

Gone Too Soon: The Impact of Gun Violence on Historical Figures

PURPOSE

To develop research skills and explore the impact on society when a person dies early from gun violence.

GRADE LEVELS

Upper Elementary
Middle School
High School

CONTENT AREAS

English/Language Arts
Theatre/Drama
Social Studies

TIME

2-3 class periods (adapt for different grade levels)

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Students will explore the impact of history on society.
- Students will research and write about an historical figure.
- Students will use critical thinking skills in writing.

STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

Fine Arts State Goals 26B, 27B
English Language Arts State Goals 1C, 3B, 3C, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 5C
Social Sciences State Goals 14D, 16A, 16B, 16D, 18B, 18C

LEARNING STYLES

Verbal/Linguistic
Interpersonal

MATERIALS

Chart paper and Markers
Gone Too Soon Biography Outline
Gone Too Soon Assassination Presentation
Monologue Rubric

VOCABULARY

Monologue
Assassination

ASSESSMENT

Gone Too Soon Monologue

ACTIVITIES

Anticipatory Set

- Ask students to list a famous person (past or present) they can think of who was a victim of gun violence. Compile a list and note which ones were killed as a result of the gun violence. Tell students that when a person is killed early in life, they can no longer contribute positively to their families, their communities, or society as a whole.

Lesson:

- Define **assassination: a murder, especially of a public figure, by surprise attack**

- Define **monologue**: a long speech, often in a play, made by just one person to an audience or another character on stage
- Assign students to groups of four or five, and have them select a historical figure who was assassinated by gun violence. Possibilities include Martin Luther King, Jr.; John F. Kennedy; Abraham Lincoln; and Mahatma Gandhi. Have each group research the person they chose and list the positive contributions he or she made to society. Older students might also consider celebrities such as Tupac Shakur or John Lennon as research topics. You may wish to use the **Gone Too Soon Assassination Presentation** to capture student interest and help them make a decision. See the **Resource** section below for another idea for introducing the topic.
- Ask students to predict how these individuals might have continued their work if they hadn't been killed by gun violence.
- Have each group present a brief biography of the individual they researched and their ideas of what the individual could have done if he or she had not died from gun violence. You may wish to provide students with the **Gone Too Soon Biography Outline** as a guide.

Debrief/Assessment:

- Debrief by asking students which individuals left the biggest hole when they were taken by gun violence and encourage students to clarify their answers with support and to challenge or debate each other's responses as preparation for the assessment.
- As an assessment, have each member of the class choose one of the historical figures from the presentations they feel could have made a strong impact if they hadn't have been killed. Students will then write a **monologue** that takes place five years after the person died and shares what the person could have done if the person had lived. The students may choose to write the entry from the point of view of the individual or of a third party who had been influenced by the individual's work (e.g., someone who heard Martin Luther King, Jr. give a speech). Choose the appropriate version of the **Monologue Rubric** to use for grading the assignment.
- In an **English** or **Social Studies** classroom, simply turning in the assignments or sharing them on the spot may be enough, but for use in a **Theatre class**, encourage students to memorize, rehearse, and revise their monologues before performing them for the class as a larger assignment.

Resources:

One of our past winning entries in ICHV's Annual Student Voices Contest is directly related to the idea of this lesson plan: the way gun violence has impacted history by claiming the lives of important figures. This picture appears below and can also be found in the Teacher Resource section for this lesson plan as an image file. It may be helpful to show this picture to students and ask them to try to identify each of the figures in the picture. This could act as a springboard for their research. Ask them to identify the message the artist was trying to create with his project. This may also help inspire students to participate in the **Student Voices Contest**.



Suggestions for Extension Activities:

1. In a drama class, turn each monologue into a sketch or skit about what the future might look like if that historical figure had not been killed.
2. Coordinate with an art class to create images or illustrations to accompany each monologue and bind them together into a book to promote Anti-Gun Violence.
3. Turn the monologues into a multimedia project using PowerPoint to incorporate the text with relevant images and sound.
4. Extend this into a service project by having students design a memorial for people killed by gun violence in their neighborhood or city.