

THE HUMAN ZOO: RACISM AT THE WORLD'S FAIR

ABSTRACT: While the World's Fair of 1904 was indeed a grand undertaking and huge success that displayed a great technological advance of mankind, there was also a dark underbelly of racism to the World's Fair. It would be beneficial for teachers to read the prologue of [Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition](#) before starting this lesson.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS/ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:

- What is racism?
- Can racism become extinct?
- How does racism benefit those in power?
- Why are so many people blind to racism and its effects on others?

ASSESSMENT: The teacher should utilize classroom debate, the completed handouts and final debate in order to assess understanding.

SETTING THE PURPOSE: Students will examine the controversy of the racism on display at the World's Fair, and surprisingly lack of controversy of around the nature of the exhibits using primary sources and a video documentary on the topic.

DURATION: 2-4 class periods

PROCEDURE:

PART 1

- To start this lesson, review that all we have seen about the fair talks about technology/progress and provide examples.
- Revisit the photo analysis done in Lesson 1 and the connections students thought there were between the first and second set of pictures.
- Now, tell the students that there are two departments/exhibits that you have not yet mentioned at the 1904 World's Fair: The Philippine Exhibit and The Anthropology Department Exhibit. First you will talk about the Anthropology Exhibit.
- Display or Distribute: Departmental Exhibits [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#). Distribute [NARA's Written Document Analysis Worksheet](#) and have students complete this using the Departmental Exhibits Worksheet. Discuss-what is this? Why is there handwriting? Who wrote it? Why?
- Now display/distribute "[World's Fair Department of Anthropology](#)" article. You may choose to have students fill out [NARA's Written Document Analysis Worksheet](#), or simply take notes on what was said. Tell them that you want them to focus on what seems strange about this article (hopefully many will immediately point to the "Lowest Development" part of the article).
- Anthropology Day was organized by the Anthropology Department and Physical Education Department of the Fair to mirror the 1904 Olympics also held there. The purpose of this fair, however, was to prove that whites were also more civilized at sports. The natives were forced to play these games with no instruction, and therefore had no chance. Have students read: "[Great Fun for Savages](#)" and examine Anthropology Days [1](#) and [2](#).
- Now, distribute "[Filipino Exhibit at the Fair](#)" and "[Progress Under Uncle Sam](#)". Again, you may choose to have students fill out [NARA's Written Document Analysis Worksheet](#), or simply take notes on what was said. Again, have them focus on anything strange or unusual. If you have not yet covered the Spanish-American

War, you may want to inform students that we just gained the Philippines as a U.S. Territory (we ruled over them) and there was not agreement in the United States whether we should be there or not.

- What might have been the purpose of both of these displays? Tell them that the Government ran the Philippine encampment, while the Anthropology department ran the others.

PART 2

- Now show your students the short film "[Human Zoo: Science's Dirty Little Secret](#)". Though you would not need to watch the whole video, it is quite interesting. Click here for [part 2](#) and here for [part 3](#). You may wish to also use the [handout](#) that goes with this film clip.
- Ask students, after seeing this, what do they think the purpose of the Anthropology Human Exhibit and the Philippine Exhibit were? If this showing progress is one of the main goals of a World's Fair, how do these two exhibits fit in with that goal?
- Use [ADL's "Racism" webpage](#) to help define what racism is.
- Have students complete the [Debate Worksheet](#). In each column, students should write concrete evidence from either the documents they studied in this lesson, or previous material they have covered. It is up to the teacher whether they have time to conduct a classroom debate on the issue; however, it is strongly encouraged that once students have completed their reasons on both sides to have classroom discussion on their answers so it can be processed.

ANALYSIS OF LOCAL PRIMARY SOURCES:

Students will analyze the following primary sources from The Missouri History Museum Library and Research Center:

- Departmental Exhibits [1](#), [2](#) and [3](#)
- [World's Fair Department of Anthropology](#)
- Anthropology Days [1](#) and [2](#)
- [Filipino Exhibit at the Fair](#)
- [Progress Under Uncle Sam](#)

TIES TO NATIONAL PRIMARY SOURCE OR SOURCES:

All of the primary sources listed in this lesson are of both local and national significance. The 1904 World's Fair was one of the biggest and reflected national thinking towards national and world politics as well as world cultures at the time.

ATTACHMENTS:

- [Debate Worksheet](#).
- [NARA's Written Document Analysis Worksheet](#)