

Inquiry and Primary Source-Based Lesson Plan

Lesson 1: Disability and 19th Century Moral Reformers

Lesson Details		
Grade Level & Unit:	Grades 8-12 - Founding of Schools and Asylums	
Subject Area Focus:	History and Civics	
Inquiry skill(s) Focus:	Analyze and compare primary and secondary sources to examine diverse groups. Distinguish the roles of government at different levels.	
Estimated Time to Complete:	50 minutes in one session or split in two sessions.	

Dorothea Lynde Dix. (n.d.). [Photo]. Library of Congress.

Lesson Summary:

Students explore the context and causes of the rapid growth of schools and asylums for people with disabilities in the first half of the 19th century, beginning with analysis of a set of drawings of the first school for the Deaf in Connecticut. The lesson puts education reforms in the context of the Antebellum era of reform and evolving views on federalism. Students analyze the 1843 report by Dorothea Dix to the Massachusetts Legislature, based on her field research on the awful conditions in poorhouses and prisons. Students consider the scale of growth of schools for the Deaf, blind, and developmentally disabled. [Lesson slides](#).

A. Desired Results/Objectives:

Compelling Questions/Historical Question(s):

- Who is responsible to care for individuals who need care?
- How widespread were education and asylum reforms of the early 19th century?

Supporting Questions:

- How did education reform relate to other aspects of life in the new republic?
- What strategies did reformers Dix, Mann, and Howe support?
- Why did these leaders take up these reforms? What were the influences on them?
- Who was affected by reforms in education and treatment of people with disabilities? How were they affected?

Standards - Skills summarized above. Standards cited in detail in unit overview.

- Content
 - Using primary sources, research social, political, and religious change in U.S. reform movements in the early to mid-19th century, concentrating on the following and considering connections between reforms: Abolitionism, women's rights and suffrage, temperance, asylum reform, education, including for people with disabilities.

Universal Design for Learning:

How will you meet the needs of students with disabilities & remove barriers they might encounter?

[Also see Unit Plan grid.]

- **Engagement:** Students begin the lesson by thinking about a reform they would like to see today. Students conduct close analysis of a set of images of a school, including many images of students. Slides guide students through the steps of the Observe - Reflect - Question primary source analysis tool. Clues lead them to figure out what is happening in the images. Social change is presented around a related group of compelling personalities. These stories feature leaders with disabilities taking action for people with disabilities.
- **Representation:** Students can either access the story of the American School for the Deaf through a single large primary source or through a narrative set of slides. Students learn about the large scale of reforms through a series of stories about the development of schools and asylums. A video on The History of Black Deaf Schools uses multiple tools for access: American Sign Language, closed captioning, and the voice of a narrator.
- **Expression and Action:** Students will choose one aspect of the narrative and generate questions for further investigation. Students will pursue their questions in the next lesson. Students work in pairs to help them make contributions to the class discussion.

- **Cultural Considerations:** Some students may have emotional difficulty reading or hearing about the terrible conditions reported on by Dorothea Dix in her Memorial to the Massachusetts Legislature. Consider alternative ways that these students might learn the information. Some students may want to speak about their own experiences as students with disabilities. No one should be put on the spot or asked to speak for large groups of people.

Lesson Vocabulary		
Disciplinary “Brick” Words	Transferrable “Mortar” Words	Other Disciplinary Words
● Reform ● Asylum ● Second Great Awakening	● Predict ● Institution ● Have in common	● Moral / Social Reform ● American Sign Language (ASL) ● Abolitionism ● Temperance ● Developmentally disabled ● Advocate ● Alms - Almshouse - Almoner - Poorhouse ● Inmate ● Desolate ● Outcast ● Private / Public ● Individual

B. Assessment:

- Pre-Assessment:
 - Students compose a quick write to the following prompt: A reform is something that aims to make the community or country a better place. What is one reform that you would like to happen in our time. Why?
- Formative Assessment(s):
 - Students conduct an Observe - Reflect - Question analysis of a complex print on the first school for the Deaf. Students ask questions about the people and the institution in the pictures.
- Summative Assessment:
 - Students complete an exit ticket. First they identify similarities and differences between the education and asylum reforms and reformers. Then they make predictions about what might happen to the schools and institutions and to their students.

C. Learning Plan:

Lesson Introduction

- Students compose a quick write to think about what reform they would like to see today.

Learning Activities		
Time	What does the teacher do?	What does the student do?
5 minutes	Quick-Write Students write and turn in a couple of sentences.	Compose a quick-write to the following prompt: A reform is something that aims to make the community or country a better place. What is one reform that you would like to happen in our time. Why?
15 minutes	Present the lesson slides. Remind students of the need to use words with respect for all, including offensive words from primary sources. Conduct Observe - Reflect - Question analysis (in student materials) of the print of the American School for the Deaf. Students can either access the full digital image or go through the slides as a class.	Commit to always use words with respect. Analyze the print of the American School for the Deaf, founded in 1817. - What do you see? - Who are these people? What happens in these rooms? Why? - Why is American Sign Language important? - What are your questions? What would ask a student or teacher at the school if you could?
15 minutes	Show the two slides on the Moral Reformers. Present the four slides on Dorothea Dix and asylum reform. Have students work in pairs to analyze the Dix Memorial to the Massachusetts Legislature, using the questions. Address the questions as a class.	Consider the case of Dorothea Dix and asylum reform. Make a close reading of these excerpts from her report to the Massachusetts Legislature. - What can we learn from her report about the lives of people with disabilities? - What impact did her report have?

Learning Activities

Time	What does the teacher do?	What does the student do?
10 minutes	Show the rest of the slides on the Founding of Schools and Asylums. Discuss the implications of the Pierce veto.	Study the cases of schools for students with developmental disabilities, and for Deaf and blind students. • In the early 19th century, who took responsibility to care for individuals who needed care? • What patterns do you observe?

Summative Assessment:

Time	What does the teacher do?	What does the student do?
5 minutes	Students write an exit ticket. They will consider their predictions and questions in the next lesson. Encourage students to include drawings.	Write an exit ticket of 2-4 sentences. • What do the reforms and reformers have in common? What are the differences? • What predictions might you make about these efforts for education reform? • What will happen to these schools and institutions? • What will life be like for the students and patients? • What questions do you have?

D. Materials, Sources, & Equipment Used in the Lesson

(Unit Overview includes images of primary sources and full citations with URLs.)

Lesson Slides

1. [Link to SLIDES - DHist - Grades 8-12 - Founding Lesson 1 - Disability and Reformers - CES-TPS.](#)

What primary sources are used?

1. (1829). [Camp-meeting](#). H. Bridport. [Print]. Library of Congress.
2. (1843). [Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts](#). Dorothea Dix. Library of Congress.
3. (c1844). [Oliver Caswell. Laura Bridgman](#). Painted by A. Fisher. Library of Congress.

4. (c1845). [Frederick Douglass](#). [Engraving]. Library of Congress.
5. (1854). [Land-Grant Bill for Indigent Insane Persons](#). U.S. Congress. Library of Congress. [Dix bill transcript](#).
6. (1854). [Veto of the Land-Grant Bill For Indigent Insane Persons](#). President Franklin Pierce. Disability History Museum.
7. (1881). [American Asylum for Deaf and Dumb](#). Lithograph by H.P. Arms. Library of Congress.
8. (c1887). [Julia Ward Howe](#). Caroline Amelia Powell, artist. [Print]. Library of Congress.
9. (c.1900). [Horace Mann, Common Schools advocate](#). Elson Co. [Print]. Library of Congress.
10. (1906). [Worcester State Hospital](#). Bloomingdale Hospital, Worcester, Mass. [Photo]. Library of Congress.
11. (1917). [Play-time at the Oklahoma School for the Blind](#). Lewis Hine. [Photograph]. Library of Congress.
12. (1926). [Administration building: State School for Negro Deaf, Dumb and Blind: Raleigh, N.C.](#) [Photograph]. The New York Public Library.
13. (1927). [Roger Demonsthenes O'Kelly from "The Only Deaf-Mute Lawyer in the United States."](#) The Silent Worker, March, 1927. Vol. 39. Page 169. National Association of the Deaf. Internet Archive.
14. (1933). [Jacobs Hall, Kentucky School for the Deaf](#). Photography by the Historic American Buildings Survey. Library of Congress. Opened in 1857.
15. (2020). [The History of Black Deaf Schools](#). [Video]. The Language of Life Project. YouTube. In American Sign Language, with voice and closed captions. (1:27 minutes).
16. (n.d.). [Mentally Retarded children in E.S.F.S. for Crippled Children](#). Bain News Service. Library of Congress.
17. (n.d.). [Laurent Clerc](#). Lithography by American School for the Deaf. Disability History Museum.
18. (n.d.). [Dorothea Lynde Dix](#). [Photograph]. Library of Congress.
19. (n.d.). [Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875](#). Library of Congress.
20. (n.d.). [Samuel Gridley Howe](#). Engraving by H.W. Smith. Library of Congress.

What secondary sources are used by students?

The Education section of the [Disability History Museum](#) has several excellent essays and seven advanced lesson plans with extensive primary sources on this topic.

1. [Monsieur Laurent Clerc](#). (n.d.). John Crowley. Disability History Museum.
2. [Moral Treatment](#). (n.d.). James W. Trent. Disability History Museum.
3. [Samuel Gridley Howe, Romantic Reformer](#). (n.d.). James Trent. Disability History Museum.
4. [Poor Relief and the Almshouse](#). (n.d.). David Wagner. Disability History Museum.

5. [Miss Dorothea Dix](#). (n.d.). Graham Warder. Disability History Museum.
6. [Horace Mann And The Creation Of The Common School](#). (n.d.). Graham Warder. Disability History Museum.
7. [Religion and Reform](#). (n.d.). Radical Equality. Emerging America. Essay on the Second Great Awakening reform movements, part of an online exhibit.

Student Materials

On following page.

Memorial to the Legislature of Massachusetts

Dorothea Dix. (1843). (Excerpts)

[Link to PDF of Dix bill.](#)

[Link to Dix bill transcript.](#)

I come to place before the Legislature of Massachusetts the condition of the miserable, the desolate, the outcast. I come as the advocate of helpless, forgotten, insane, and idiotic men and women... of beings wretched in our prisons, and more wretched in our almshouses...

- “No one can be more impressed than I am with the great injustice done to the insane by confining them in jails.” - prison doctor
- Medford ... One idiotic subject chained, and one in a close stall for 17 years...
- Shelburne ... I... inquired where the insane person might be found... This shanty or shell enclosing a cage might have been eight or ten feet square... It was very cold... "How do you give him his food?"... "Oh," pointing to the floor, "one of the bars is cut shorter there: we push it through there."
- Bolton... "Do take me with you, do, I'm so cold. Do you know my sisters? They live in this town. I want to see them so much. Do let me go." - almshouse inmate
- I have seen many who, part of the year, are chained or caged. The use of cages all but universal...
- In but few instances have I seen the rods and whips, but I have seen blows inflicted, both passionately and repeatedly...