

# The Case of Jesse Washington: Lesson Plan

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## *The Case of Jesse Washington*

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### **Lesson Plan**

**Grade Levels:** 10-12

**Duration of Lesson:** 50 minutes to 90 minutes

#### **Learning Objectives**

- Analyze the racial motivations behind the lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco
- Analyze the aftermath of the lynching on the NAACP's anti-lynching policy

#### **Summary:**

Students will read a background of the crime and evidence taken against Jesse Washington as well as the verdict in his case. Then review the realities of the lynching and analyze how the NAACP rallied its cause around the brutality of the event to create a national anti-lynching campaign.

#### **Materials:**

- Images for student analysis
- Background information on the case
- NAACP's Reaction
- Discussion Questions

#### **Instructional Background Material:**

The brutal and violent lynching of seventeen year old Jesse Washington in 1916 led to the NAACP taking up a public and national anti-lynching campaign.

#### **Preparation:**

The photos of the lynching are very violent so it is up to the teacher's discretion to utilize individual photos based on their class's needs and requirements.

#### **Instructional Steps:**

1. Teacher should give students a copy of the background information on the murder case that led to Jesse Washington's lynching.
2. Once the students are familiar with the case, the teacher should introduce the images for analysis. Students can either do this as a group or individually. (Some images are quite graphic). Students will answer the questions based on the information they learned from the background information.
3. Students will work on the discussion questions as a small group or as a whole class discussion.

### **Post-Assessment:**

Teachers should use the following questions to facilitate a post lesson discussion:

- In what ways does Jesse Washington's murder represent a miscarriage of justice?
- What was the impact of Elizabeth Freeman's report to W.E.B. DuBois? What is the impact of a single person's actions?
- What was the role of race in Jesse Washington's lynching? Why was he targeted?

### **Extension Activities:**

- Just a few weeks prior to the lynching there was a popular viewing of *The Birth of a Nation* which glorified antebellum society and slavery as well as the rise of the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War. The population of Waco loved the film and supported the portrayal of slavery in the film. However, Waco was not the only place the film was popular. The film was also screened in the Wilson White House. Teachers could expand the impact of the film not just on Waco but on the rest of the country and is credited with contributing to the second rise of the KKK in the 1920's. A strong resource for further reading is Meacham, Jon. *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels*. 1st edition. New York: Random House, 2018.