

THE LOCKE SOCIETY

LIFE, LIBERTY & EDUCATION



Unit

**Civil Rights
Movement (1960s)**

Topic

Civil Rights Act of 1964

Lesson Plan

Aim

To evaluate the effectiveness of Everett Dirksen's address to the Senate by analyzing the challenges in passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Rationale

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a landmark achievement in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. With the incredible perseverance of the people fighting for civil rights, it was inevitable that they would be victorious. However, the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was not easy, and ideological barriers caused the Civil Rights Bill to dwell in the Senate for months. It wasn't until Republican Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen made it possible to garner the support needed to pass the bill. Students will read Everett Dirksen's speech and note his challenge and approach, his words of inspiration, his persuasive arguments, and how he enlightened many to recognize the urgency of voting on the Civil Rights Bill.

Student Learning Objectives

Students will be able to interpret the meaning of a primary source document by reading and analyzing Everett Dirksen's original speech to the Senate.

Students will be able to form an opinion and adjust their thinking by discussing different points of view with peers.

Civics Connection

- How have people in power affected political, social, and economic developments regarding the freedom and protection of their people?
- How do the values of a nation unite its citizens?

*See the *Civics Connection Through Questioning* guide in *Civics* for more ideas.

Vocabulary

Civil Rights Act of 1964	filibuster
Everett Dirksen	cloture



Materials and Resources

1. Text: *Background: Everett Dirksen and the Civil Rights Act of 1964*

Sources: https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Speeches_DirksenCivilRights.htm
<https://www.everettdirksen.name/dirksenonrecord.htm#section5>

2. Text: *Everett Dirksen The Civil Rights Bill (In the Senate) June 10, 1964* (Speech)

Source: <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/resources/pdf/DirksenCivilRights.pdf>

3. Handout: Guiding Questions

4. Handout: Group Consensus

Procedure

Do Now:

State whether you agree or disagree with the following quote and explain why.

“Stronger than all the armies is an idea whose time has come.” – Victor Hugo (historian and French philosopher)

Lesson:

The teacher will review the background information on the struggle for passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Everett Dirksen’s role in its success. (See background notes.) The teacher should define key vocabulary words (filibuster, cloture) and the process of passing a bill, if necessary.

Independent/Collaborative Work:

Students will read and annotate Everett Dirksen’s speech to the Senate from June 10, 1964. Students will work independently to answer the guiding questions after reading. Next, students will meet with their group members and discuss their answers to the first three questions. The students must come to a consensus on a group choice for the most inspirational line, the most persuasive argument, and the most enlightening point. Group members will try to persuade others that their choice should be selected, or they may change their opinion after hearing another group member’s response and reasoning.

Share:

Each group will share their group’s consensus and discuss whether it was difficult to agree or not.

Close:

Why was the Civil Rights Act of 1964 difficult to pass? Do you think it would have passed without Everett Dirksen? Explain why or why not.

Modifications

- Students may read Everett Dirksen’s speech and/or the background notes the day prior to the lesson for homework.
- The teacher may provide a modified version of the speech.
- The teacher may provide pre-selected quotes for students to work with in answering questions one through three.



Extension

Students will assume the responsibility of writing a news article to announce the passage of the Civil Right Acts of 1964. In the article, they should explain Everett Dirksen's role by accurately representing his approach to the Senate and how it brought some of the opponents to change their mind.

Notes

**Use discretion for activities according to what is appropriate for your class.*



Background: Everett Dirksen and the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Everett Dirksen was a Republican U.S. Congressman from 1933 to 1948, a U.S. Senator from 1951 to 1969, and served time as the Senate Minority Leader from 1959 to 1969. Dirksen's contribution to the Civil Rights Movement was crucial in its success as the responsibility for passing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 fell largely on his shoulders.

The growing frustration with the denial of civil rights and the discrimination of African Americans was present more than ever with protests. Just one year before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed, Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream Speech" during the March on Washington, and a few months later the country suffered the loss of President John F. Kennedy.

It was President John F. Kennedy who, in the spring of 1963, submitted a draft of the Civil Rights Bill to Congress. The House of Representatives passed the bill in February of 1964, less than three months after President Kennedy's assassination. Right after it passed in the House, the bill was sent to the Senate, where the battle began. The Senate had a five-month long debate on passing the Civil Rights Bill of 1964, with a record 534-hour, 1 minute, and 51 second filibuster. The debate grew out of the lack of support of southern Democrats, and Republicans who supported civil rights but opposed federal government intervention.

Dirksen, the Republican Senate Minority Leader, was tasked with the job of working with the White House, Judicial Department, and Democratic leaders to redraft the bill with hope that it garnered more Republican support and passed in the Senate. Dirksen made the arrangement that the responsibility of enforcement would fall to state and local governments, and the federal government would only step in if absolutely necessary. However, this change would not satisfy the southern Democrats, and the debate continued.

On June 10, 1964, Everett Dirksen made his stand on the Senate floor delivering the momentous speech that would forever change the course of history. Dirksen's speech paved the way for cloture, the process of ending debate, which led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He accomplished what no other has before him: ending a filibuster on a civil rights bill. The result of his speech led 44 Democrats and 27 Republicans to vote for cloture, to end the debate and vote on the bill, while 23 Democrats (20 from the south) and 6 Republicans still opposed.

On June 19, 1964, the Senate passed the Civil Rights Bill (73-27), the House accepted the Senate version, and on July 2, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed it into law. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was an incredible accomplishment, foreseeable by those who strongly believed in America's founding principles and the people of the Civil Rights Movement who refused to give up. The outlawing of discrimination was at the heart of the fight for civil rights; a movement that continuously gained strength and inspired a nation to find its true virtue of equality.

Majority Leader Mike Mansfield said in regard to Everett Dirksen, "This is his finest hour. The Senate, the whole country is in debt to the Senator from Illinois." When asked by a reporter about taking the lead on the Civil Rights Bill, Dirksen replied, "I come of immigrant German stock. My mother stood on Ellis Island as a child of 17, with a tag around her neck directing that she be sent to Pekin, Illinois. Our family had opportunities in Illinois, and the essence of what we're trying to do in the civil rights bill is to see that others have opportunities in this country."

Sources: https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Speeches_DirksenCivilRights.htm
<https://www.everettdirksen.name/dirksenonrecord.htm#section5>



Everett Dirksen's Speech: The Civil Rights Act of 1964
June 10, 1964

1. Which line do you find the most inspiring? Why is this inspirational?
2. Which argument do you find the most persuading? Why is this argument the most persuasive?
3. Which point did you find most enlightening and why? (Something you or what you believe others may not have realized.)
4. Describe Dirksen's approach to his task of working on gaining more support for the bill and delivering a speech.
5. Why was Dirksen's speech effective?



