

Where the Neighborhood Ends

Lesson 4: DBQ Essay

Focus Questions

Was Chicago a racially integrated city in the 1950s? How did housing segregation manifest itself in Chicago? How did Chicago's urban-renewal programs change the city? Were the intentions of Chicago's planning officials good or bad?

Core Understandings

Students will understand the history of housing segregation in Chicago. They will understand that both race and class had a significant impact on the formulation of Chicago's urban-renewal programs. They will understand how housing discrimination affected the lives of both poor and affluent African Americans.

Knowledge

Students will know the methods and reasoning used to segregate African Americans in circumscribed Chicago neighborhoods. They will know the variety of perspectives regarding public housing within the African American community of the 1950s. They will know that Chicago's urban-renewal programs reflected both positive intentions and negative stereotypes in their formulation.

Skills

Students will use their analytical skills to interpret primary and secondary historical sources. They will use their writing skills to persuasively argue a position.

Common Core ELA Standards

CCSS.R.1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.R.2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.R.7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCSS.R.8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

CCSS.W.1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

ISBE Social Science Standards

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the US, and other nations.

Goal 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the US.

In This Lesson

Students will write an essay on housing discrimination and urban renewal in Chicago using the document-based question (DBQ) approach. The story elements of conflicts/problems and resolution are addressed. This lesson was researched and written by Jackson Potter.



Activity

Begin with a class discussion about what students have learned so far in the unit about housing segregation and urban renewal. Remind students that the issue of forced segregation was not always a simple question of the dominant white community conspiring against the black community; there were many other factors involved, such as personal profit, rapid population growth due to the Great Migration, and class conflicts within the black community itself.

Next, distribute copies of the DBQ Essay handout (at the end of the lesson) as well as printouts of the resources listed under Materials & Resources.

Direct students to write a two-page essay in response to following question: Were Chicago's urban-renewal programs ultimately helpful or harmful?

Essays should be structured in the following outline:

- I. Introduce the historical background and lay out a thesis.
- II. Provide a basic synopsis of the thesis supported by at least six primary or secondary sources, including artifacts.
- III. Lay out the merits of an opposing view, supported by evidence and documents.
- IV. Explain why the chosen argument prevails, comparing and contrasting documents, artifacts, and other evidence.

Lesson 4 Home Connection

Have students interview a parent or grandparent about his or her reflections on Chicago's urban-renewal and/or public-housing programs of the 1950s and 1960s.

Materials & Resources

- **Printouts of the *Where the Neighborhood Ends* narrative:**
http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/story/Where_the_Neighborhood_Ends_by_Melody_Herr.pdf
- **Printouts of the *Where the Neighborhood Ends* artifact image set:**
http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/artifacts/artifacts_neighborhood.pdf
- **Printouts of the *Where the Neighborhood Ends* background information:**
http://www.chicagohistory.org/greatchicagostories/pdf/background/Neighborhood_Background_Information2.pdf
- ***Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago* entries:**
 - “Daley’s Chicago” <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1722.html>
 - “Martin Luther King, Jr.” <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1438.html>
 - “Urban Renewal” <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1295.html>
 - “African Americans” <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/27.html>
 - “Chicago Housing Authority” <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/253.html>
 - “South Side” <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1177.html>
 - “Robert Taylor Homes” <http://encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/2478.html>
- **Robert G. Spinney, *City of Big Shoulders: A History of Chicago***
(DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 204-08.

Instructional Notes

The *Great Chicago Stories* website offers worksheets for guided analysis of artifacts, documents, and photographs that could be used to support the DBQ approach.

<http://www.GreatChicagoStories.org/classroom/artifact.php>

Extension Activities

Have students create an illustrated timeline, drawing out 10 important incidents in the post-war history of housing segregation in Chicago. Students should include a small written summary explaining each incident's importance and impact.

Have students read two excerpts from *A Raisin in the Sun*: the one in which Walter throws Mr. Lindner out the house for suggesting that the family not move into the white community and the one in which Walter decides to sell the home. Ask students to explain how one person could have two completely different instincts with regard to the issue of forced segregation.

Handout: DBQ Essay

Were Chicago's urban-renewal programs of the 1960s ultimately helpful or harmful?

Today you will write a two-page essay in response to the question above. In order to answer this question, you will be required to use a document-based question (DBQ) approach citing at least six pieces of evidence. Draw upon all resources provided, including the *Where the Neighborhood Ends* story and artifact images.

For example, if you decide that urban-renewal programs were harmful to the city, here is something you might write:

It is clear that public housing was well-intentioned on the surface, but it continued a fundamentally flawed practice of confining African Americans to segregated neighborhoods. (Source: "Urban Renewal" in *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago*.)

Or, you might argue the opposite:

No matter how flawed the plans were for Chicago's public housing projects, they still offered poor African Americans vastly better housing conditions, at least in the short run. (Sources: *Slum Interior, 1950*, artifact image set. *Interior view of Loomis Courts, 1954*, artifact image set.)

Please structure your essay according to the following format:

- I. Introduce the background and lay out a thesis.
- II. Lay out the merits of your thesis, supported by evidence and documents.
- III. Lay out the merits of an opposing view, supported by evidence and documents.
- IV. Explain why your chosen argument prevails, comparing and contrasting documents and other evidence.