



The Tulsa Race Massacre

Five-Day Lesson Plan

Standards Addressed:

- **Grade 3:** Content Standards 1.5; 2.1; 3.1; 3.2
- **Grade 6:** Content Standard 5.2
- **Grade 9 Oklahoma History:** Content Standard 5.2
- **High School Psychology:** Content Standard 6
- **High School Sociology:** Content Standards 2.1, 2.5, 2.6, 3.2, 4.2, 5.3, 6.2, 8.2, 8.4, 8.5
- **Grade 11 US History:** Content Standards 4.1
- **World Human Geography:** Content Skills 3.3, 3.4, 7.3

Practices Addressed:

- Analyze and Address Authentic Civic Issues
- Read Critically and Interpret Informational Sources

Vocabulary:

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Cause and Effect | • Equality | • Race Relations |
| • City/Urban | • Industry | • Resources |
| • Community | • Landmark | • Respect |
| • Courage | • Massacre | • Rights |
| • Cultural Perspective | • Media | • Riot |
| • Culture | • Neighborhood | • Secondary Sources |
| • Different | • Point of View | • Segregation |
| • Discrimination | • Population | • Timeline |
| • Economy | • Primary Sources | • Tulsa Race Riot |
| • Entrepreneur | • Property | |

Objective:

This multi-tiered lesson will help students answer the following questions/themes regarding the events in the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1921:

- What happened?
- Why/How did this happen?
- What happened after?
- What do we do in order to prevent similar happenings and heal now?

Supplies:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| • <i>Up from the Ashes</i> , Hannibal B. Johnson | • Smartboard and internet access |
| • <i>Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921</i> , Scott Ellsworth (for older students) | • Handout or paper, pencil |

Day One Lesson: Explore What Happened

Lesson Starter:

What is the difference between a riot and a massacre? Discuss and write answers on the board.

Define the terms and connect them to modern national or local events that students are familiar with. After a quick discussion, tell them there was an incident in Oklahoma state history: the Tulsa Race Massacre in 1921, in a Tulsa neighborhood.

Discuss/define the vocabulary terms. (It is essential that they understand the terms riot, race relations, segregation, cause and effect, and discrimination, at the very least, prior to the lesson.)

Introduction to the Tulsa Race Massacre:

Read Hannibal B. Johnson's *Up from the Ashes* aloud to the class, or excerpts of *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* by Scott Ellsworth (for older students).

Watch:

Watch the interview with [Dr. Olivia Hooker \(survivor\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bab3nZro4qE) [youtube.com/watch?v=bab3nZro4qE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bab3nZro4qE)

Lead a discussion with your students about the Greenwood District and connect it with massacres they may have heard about or studied before. Students should be able to answer the following:

1. Do you think that this event should be called a riot or a massacre?
2. Why?

Day 2 Lesson: Explore What Happened (continued)

Watch and Listen:

- [Senator Lankford speaks about the Tulsa Race Massacre on the Senate floor \(0:00–9:39\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lezj-fjf-hA)
[youtube.com/watch?v=Lezj-fjf-hA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lezj-fjf-hA)
- [Voices of Oklahoma, Otis Clark, Chapter 1 Intro \(0:00–1:04\) and Chapter 3 \(0:00–2:01\)](https://www.voicesofoklahoma.com/interview/clark-otis/)
[voicesofoklahoma.com/interview/clark-otis/](https://www.voicesofoklahoma.com/interview/clark-otis/)

Assignment/Activity:

Ask your students the following: (have them discuss as a class, groups, or write their answers in complete sentences.

1. What were race relations like in the United States in 1921?
2. According to these sources, what event began the Tulsa Race Massacre in May of 1921?
3. What happened to the Greenwood District during the massacre?
4. Why do you think that this particular event spurred such a large, disastrous response?

Day 3: Explore How/Why It Happened

Explore the thriving Black Wall Street before the massacre; include the racial tensions of the time using newspaper articles, photos, and video clips. Ask your students, “Why did this happen, and why did others let it happen?”

Lesson Starter:

[Watch Black Wall Street Massacre](#) from 1:05 to 3:45
youtube.com/watch?v=I_da-tHaXKU&t=2s

Lesson:

Have students look up or discuss how the Greenwood District was founded and flourished, using the [“Greenwood District” entry](#) from *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*.
okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=GR024

Then, have the students look at photographs of the Greenwood District before the massacre on the [Tulsa Historical Society website](#).
tulsahtistory.pastperfectonline.com

As a class, or individually, read the [“African Americans”](#) entry from *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=AF003

Explore (as part of the assignment or as an extension to the Oklahoma encyclopedia reading) other areas around the nation:

[“The Elaine Massacre,”](#) from the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*
encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1102

[“Race Riot of 1908,”](#) from the Sangamon County Historical Society, Springfield, Illinois
sangamoncountyhistory.org/race-riot-of-1908/

[“Atlanta Race Riot of 1906,”](#) from the Digital Library of Georgia
dlg.usg.edu/record/nge_ngen_atlanta-race-riot-of-1906OHS Education

[“The Brownsville Incident,”](#) from the New York State Military Museum
museum.dmna.ny.gov

Assignment/Activity:

Discuss the following questions:

1. Knowing now what Greenwood was like before the massacre and what race relations were like in Oklahoma at that time, what conclusions can you draw from the events?
2. Why do you think the Tulsa Race Massacre happened, and how did people let it happen?
3. Was this an isolated incident within the United States at this time?
4. Why or why not?

Day 4: Explore the Aftermath

Explore the decimated Greenwood/North Tulsa area and show how the city has tried to heal over the past century using photographs of the 1921 rubble and newspaper articles from Oklahoma and around the country. Ask your students, “How did others around our state and around the country react to this event?”

Lesson Starter:

[Watch Black Wall Street Massacre](#) from 1:05 to 3:45

youtube.com/watch?v=I_da-tHaXKU&t=2s

[View photographss from the Oklahoma Historical Society](#)

okhistory.org/trm

Assignment/Activity:

Today, you will be using primary sources. Primary sources are writings, recordings, or artifacts from a particular time a historian is studying. These are first-hand accounts of events that occurred during that period.

Explore the following newspaper articles from June 1921.

Choose two from Oklahoma and one from the Library of Congress. This can be done as a class, group, or as an individual student activity.

- [State Sentinel, Stigler, OK](#)
gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc99867/
- [The Wapanucka Press, Wapanucka, OK](#)
gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc136663/
- [The Daily Ardmoreite, Ardmore, OK](#)
gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc158845/
- [The Black Dispatch, Oklahoma City](#)
gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc152336/
- [Articles from around the country from Chronicling America: Library of Congress](#)
guides.loc.gov/chronicling-america-tulsa-race-riots

Answer the following questions:

(Students) Before reading the articles, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Who wrote this article?
2. What is the author's perspective?
3. Why was it written?
4. When was it written?
5. Do you think it is a reliable source? Why or why not?

Assignment/Activity:

Read the articles objectively and answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What is different between the accounts in each paper?
2. Why do you think there are differences?
3. What are the similarities between the newspaper articles?
4. Do you think these are reliable sources? Why or why not?

Day 5: Explore What Happens Now

Discuss how the Greenwood/North Tulsa area has healed, and question students about how simple acts of kindness can help heal the wounds of this and other injustices.

Ask your students to think about the following questions throughout the lesson:

1. Has the Greenwood District healed?
2. How?

Activity:

Using Google Earth, explore the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

If you do not have Google Earth access, visit the [John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park](https://www.jhfcenter.org/reconciliation-park) website and explore photographs at [jhfccenter.org/reconciliation-park](https://www.jhfcenter.org/reconciliation-park).

Ask your students these questions.

1. What three phrases/words are on the statue in the park?
2. What word stands out to you and why?

Assignment/Review and Assessment:

Discuss (as a class, in groups, or write answers in complete sentences) the following questions:

1. Do you think that people in the community spoke up or discussed the massacre in the past?
Why or why not?
2. Why is it important that we discuss it and learn from it now?
3. What do you think we have learned from this incident?
4. Do you feel that the people of the Greenwood District have healed? Why or why not?
5. With regard to the Tulsa Race Massacre, what does “hope” mean for today?
6. How can you be a part of that hope now and in the future?

Additional Resources and Links

[S-I-T: Surprising, Interesting, Troubling strategy; Facing History & Ourselves](https://facinghistory.org/resource-library/s-i-t-surprising-interesting-troubling)

facinghistory.org/resource-library/s-i-t-surprising-interesting-troubling

[Teacher's Guide: Analyzing Oral Histories, Library of Congress](https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Oral_Histories.pdf)

[loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Oral_Histories.pdf](https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Oral_Histories.pdf)

[Document Analysis Worksheets for Primary Sources, National Archives](https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets)

[archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets](https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets)

[Document Analysis Form, Facing History & Ourselves](https://facinghistory.org/resource-library/document-analysis-form)

facinghistory.org/resource-library/document-analysis-form