Dr. King, Gandhi, and the Responsibility to Know

Grades 6 through 12 • Five Day Interdisciplinary Research Simulation Task

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Date _____

Essential Question

How might fuller knowledge of Gandhi’s racial views and colonial service have affected Dr. King’s choice of Gandhi as a model, and how should public institutions address that record?

Objective

Analyze primary sources, distinguish evidence from inference, and defend an argument about moral leadership and public commemoration.

Demonstration of Learning

Complete 15 multiple choice questions and a RACE response using at least three sources, including a documented limitation on what can be known about King’s awareness.

NJSLS Social Studies

Grades 6 through 8: 6.3.8.CivicsPD.3, informed civic judgment; 6.3.8.CivicsPR.3, conflicting principles. Grades 9 through 12: 6.2.12.HistoryUP.3.a, racism and imperialism; 6.2.12.HistoryCC.3.c, colonial policies and Indigenous responses.

NJSLS English Language Arts

Grade 6 entry points: RI.CR.6.1, textual evidence; RI.PP.6.5, perspective and bias; RI.AA.6.7, evaluating claims; W.AW.6.1, argument. Increase source complexity and independence for higher grades.

CCSS / CCLS Literacy Connections

RH.6–8.1, RH.9–10.1, RH.11–12.1: evidence. RH.6–8.6, RH.9–10.6, RH.11–12.6: perspective. WHST.6–8.1, WHST.9–10.1, WHST.11–12.1: argument. These are literacy connections, not additional NJ standards.

Interdisciplinary and Amistad Connections

History, civics, ELA, geography, mathematics, and museum interpretation examine racial hierarchy, African resistance, the United States freedom struggle, and responsibility for accurate public history.

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Day 1 • Gandhi’s Racial Hierarchy

Do Now

Can a person oppose discrimination against one community while reinforcing it against another?

Source A • Gandhi’s Bombay Speech, 1896

Original instructional paraphrase of a primary source. In a speech defending Indians in South Africa, Gandhi objected to Europeans treating Indians as if they occupied the same social position as Indigenous Africans. He described African lives through degrading stereotypes about work, marriage, and civilization. He used an anti-African racial slur. His argument claimed higher standing for Indians instead of consistently rejecting racial ranking itself. [1]

This was racist language. Explaining the colonial setting helps identify how the argument worked; it does not excuse the stereotypes. A campaign against one form of discrimination can reproduce another form. Gandhi’s later reputation does not erase what this speech says.

Vocabulary

Racial hierarchy: ranking people by supposed racial superiority. Imperialism: extending a state’s power over other peoples. Primary source: evidence produced by a participant or witness.

Source Analysis

Identify Gandhi’s audience and purpose. Explain how his appeal challenged discrimination while also reinforcing racial hierarchy.

Quick Write

Why might this speech matter to a movement committed to equal human dignity? Cite Source A.

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