have been published?
- Why was this photograph taken?

Students should then present their 5Ws answers back to the group.

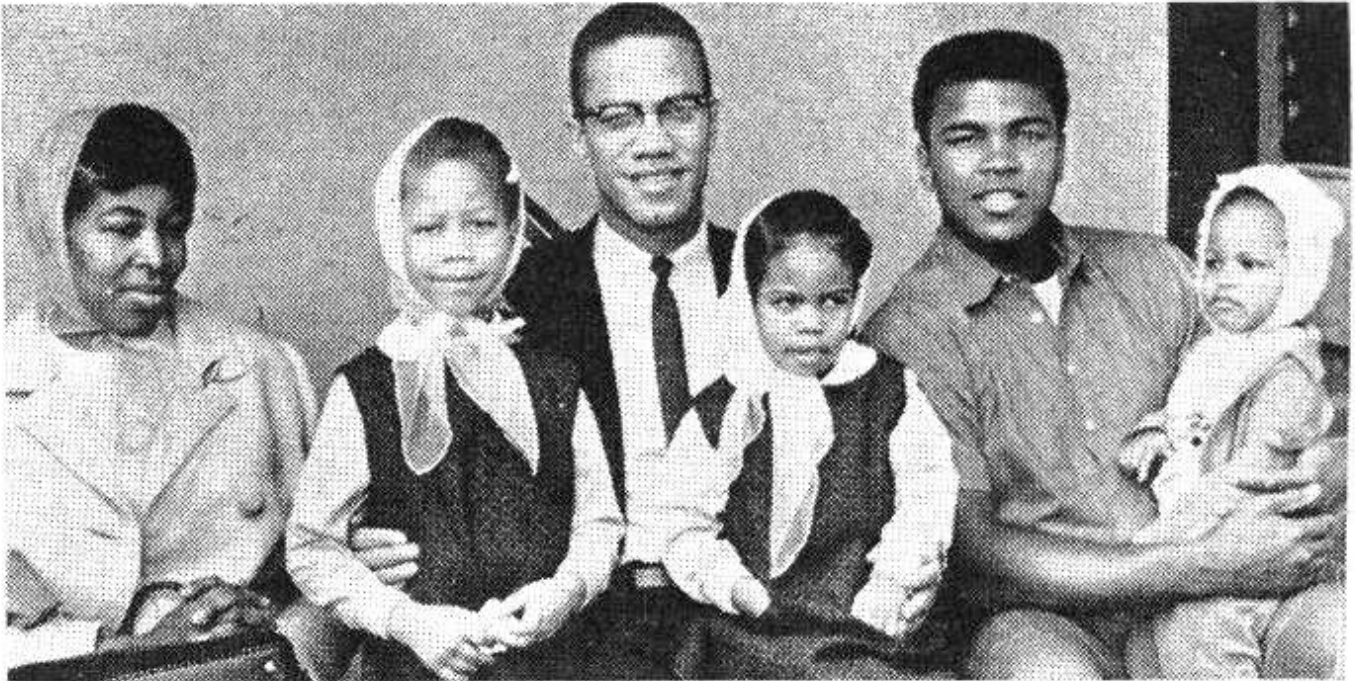
You may wish to use the 5Ws graphic organiser to help with this activity.



Photographer Unknown (c. 1870) Frederick Douglass
Available at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/15201586/@083788931246/> (accessed: 14 March 2023).
Licensed under <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>
Freely available in the public domain.

Activity 9: Create a caption

Explore the importance of captions and the interplay between words and images



❏ **Clay's Guests:** Black Muslim spokesman Malcolm X (c) and his family visit Cassius Clay's training camp in Miami, Fla., during couple's sixth wedding anniversary. The family are: Mrs. Betty X, Attilah, Qubilah and Ilyasah. Clay attends Muslim meetings.

Photographer unknown (1964) Malcolm X and his family visit Cassius Clay (Mohammad Ali). Available at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/vieilles_annonces/14489358663 (Accessed: 8 March 2023). Licensed under [Creative Commons — Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic — CC BY-NC 2.0](#)

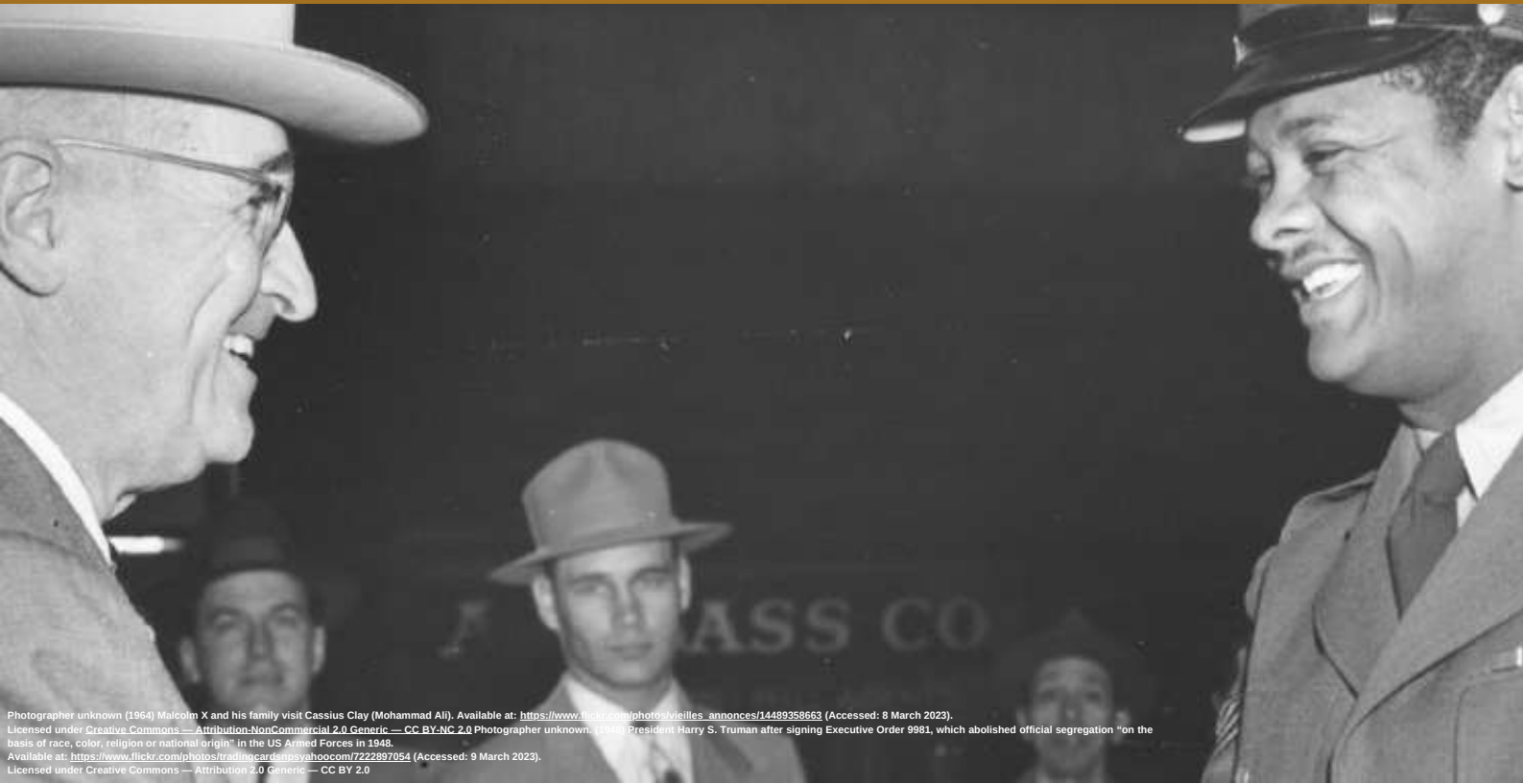
This activity involves the students coming up with captions for Civil Rights photographs. This will allow the students to consider the weight words carry, especially when applied to a significant image.

Provide a variety of photographs from the Civil Rights Movement and ask the students to get into pairs and choose one. Each pair should then come up with a caption for their image. This can be a descriptive or interpretive caption, or can be quotes from songs, speeches or poems – encourage the students to search for these if they are able to do so during class (a good selection of relevant quotes can be found at [Civil Rights Quotes - History Learning Site](#))

Each pair should then present their image and the caption they have chosen to the class, explaining why they chose their caption.

Activity 10: Moments of Change

Consider significant moments of change



Photographer unknown (1964) Malcolm X and his family visit Cassius Clay (Mohammad Ali). Available at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/vielles_annonces/14489358663 (Accessed: 8 March 2023). Licensed under Creative Commons — Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 Generic — CC BY-NC 2.0
Photographer unknown (1948) President Harry S. Truman after signing Executive Order 9981, which abolished official segregation "on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin" in the US Armed Forces in 1948. Available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tradingcardsin@yahoo.com/7222897054> (Accessed: 9 March 2023). Licensed under Creative Commons — Attribution 2.0 Generic — CC BY 2.0

Ask the class to split into small groups of 3-4. For this activity, provide the students with the whole image pack. The students should then organise the images into a chronological timeline. Provide them with A3 paper and pens to make notes if they need to.

Together, the groups should then decide on what they feel are the 4 most significant moments of change in the Civil Rights Movement. This can be change for the better or for the worse.

- Was this a turning point?
- Did this moment represent change for all, or only for some? The USA at large? Black people? Men? Women?
- What was the extent of this change – was there a lasting impact? Was it a gradual change, or did it occur rapidly?

Each group should then feed back their findings to the whole group, explaining why they chose the moments they did. It may then become apparent that there are moments most groups chose, or perhaps a moment one group chose and the others didn't. The reasons for this should be discussed.

Activity 11: Continuity: Progress and Decline

Consider the continuity of the Civil Rights Movement



Photographer unknown (1865) 107th US Coloured Infantry at Fort Corcoran in Virginia, November 1865.
Available at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/23890476106/ (Accessed: 4 April 2023).
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This activity works well with the “Moments of Change” activity, as the students can use the same timeline they have already made. If you have not already done this, start this task by asking the class to split into small groups of 3-4. For this activity, provide the students with the whole image pack. The students should then organise the images into a chronological timeline. Provide them with A3 paper and pens to make notes if they need to.

Each group should then consider whether significant periods of continuity can be seen on the timeline, and which could be considered periods of either “progress” or “decline” – were things getting continuously worse, or better?

A good example for this is the image of the all Black regiment in the Civil War and the all Black regiment in WW2. These images are almost 80 years apart, but show distinct continuity – on the face of things, little has changed. Yet the students know that the soldiers in the Civil War were likely to be made up of formerly or still enslaved people, fighting for their own freedom. By 1944, Black people were free from slavery and therefore fighting for other reasons. This can encourage a good discussion about whether the continuity in these images represents any “progress” or “decline.”

They can make a note of which images fit into which category. Questions they can reflect on while they do this:

- Can they categorise and name these periods of continuity?
- Did they notice commonalities across the events marked “progress” and the ones marked “decline”?
- Are there any events represented by these images which could be considered as representing both “progress” and “decline”? Images of segregation may be useful here, to prompt discussion on opinions about “separate but equal policies” – touted by some as progress towards “equality” as enshrined in the Constitution, but in reality, further empowerment of Jim Crow.

Y Notes Graphic Organiser

The graphic organizer is a large 'Y' shape. The top left arm is a trapezoid labeled 'Source A:'. The top right arm is a trapezoid labeled 'Source B:'. The bottom stem is a rectangle labeled 'Similarities:'. The entire shape is outlined in black.

5Ws Graphic Organiser

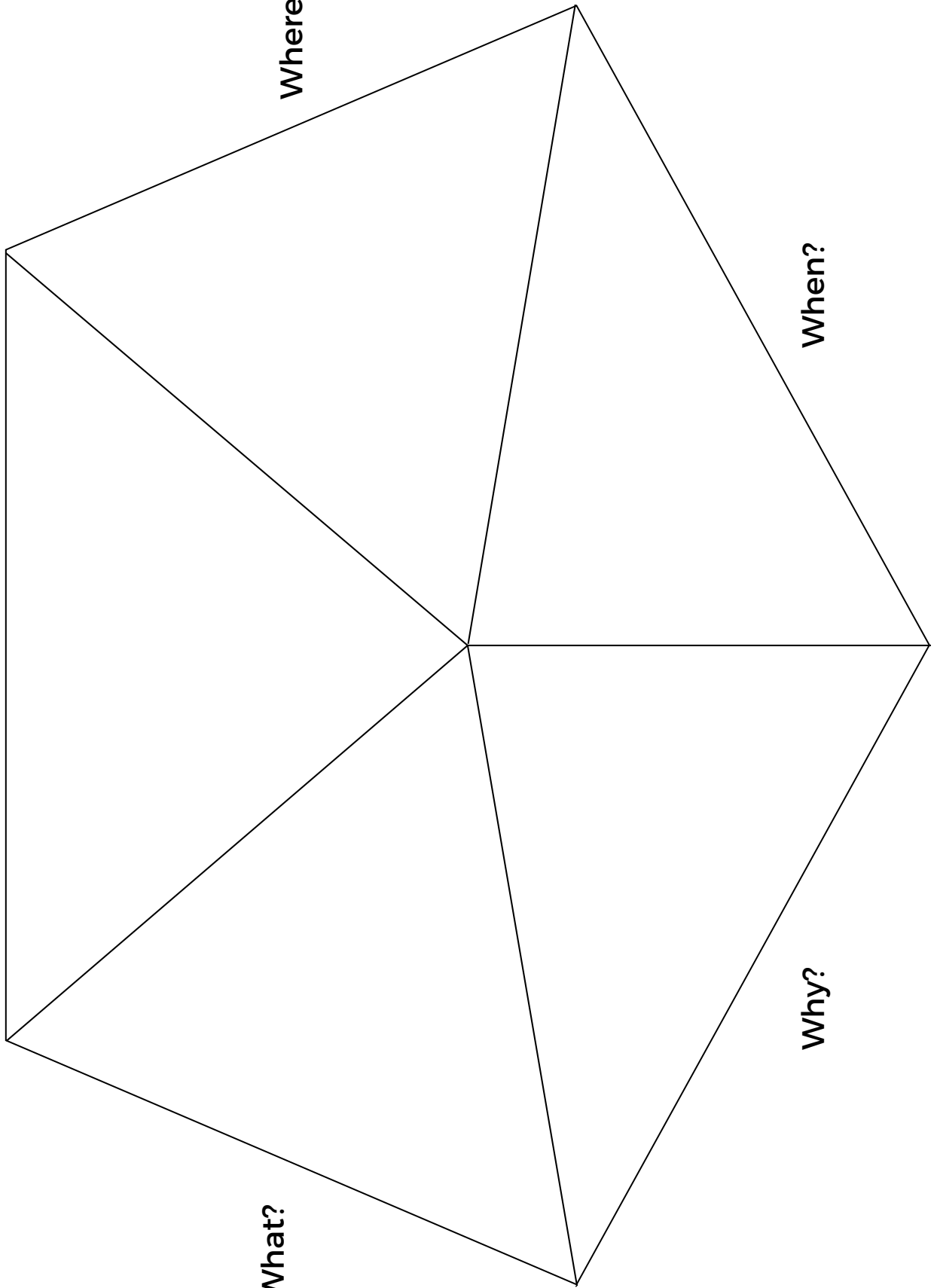
Who?

What?

Where?

Why?

When?



We hope you enjoyed using this teacher resource pack which was created by Newcastle University Library Education Outreach Team as part of a project kindly funded and supported by Newcastle University's Black History Month Steering Group.

You can find more classroom resources on our website:

[Schools & Education Outreach](#) | [University Library](#) | [Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](#)

If you'd like to get in touch with us, you can email us at: **lib.outreach@ncl.ac.uk**

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