



RISE UP! AN AMERICAN CURRICULUM INSPIRED BY HAMILTON: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL



THEME
Identity

LENGTH
Total 220min+
Session 1 - 60min
Session 2 - 90min+
Session 3 - 70min

GRADE LEVEL
9-12

SUBJECT
Social Studies
History
Civics

WE ARE THE ONES WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

By Jah Yee Woo

Lessons in this module support learners to better understand the complexities of themselves and others to have a fuller engagement with their voice in the world.

The following lesson uses memory and self-reflection to help students understand collective and participatory action for democracy. Sessions incorporate close reading and discussion of multiple texts, including songs from Hamilton, and an interview with Grace Lee Boggs. Using this material, the teacher facilitates each student's ability to analyze and make connections from the text to their own experiences using multiple learning styles, including kinesthetic movement.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

CREATIVE INQUIRIES

- **What is the reflective work that I can undertake to understand and know myself?**
- **What is the framework for understanding and participating in collective action?**

FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE

Students will know...

- Basic understanding of systems of oppression (institutional, interpersonal, and internalized)
- Basic understanding of human rights
- Basic understanding of genes and human biology
- Basic understanding of stress, historical and intergenerational trauma and its effects on the body
- Knowledge of Alexander Hamilton's biography

PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE

Students will be able to...

- Outline and communicate what systems of oppression are
- Outline and communicate what human rights are
- Design a model/representation of gene codes
- Design a visual for communicating the impact of intergenerational stress

CONCEPTUAL INQUIRY

Students will understand...

- The design and impact of collective action
- The purpose of reflective practice to know the full self
- Intergenerational stress/trauma outcomes: Adverse Childhood experiences

PERFORMANCES OF UNDERSTANDING

- Journal writings
- Participation in discussion
- Completion of Viewing Discussions for **"We are the Leaders We've Been Waiting For"**

HAMILTON HOOKS

How to build anticipation for learning

- Hold a listening party as students enter the room. **Play: "Hamilton", Act I - "My Shot"**
- Introduce the lesson for the day by sharing the Creative Inquiries.



PLAY: "HAMILTON", ACT I - "MY SHOT"

"I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory...Scratch that, this is not a moment, it's the movement where all the hungriest brothers with something to prove went?...for the first time, I'm thinkin' past tomorrow."

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Session 1: Resilience
Session 2: Memory
Session 3: Collective Leadership

SESSION 1 OF 3 RESILIENCE

SESSION OVERVIEW

LENGTH
50 min

GRADE LEVEL
9-12

SUBJECT
Social Studies
History
Civics

CREATIVE INQUIRIES

What is the reflective work that I can undertake to understand and know myself?
What is the framework for understanding and participating in collective action?

EQUIPMENT

- Audio player/ computer speaker to play digital recording of **"My Shot" from Hamilton: An American Musical**
- Computer/ projector to display **lyrics** to class

MATERIALS

- **Song version of "My Shot" from "Hamilton: Act 1"**
- **Info on Adverse Childhood Experiences**

OUTLINE

Activity #1: "My Shot" excerpt Think-Pair-Share (10 min)

Activity #2: Hamilton's life experience and resiliency (20 min)

Activity #3: Group discussion and personal life examples (20 min)

SESSION 1 OF 3 RESILIENCE

1. "MY SHOT" EXCERPT THINK-PAIR-SHARE 10 MIN

PLAY
"My Shot" from Hamilton: An American Musical



Play **"My Shot" from Hamilton: An American Musical** and **project the lines from the song** that will be used to frame the lesson (see Materials list above), focusing particularly on the first part of the excerpted line, "I imagine death so much it feels more like a memory..."

DISPLAY
Lyrics to "My Shot" from Hamilton: An American Musical

Have students Think-Pair-Share their interpretation of this part of the song.

2. HAMILTON'S LIFE EXPERIENCE, ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES & RESILIENCY 20 MIN

Briefly outline the circumstances of Alexander Hamilton's childhood, particularly the following traumatic events:

- The absence of his father and the death of his mother
- The suicide of his cousin Peter Lytton who had become his guardian after the death of his mother
- The separation from his brother James, Jr. after the suicide of Lytton.

These traumatic events would now be considered Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE).

DOWNLOAD
Adverse Childhood
Experiences (ACE)
and Resilience



Introduce the concepts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) and Resilience using Hamilton's life. Identify ways in which Hamilton developed resilience. The American Psychological Association includes the following as ways in which people develop resilience:

Making connections
Look for opportunities for self-discovery
Nurture a positive view of yourself
Accept that change is a part of living
Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems

Keep things in perspective
Move toward your goals
Maintain a hopeful outlook
Take decisive actions
Take care of yourself

Guide students in understanding that the study of stress and trauma has led to a developing science of epigenetics, which examines the effects of historical and intergenerational trauma which are carried in one's genes and DNA. At the same time, resilience is the process on how well one adapts to such trauma.

3. GROUP DISCUSSION AND PERSONAL LIFE EXAMPLES 20 MIN

This activity can be conducted as a discussion or in circle.

DISCUSSION OPTION

- Invite students to contribute examples of their own.
- Chart examples as you go along.
- Display ACE and resilience examples side by side. Invite student discussion on the important relationships between the two.

CIRCLE OPTION

If completed as a circle, have students form a circle, and have several rounds where students are invited to share:

- a hardship or worry they want to let go (alternatively, students can also write this hardship or worry on a piece of paper and place it in a box provided by the teacher for the express purpose of letting go)
- a word or symbol of resilience
- a gesture that represents resilience to them

4. CRITICAL REFLECTION 10 MIN

Set-up

Instruct students to use their (accordion) journals to record ongoing investigations/learnings and reflect on their meaning making.

Prompt

Critical Reflection Question



***What are my personal memories of change?
Based on my memories and shared understanding of how change happens,
what is my personal theory of change?***

Task

Write in journal for allotted time. (5-15 min)

SESSION 2 OF 3

MEMORY

SESSION OVERVIEW

LENGTH

90 min+

GRADE LEVEL

9-12

SUBJECT

Social Studies

History

Civics

SUMMARY

This lesson helps students consider their power and ability to make change informed by an understanding of their own contexts and set of circumstances.

EQUIPMENT

- Audio player/ computer speakers to play digital recording of **Hamilton: An American Musical Soundtrack**
- Computer/ projector to display lyrics to class

MATERIALS

- “My Shot” lyrics from “Hamilton: Act 1”
- **Hamilton soundtrack** (or other music) for Mingle, Mingle activity
- Student journals

OUTLINE

Activity #1: “My Shot” keyword analysis and relationship to change

Activity #2: Journal writing and dyads on action that led to change

Activity #3: Mingle, Mingle - dyad discussion prompts

Activity #4: Group tableau

Activity #5: Large group discussion- the nature of change

Activity #6: Journal writing - personal theory of action/ change

SESSION 2 OF 3

MEMORY

1. “MY SHOT” KEYWORD ANALYSIS AND RELATIONSHIP TO CHANGE 10 MIN

It helps to **preface the following activities in this lesson by having students consider their own power and ability to make change** that is informed by an understanding of their own contexts and set of circumstances.

PLAY
“My Shot” from Hamilton: An American Musical



In pairs, have students return to the song “My Shot”, analyzing the excerpted lines, focusing in on the keywords of “memory”, “moment”, “movement”, “prove” and “tomorrow”. What do these 5 words suggest about change, given the context of yesterday’s session?

2. JOURNAL WRITING AND DYADS ON ACTION THAT LED TO CHANGE 10 MIN

Have students take out their journals, and ask them to think about a time when they took action which led to a change. Give students 5 minutes to think and write in their journals.

In pairs, have students share their journal entries, then have students share out commonalities or insights heard in order to build a shared understanding of the meanings of personal movement and change.

Chart words that are shared by students in order to build a vocabulary bank.

3. MINGLE, MINGLE - DYAD DISCUSSION PROMPTS 10 MIN

Suggest to students that while we often think of change as these monumental shifts, change also happens as a result of individual choices and actions, and those are the changes we want to consider in this lesson.

PLAY
Soundtrack of Hamilton



Explain the protocol for “Mingle, Mingle” where music plays (suggested: “Hamilton” songs) and students move around the room. When the music stops, students pair up with whomever they are facing, and a prompt is given. **Each person has 1-2 minutes to respond to the prompt** before the music strikes up again, and then the rounds begin again.



What is a memory of a time when my words, either spoken or written, made a difference to someone else or a situation?

What is a memory of my first action of self care?

What is a memory of when I spoke up for someone else/was an ally and not a bystander?

What is a memory of when I did something about an issue I cared deeply about?

What is a memory of when I felt like I belonged to a community?

What is a memory of when I felt like I contributed to my community?

4. GROUP TABLEAU 20 MIN

Have students form groups of 3-4 based on the memory that resonated most with them. In these small groups, students create a tableau, using their bodies as sculpture, on the nature of change. Each group should share their tableau to the rest of the class, while the class observes.

5. LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION- THE NATURE OF CHANGE 25 MIN

Based on the Mingle, Mingle and Tableau activities, engage students in a discussion on the nature of change. What does it mean to be a person who makes change, who “for the first time, [am] thinkin’ past tomorrow...”?

Words students may share are: resilience, revolution, movement, democracy, intergenerational trauma, systems of oppression, collective action, uncertainty, inspiration, impact, immediate and long term effects, momentum, critical mass, risk, and influence

6. JOURNAL WRITING - PERSONAL THEORY OF ACTION/ CHANGE 15 MIN

In their journals, have students develop a brief personal theory of action or change.

Sentence Starters:

Even when the world around us seems...

I believe that change is...

Change is when...

SESSION 3 OF 3

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

SESSION OVERVIEW

LENGTH
50 min

GRADE LEVEL
9-12

SUBJECT
Social Studies
History
Civics

SUMMARY

This lesson helps students consider their power and ability to make change informed by an understanding of their own contexts and set of circumstances

EQUIPMENT

- Audio player/ computer speakers to play digital recording of Hamilton: An American Musical Soundtrack
- Computer/ projector to display lyrics to class

MATERIALS

- “My Shot” lyrics from “Hamilton: Act 1”
- Quotes from “The Next American Revolution”
- Viewing Questions for “We Are the Leaders We’ve Been Waiting For” video
- Student journals

OUTLINE

Activity #1: Student reflection and discussion: moment vs. movement

Activity #2: Give one, Get One

Activity #3: Grace Lee Boggs video and discussion

Activity #4: Student journal reflection

SESSION 3 OF 3

COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

1. STUDENT REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION: MOMENT VS. MOVEMENT 10 MIN

To bridge Lessons #1 and #2, **ask students to explain the difference between a moment and a movement**, making connections to yesterday’s line from “My Shot” - “it’s not a moment, it’s a movement...”

2. GIVE ONE, GET ONE 30 MIN

Pass out one quote from The Next American Revolution to each student. There are a total of 10 quotes, so if there is a class of 30 students, each quote will have 3 students who have it.

Explain Give One, Get One. Students pair up and read the quote to one another. They take turns paraphrasing the quote, then switch quotes, then switch partners. Students should read, paraphrase, and switch at least 5 times.

Ask students to share out the quotes they had a personal response to - ones they liked, ones they had questions about, ones they disagreed with. Ask students what themes they saw in the quotes.

3. GRACE LEE BOGGS VIDEO AND DISCUSSION 20 MIN

Transition by saying ... “all the quotes come from an American writer, activist, and philosopher named Grace Lee Boggs who had a particular theory of action and change. We will be watching a brief interview of Ms. Boggs by Bill Moyers from 2011.”

PLAY
Video of “We Are the Leaders We’ve Been Waiting For”



Pass out the Viewing Questions for the video and **screen “We are the Leaders We’ve Been Waiting For”** (Length: 8 min) from the Grace Lee Boggs Website

In small groups, have students discuss their responses to the Viewing Questions- Who is Grace Lee Boggs and what does she encourage us to consider for going from a moment to a movement?

4. STUDENT JOURNAL REFLECTION 10 MIN

In their journals, have students reflect on today’s lesson and revisit their personal theory of change from Lesson #1. What can they add to that personal theory after Lesson #2?



QUOTES FROM THE NEXT AMERICAN REVOLUTION

"...we urgently need to stop thinking of ourselves as victims and to recognize that we must each become a part of the solution because we are each a part of the problem" (29).

"Because the problems seem so insurmountable and because just struggling for our own survival consumes so much of our time and energy, we view ourselves as victims rather than embrace the power within us to change our reality" (31).

"This movement has no central leadership and is not bound together by an ism...they are linked by their indomitable faith in our ability to create the world anew" (40).

"The social activists among us struggle to create actions that go beyond protest and negativity and build community because community is the most important thing that has been destroyed by the dominant culture" (41).

"We urgently need to bring to our communities the limitless capacity to love, serve, and create for and with each other" (47).

"We must have the courage to walk the talk, but we must also engage in the continuing dialogues that enable us to break free of old categories and create new ideas that are necessary to address our realities, because revolutions are made not to prove the correctness of ideas but to begin anew" (51).

"Our responsibility...is to face the past honestly and do the things necessary to heal ourselves and our planet" (164).

"Our challenge now is to recognize that the future of our country and our planet is as much about us as about [our president], that in our communities and our cities we have become responsible for grappling with the issues he is wrestling with..." (165)

"...we [must] consciously try to learn the lessons of the many grassroots efforts to create alternative economic institutions that will not only bring greater stability to our communities but also provide us with the control over the ways in which we make our living that is necessary for a real democracy" (172).

"These visits have reaffirmed my belief that the movement today, in this period and this country, is being created not by the cadres of a vanguard party with a common ideology, but by individuals and groups responding creatively with passion and imagination to the real problems and challenges that they face where they live and work" (178).

VIEWING QUESTIONS

WE ARE THE LEADERS WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

Context: Grace Lee Boggs (1915-2015) was an activist, writer, philosopher, and speaker.

1. In the space below, write down any questions you have or comments you hear that you found interesting.

2. Why do you think that when Boggs says that a movement is about to emerge, she talks about feelings of hope rather than despair?

3. What do you think Boggs means when she says that we need “a different way of relating to time, history, and the earth”?

4. Boggs worked with the *Beloved Communities Initiative*, which builds upon the philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. What are the goals of her movement?

5. What does Boggs suggest young people do to make change? What steps does she say we should take? Do you agree or disagree?

6. Boggs ends the interview by saying “Leaders imply followers...we need to embrace that we are the leaders we are looking for...” What do you think she means? What is your response to this idea?

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE LINKS

Boggs, Grace Lee. *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 2011.

[James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership](#).

Tactics for Change was developed by Savannah Shange, a teacher at June Jordan High School in San Francisco, and further developed by the following teachers: Chela Delgado and Perry Bellow-Handelman of Coliseum College Prep Academy, and Nicholas Palmquist of MetWest High School.

[Document A](#) - definitions only

[Document B](#) - chart/visual version

Evaluating the Tactics of the Civil Rights Movement is a supporting activity for a History Writing Assessment developed by history teachers in the Oakland Unified School District. This activity includes Asa Hilliard's [Seven Tactics of the Civil Rights Movement](#).

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision of the [Beloved Community](#) is referenced multiple times in Grace Lee Boggs' work.

American Academy of Pediatrics. [Adverse Childhood Experiences and the Lifelong Consequences of Trauma](#). 2014.

Pember, Mary Annette. [Intergenerational Trauma: Understanding Natives' Inherited Pain](#).

Pember, Mary Annette. ["Trauma May be Woven into the DNA."](#) Indian Country Media Network. May 2015.

Hardy, Kenneth. ["Healing the Hidden Wounds of Racial Trauma."](#) Reclaiming Children and Youth. 2013.