

Revolution '67

Premiere Date: July 10, 2007

Lesson Plan

Root Causes of Urban Rebellion

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OVERVIEW

This lesson plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the film **Revolution '67**, which focuses on the six-day urban rebellion in Newark, New Jersey, in the summer of 1967. **Note: Please preview the film before showing it in its entirety in a classroom setting.**

POV documentaries can be recorded off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from the initial broadcast. In addition, POV offers a [lending library of DVDs](#) that you can borrow anytime during the school year — FOR FREE! Please visit our [Film Library](#) to find other films suitable for classroom use or to make this film a part of your school's permanent collection.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Use viewing skills, note-taking strategies and class discussion to determine the causes of Newark's 1967 urban rebellion.
- Describe modern conditions in Newark and form an opinion about whether or not riots could happen in the city today.
- Identify lessons learned from Newark and write about how those lessons could be applied toward positive changes in your community or state.

GRADE LEVEL: 7-12

SUBJECT AREAS: U.S. History, Current Events, Economics, Civics, Sociology

MATERIALS

- Political map of the United States.
- Method (varies by school) of showing the class a video clip from the POV website for **Revolution '67**, or have a copy of the film and a VHS/DVD player and monitor.

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED: One or two 50-minute class periods

SUGGESTED VIDEO CLIPS

[Clip 1: Revolution in Newark](#) (length: 2:11 minutes)

In this clip, historians and experts recounts how Newark, New Jersey erupted in a riot in July of 1967.

[Clip 2: Bad Living Conditions Lead to Rebellion](#) (length: 4:13 minutes)

In the second clip, historians and experts explains some of the conditions in Newark that led up to the urban rebellion in 1967.

[Clip 3: Revolution '67: Film Update](#) (length: 8:34 minutes)

In this video update from filmmaker Marylou Tibaldo-Bongiorno, historians and experts from **Revolution '67** talk about the state of Newark today. Despite government-sponsored building projects, which include an arts center and a baseball stadium, Newark continues to struggle 40 years after the riots.

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BACKGROUND

In 1967, Newark was in the midst of several major shifts. Factory jobs, which had provided the city's economic base in the first half of the 20th century, were leaving the city in large numbers, contributing to high rates of poverty and unemployment. According to the Hughes Commission that studied the 1967 uprising, more than a third of black men between ages 16 and 19 were unemployed at the time. In addition, as the city's white population moved to the suburbs or to other states, the black population surged, shifting the city's racial makeup to one in which blacks were the majority. Newark's housing had also declined considerably: The city itself described 40,000 of Newark's 136,000 housing units as substandard or dilapidated in a 1966 application for federal aid.

At the same time, Newark's political structure was slow to change. While the white population dropped by almost half between 1950 and 1967 — from 363,000 to about 158,000 — and the population of African Americans tripled — from 70,000 to an estimated 220,000 — the city continued to be run almost exclusively by whites. Black representation was almost nonexistent in the government, the police department, and the private sector. Government corruption was also rampant. The city's government was believed to be closely tied to organized crime, and municipal jobs and contracts were doled out to contractors and construction firms that largely excluded blacks.

These conditions reached a boiling point in July 1967, when a black cab driver's arrest triggered violent protests and the looting of commercial buildings. To restore order, state police and National Guard troops joined local officers on the streets of Newark, escalating the violence. When peace was finally re-established, 26 people had been killed and more than \$10 million in property damage incurred.

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ACTIVITY

1. Build student interest in the lesson's topic by showing the two-minute [introductory video clip](#). Explain that in 1967, racial tensions erupted in violence in 125 American cities. The most destructive of these so-called "riots" took place in Detroit, Michigan, and Newark, New Jersey. Show students where Newark is on a map. Tell the class that they are going to focus in on the urban rebellion in Newark and will identify what factors led up to the violence there. Students will then be asked to judge whether or not Newark or other modern-day cities are at risk for such events happening again.
2. Show the class the second [video clip](#) (length: 4:05 minutes), which explains some of the conditions in Newark that led up to the events in 1967. Focus students' viewing by having them take notes on what circumstances shown in the video are thought to have caused bad living conditions for Newark's African-American population.
3. After watching the video clip, ask students to share their notes about the circumstances that led to Newark's urban rebellion in 1967. On the board, organize student comments into a fishbone map (see [a diagram here](#)) that clearly illustrates the factors that triggered the riots. Discuss how these causal factors interrelate.
4. Drawing from the Background section above, explain what happened during the uprising. Then, show the class a [video clip](#) that describes what is happening in Newark today (length: approximately 8:30). As students watch, have them take notes on factors that describe the conditions of Newark, and on what the people in the video think needs to change there.
5. After the clip, discuss student observations. Does the class think riots could happen in Newark today? Why or why not? What lessons do students think can be taken from Newark's 1967 rebellion?
6. Conclude the activity by having students write a description of their ideas for how these lessons learned from Newark could be applied toward positive changes in your community or state.

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ASSESSMENT

Students can be assessed on their:

- Notes taken while watching the video clips.
- Contributions in class discussions.
- Written descriptions of how the lessons of Newark's rebellion could be applied locally.

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EXTENSIONS & ADAPTATIONS

1. Watch **Revolution '67** in its entirety. (Please preview before using in the classroom.) Afterwards, conduct one or more of the following activities.
 - Have the class produce and present a talk show in which students share the perspectives of white and black Newark residents, members of the National Guard or Newark or state police, reporters, government leaders, store owners, activists and others involved in the conflict.
 - Ask students to create a collection of news stories covering various angles of the event and organize these stories into a newspaper, website, podcast or other media representation.
 - Discuss the role of the press during the riots. How did press coverage during the riots reflect beliefs common during that time period?
 - Compare and contrast events in Newark with civil rights activities during the 1960s.
 - Research the urban rebellions from this time period in Chicago, Detroit, Watts (Los Angeles), Jersey City, Harlem and other areas. How are they similar to or different from the events in Newark? How do these riots of the 1960s compare with the 1992 uprising in Los Angeles that was triggered by the Rodney King case?

2. Have student groups choose a U.S. city to research and determine if it is at "high," "medium" or "low" risk for riots like those that occurred in Newark. Students should present evidence from their research findings to support their rating. Discuss what makes a healthy city.
3. Create a timeline of Newark politics from the city's colonial settlement by the Puritans to modern times featuring key events and people. Recommended resources for this activity include POV's [Newark: A Brief History](#), [Black Mayors: Newark in Context](#), and [Thirteen's A Walk Through Newark](#).
4. Explore what role activists played in Newark's 1967 riot. Who were some of these activists? What groups did they represent? What were their goals and their methods for achieving them? How do their activities compare with those of activists today?
5. Introduce the terms "de jure segregation" and "de facto segregation." How would students apply these terms to what happened in Newark?

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RESOURCES

[A Walk Through Newark](#)

This site reviews the history of Newark, including the riots, and also provides information about and photographs of various Newark landmarks and areas.

[Riots - 1967](#)

This Rutgers University study reviews the events of the 1967 urban rebellions in Newark and Detroit. The site includes bios of the victims, witness accounts, maps and bibliographies.

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STANDARDS

These standards are drawn from [Content Knowledge, a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum](#) by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

Civics, Standard 13: Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity.

Civics, Standard 14: Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life.

U.S. History, Standard 26: Understands the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II United States.

U.S. History, Standard 29: Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties.

U.S. History, Standard 31: Understands economic, social and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

Language Arts, Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes.

Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in broadcast journalism, secondary education and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive's Director of Education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource website (now [PBS Teachers](#)), and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.

Background Sources

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["Corruption by Consent,"](#) *Time Magazine*. Dec. 26, 1969.

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