



INTERNATIONAL
STORYTELLING CENTER

**Curriculum Guide for Freedom Stories Discussion
“Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race”**

Notes about this guide:

First, it is just that—a guide. It is meant to offer suggestions for how you might approach these important yet sensitive topics in your classroom, as well as ideas for how you might augment existing curriculum in your classroom. Please adapt it as necessary to fit your classroom’s needs.

Second, while it is aimed for 10th grade, many of the activities can easily be adapted both for lower and higher grades, and we encourage you to do so.

Third, since the International Storytelling Center is based in Tennessee, we have used the Tennessee state academic standards for Social Studies as our guide, but have also included Common Core standards where appropriate in an attempt to provide some reciprocity between and among state curriculums. Please feel free to use your own state standards in place of Tennessee’s or Common Core’s.

Fourth, our collective understanding of the subject matter covered in this and the other Freedom Stories Curriculum Guides is ever-evolving as we unearth forgotten narratives and seek out more complete truths. As such, there may be instances where certain instructional approaches are no longer useful, or where certain resources are no longer applicable. We encourage you to keep this in mind as you use this guide and adapt activities with new information as it becomes available.

Last, we welcome your feedback about this guide and its role in your classroom. Please reach out to us at FreedomStories@StorytellingCenter.net with comments, questions, and suggestions.

Lesson Title	Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race
Grade Band	10th
Standard(s)	<p><u>Tennessee Social Studies Standards AAH.12:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe and analyze various experiences of African American families in the Antebellum U.S. <p><u>Tennessee Social Studies Standards AAH.22:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the legal ramifications of segregation laws and court decisions (e.g., <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>) on American society. <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1, Key Ideas and Details</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information. <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4, Craft and Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6, Craft and Structure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
Lesson Objective(s)	<p>The students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain key aspects of the Melungeon experience at various times, including during the antebellum, Jim Crow, and Civil Rights Movement periods. • Identify changes in laws that impacted people of Melungeon identity and descent, such as the adoption of Tennessee’s state constitution in 1835 and the passing of Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924. • Analyze how external structural and attitudinal influences on Melungeon life have both contributed to and hindered the formation of a strong sense of intercommunity identity. • Compare and contrast the definitions and understandings of Melungeon culture presented by experts within the culture (such as the panelists of the Freedom Stories session “Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race”) with those who have written from outside of the culture (such as Will Allen Dromgoole).
Essential Understanding/ Essential Question	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does a group of people develop a strong cultural identity internally when facing inaccurate descriptions about themselves from external sources? 2. How do names chosen by an individual or group and those given by external sources influence people’s cultural identity and lives? 3. How does storytelling help individuals and groups of people maintain their identities?
Lesson Activities	<p>Warm-up Activity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Before students enter the classroom, prominently display the question, “Who am I?” 2. Once students are settled, reference the question and explain that the class will begin with an activity that helps us consider that question. 3. Distribute “Identity Chart” handout and explain the process of creating an identity chart, using the example found at “Facing History and Ourselves”. 4. Give students 3-5 minutes to complete their identity charts. 5. In a brief class discussion, ask students to share one or two details from their chart that they feel are key to their identities. 6. Returning to the Sample Identity Chart, ask questions about items that appear on the chart. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What items might come from internal sources (e.g., the person themselves and/or their closely identified community)? b. What items might come from external sources (e.g., what the person has been told about themselves and/or had communicated to them from outside their closely identified community)? 7. Invite students to consider the charts they created and add arrows.

- a. Inward arrows indicate something we believe to be true about ourselves.
 - b. Outward arrows indicate something that has been placed upon our identity by other people.
 - c. Sometimes we feel there is a bit of both in an identifier, so having arrows point both ways is a valid choice.
8. Give students 1-2 minutes to add arrows.
 9. Once students have completed this part of the activity, ask students to consider any insights the arrows provided to them and/or any feelings they elicit, and provide time for brief class discussion before using the activity to transition to the body of the lesson.

Activity 1: Introduce the Melungeon People

1. Share with students that, just as our individual identities are influenced by both internal and external factors, so are the identities of communities and groups of people, such as the Melungeons.
2. Play the slide show from the beginning of the International Storytelling Center's presentation "[Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race](#)," available in both video format (0:00-8:30) and standalone PowerPoint format.
3. Discuss key moments of history that influenced race in America prior to and around the same time as Melungeon families were reportedly founded.
 - a. The first enslaved Africans arrived at Point Comfort, Virginia, in 1619; information about this event can be found at [The 1619 Landing — Virginia's First Africans Report & FAQs](#).
 - b. Children of enslaved women were consigned to "serve according to the condition of the mother" in Virginia in 1662; information about this law can be found [here](#).
 - c. Varying laws on manumission were enacted, including the 1806 Virginia law that required that enslaved people who were freed leave the state within a year's time; information about this law can be found at [An ACT to amend the several laws concerning slaves" \(1806\) - Encyclopedia Virginia](#).
 - d. "One drop" rules were codified in varying ways from state to state and from time to time; an overview about these laws can be found at [The 'One Drop Rule', a brief story](#).
4. Using the previously-shown slide show, identify with student help a list of people and places associated with Melungeon history.
 - a. Key People
 - i. Vardy Collins
 - ii. Shep Gibson
 - iii. Will Allen Dromgoole
 1. Show portion of the Freedom Stories: "Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race" session in which Will Allen Dromgoole is discussed (38:46-40:43).
 2. Discuss with class how Will Allen Dromgoole wrote about the Melungeon community and how this is an example of someone speaking about a community from a place outside of that community.

3. Ask the class to consider what impacts this sort of writing likely had on internal and external images about who the Melungeon people were.

b. Key Places

- i. Eastern Kentucky
- ii. East Tennessee (particularly Hawkins and Hancock Counties, with Newman's Ridge not far from Sneedville being an important location)
- iii. Southwest Virginia (particularly Lee, Scott, and Wise Counties)
- iv. Ohio (particularly Highland County)

Activity 2: Criminalizing Race

1. Lead students through an examination of examples of moments when laws and their applications changed life for people called Melungeon.

- a. The Tennessee state constitution was changed in 1835.
 - i. The text of the 1835 constitution can be found [here](#).
 - ii. This new constitution effectively changed the law to prohibit all people except white men from voting.
 - iii. In 1845, some free men of a variety of racial backgrounds were subsequently prosecuted for voting.
 - iv. Show portion of the Freedom Stories: "Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race" session in which discussion of the new Tennessee constitution and the prosecution of various men due to the new constitution took place (47:08-47:44).
- b. The [Fugitive Slave Act of 1850](#) increased the risk for people who were involved with the Underground Railroad.
 - i. People identified as Melungeon were heavily involved with the Underground Railroad in Appalachia.
 - ii. Ask students in what ways this Act may have increased risk particularly for Melungeon people.
- c. Virginia's [Racial Integrity Act of 1924](#) influenced definitions of race within and without Virginia.
 - i. This Act categorized all people as either "colored" or "white."
 - ii. These categorizations determined where people could live, what schools they could attend, whom they could legally marry, and more.
 - iii. Show portion of the Freedom Stories: "Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race" session in which the Racial Integrity Act and Walter Plecker are discussed (Racial Integrity Act: 47:45-48:35; Plecker: 1:08:14-1:11:01).
 - iv. If appropriate for your class setting, read both the Racial Integrity Act and [one of Walter Plecker's letters](#).

- v. Discuss how Walter Plecker distributed a list of names of people whom he believed should be categorized in certain ways.
 1. In class discussion, ask students to consider ways which such a list likely influenced the lives of people whose names were on that list.

Activity 3: The Arts as Sustainability

1. Discuss the way the arts have sustained people identifying as Melungeon.
 - a. Show the portion of the Freedom Stories: "[Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race](#)" session in which storyteller Lyn Ford shares stories (found at 10:55-28:48).
 - i. Ask students how they think these family and historical stories relate to the creation of individual and community identity.
 - b. Show the portion of the Freedom Stories: "Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race" session in which the play "Beyond the Sunset" and Wayne Winkler's subsequent interest in, and contributions to, Melungeon research are discussed (34:42-38:07).

Concluding Activities

Activity 1: Arts discussion

1. Have students get into groups of 3-4.
2. Invite students to return again to ideas about how the portrayal of Melungeon people in Will Allen Dromgoole's writing negatively impacted members of the Melungeon community.
3. Then ask students to discuss how stories told by storyteller Lyn Ford and/or the play "Beyond the Sunset" contributed to a positive identity among the Melungeon community.
4. Instruct students to compare and contrast the influence of the different artistic expressions.
5. Ask students to consider whether there are any pieces of art (writing, visual art, storytelling, film, music, etc.) that have influenced their own perceptions of themselves and/or their communities. Are there similarities between what they found in comparing/contrasting the artistic expressions that may have impacted Melungeon communities and in their own experiences with the impacts of various pieces of art?

Activity 2: Research project

1. Instruct students to pick a topic of interest from this lesson to further research.
2. Give students a period of time within or outside of class to research the topic.
3. Instruct students to prepare a one-page paper or three-minute presentation (whichever best fits the class's time and overall goals) on the topic which they researched.

	<p>4. Provide time for further classroom discussion based on the content of the papers/presentations.</p>
<p>Materials</p>	<p><u>Lesson-Specific Materials</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout: “Identity Chart,” found at Identity Chart <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource provides the key handout for the warm-up activity in this lesson. • Explanation Aid: “Sample Identity Chart,” found at Sample Identity Chart <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This Sample Identity Chart provides context and instructional support for the warm-up activity. • International Storytelling Center’s Event, “Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race,” Melungeon: The Criminalization of Race - International Storytelling Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The recording of this session, along with associated materials found at the website, are key resources for use at a variety of points throughout this lesson. • Information on the landing of first African Americans at Point Comfort, Virginia, found at The 1619 Landing — Virginia's First Africans Report & FAQs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource supplies context regarding how and when African Americans first came to the British colonies that would later become the United States of America and provides opportunity for discussion during the overview of key moments in history that influenced race in the U.S. • “Negro women’s children to serve according to the condition of the mother” (1662) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource supplies a summary, transcript, and digital image of a key law that would change the course of the African-American experience in regions that would eventually become part of the United States of America and provides opportunity for discussion and referencing of a primary source during the overview of key moments in history that influenced race in the U.S. • “An ACT to amend the several laws concerning slaves” (1806) - Encyclopedia Virginia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource supplies a summary, transcript, and digital image of a key law that required enslaved people who were manumitted to move out of the state of Virginia and provides opportunity for discussion and referencing of a primary source during the overview of key moments in history that influenced race in the U.S. • The 'One Drop Rule', a brief story at the African American Registry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource supplies a brief look at the idea of the “One Drop Rule” and its impacts and provides opportunity for discussion during the overview of key moments in history that influenced race in the U.S. • Tennessee Constitution, 1835, Tennessee Constitution, 1835. TNGenNet, Tennessee Law, The Early Days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource supplies a transcript of the Tennessee Constitution of 1835 and provides opportunity for discussion

	<p>and referencing of a primary source during the lesson section focusing on how laws impacted the Melungeon people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fugitive Slave Act 1850 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource supplies the text of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and provides opportunity for discussion and referencing of a primary source during the lesson section focusing on how laws impacted the Melungeon people. • Virginia Racial Integrity Act of 1924 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource supplies the text of the Racial Integrity Act of 1924 and provides opportunity for discussion and referencing of a primary source during the lesson section focusing on how laws impacted the Melungeon people. • Walter Plecker Letter to Local Officials, Walter Plecker, MD, to Local Registrars, Physicians, Health Officers, Nurses, School Superintendents, and Clerks of the Court, January 1943 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource supplies the text of a letter Walter Plecker wrote to officials regarding enforcement of the Virginia Racial Integrity Act of 1924 and provides opportunity for discussion and referencing of a primary source during the lesson section focusing on how laws impacted the Melungeon people. <p><u>Books for Further Study</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beyond the Sunset: The Melungeon Outdoor Drama, 1969-1976</i> by Wayne Winkler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This source provides information about the play “Beyond the Sunset.” • <i>Walking Toward the Sunset: The Melungeons of Appalachia</i> by Wayne Winkler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This book gives insight into the history of the Melungeon people. • <i>The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People</i> by Dr. Brent Kennedy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This resource is a foundational work about the Melungeon people.
Accommodations	<p>In addition to discussion (as noted above in the lesson plan), there can be the following accommodations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. use of photographs and other images; 2. written sources read aloud or otherwise provided in an audio format; 3. alternate culminating events (written or oral) provided depending on student needs.