

People

Henry Frye



Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVE: *To understand the impact of retired state Supreme Court Chief Justice Henry Frye on North Carolina*

Social Studies Objectives: 9.1, 11.1, 11.3, 11.4

Social Studies Skills: 1, 3, 4

NCSS Standards: I, II, IV, V, VI, X

ELA Competency Objectives: 1.03, 1.04, 2.01, 4.02

Resources / Materials

- Biographical sketch for Justice Henry Frye
- The Black Presence in North Carolina (slides/tape six minutes, available from the North Carolina Museum of History)

Procedure / Activities

- Show slide presentation to acquaint students with the contributions African Americans have made in North Carolina.
- Read the biographical sketch on Justice Frye and answer the accompanying questions.
- Discuss with students the remarkable accomplishments Frye made considering the time period. This is a good time to talk about segregation and the fight by African Americans to receive first-class status.
- On a map of North Carolina, locate Ellerbe (his hometown), Greensboro (A&T University and Greensboro National Bank), Chapel Hill (law school), and Raleigh (General Assembly and state Supreme Court).

Bibliography

"Henry Frye." North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts.

<http://www.aoc.state.nc.us/www/copyright/sc/bios/frye.html> (1 April 2003)

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Dominion. "2001 Honorees - Henry Frye." <http://www.dom.com/about/education/strong/2001/henryfrye.jsp> (26 March 2003)

Tuttle, Steve. "Chief Justice Henry Frye." *North Carolina Citizens for Business and Industry*. <http://www.nccbi.org/NCMagazine/1999/mag-09-99editorial.htm> (1 April 2003).

Henry Frye



Biographical Sketch

“Everybody can’t be a Martin Luther King. Everybody can’t be a great speaker. Everybody can’t lead a great movement. But everybody can do something,” said Henry E. Frye, former Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court. Justice Frye used this ideal to direct his life.

Born in the small town of Ellerbe in Richmond County, Frye worked long and hard to make his dreams come true. “Develop good habits - they will serve you well throughout life” is another adage that guided his existence. Justice Frye grew up in an era where life was harsh and unjust for most African Americans, but he still managed to realize his dreams.

Justice Frye worked hard in school and went to North Carolina A&T University in Greensboro, where he graduated with highest honors. After college, he entered the United States Air Force and rose to the rank of captain before leaving after four years. Up to that point in his life, the ideals and ideas he worked toward had come true. However, when he returned home to Ellerbe, he found that his hard work and preparation were no match for a system put in place to keep people from advancing. This realization came when Frye tried to register to vote. He had to pass a test in order to sign up to vote.

In the years before the Voting Rights Act of 1965, African Americans who wanted to vote had to answer questions that most other Americans could not. Voting registrars often wanted to know things like the names of all the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Sometimes the African American who wanted to vote had to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar. Roadblocks to voting were part of what is known as the Jim Crow era, a time when laws barred African Americans from access to employment and to public places such as restaurants, hotels, and other facilities. In the South especially, African Americans lived in fear of racially motivated violence because of laws that destined them to be second-class citizens.

Being refused the right to vote after serving his country in the military upset Frye. However, just being upset was not enough; Frye decided to do something about it. He decided to become a lawyer. Justice Frye graduated in 1959 with honors from the Law School at the University of North Carolina. This was a precedent, for he was the first African American to enter the UNC Law School as a first-year student. His graduation from law school began a lifetime of fighting for fairness and justice.

In 1963, he became the first African American assistant U.S. District Attorney. Five years later, he won a seat in the North Carolina General Assembly. No other African American had been elected to the General Assembly since 1899. After serving in the state House of Representatives from 1969 until 1980, he was elected to the state senate. As time went on, he accomplished other firsts. In 1983, Frye was appointed to the North Carolina Supreme Court and in 1999, Governor Jim Hunt tapped him to be the chief justice of the state Supreme Court. This was the first time an African American had sat on the highest judicial bench in North Carolina.

Honored in September 1999, with a historic marker in Greensboro in front of 200 S. Elm Street, Justice Frye is one of North Carolina’s most impressive citizens. The marker lists his accomplishments: first African-American Assistant U.S. District Attorney (1963), first African-American member of the General Assembly since 1899 (1968), and first African American appointed to the N.C. Supreme Court (1983). Also on the marker is the fact that Frye organized and served as president of Greensboro National Bank, the first African-American owned bank in that city.

Throughout his life, Justice Henry Frye has been an inspiration to thousands of people. He understood that he might not be another Martin Luther King or lead a great movement. Nevertheless, he knew he could do something. And he did.

People

Henry Frye



Activities

Activities

- Have students surmise character traits of Justice Frye. Then have them write an acrostic poem combining his traits and achievements.
- After the listing of the character traits is complete, students can give a two-to-four minute speech on the traits they chose and why. Part of the speech should refer to aspects of Justice Frye's life.
- Students can create a timeline of the important events in Justice Frye's life and a companion timeline of events in North Carolina and the United States.
- Have students write five questions they would ask Justice Frye if they were to meet him.
- Students may design campaign posters that could have been used by Justice Frye when he ran for state office.
- A historic marker on Elm Street in Greensboro honors Justice Frye's achievements. Have students design a pamphlet honoring Frye. Work with students to construct a rubric for grading.
- Justice Frye came to prominence in North Carolina politics in the 1960s, a time of uncertainty and change in NC. Have students research the culture of the day and give oral presentations on their findings. (For example, fashions, music, or art of the time and present their findings to the class in the form of an art show, musical concert or fashion show.)
- Have students use map skills to find the distance from each city mentioned and create a mileage chart to and from each of the cities.

Multiple Choice

Identify the letter of the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

- ___ 1. The following is the first sentence of "Henry E. Frye." What type of genre can readers expect? "Everybody can't be a Martin Luther King...But everybody can do something...Justice Frye used this ideal to direct his life."
- A. a memoir C. a biography
B. an article D. a short story
- ___ 2. The word that best summarizes Henry E. Frye's attitude is
- A. vague C. enthusiastic
B. unimportant D. confident
- ___ 3. At the beginning of this selection, Justice Frye
- A. worked long hours to make his dream come true.
B. worked hard in the community to make his dream come true.
C. worked with his students to make his dream come true.
D. worked hard on the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- ___ 4. What does this sentence from the selection tell you about Justice Frye's character? *Being refused the right to vote after serving his country in the military upset Frye.*
- A. He was really hurt by this action.
B. He refused to vote.
C. He fought during his adult life for justice.
D. He returned to the military.
- ___ 5. The time in American history when there were roadblocks to voting links was known as
- A. the Jim Crow era.
B. the Voting Rights era.
C. the Voting Registrars era.
D. the Declaration of Independence.

Henry Frye



Activities ■ Answer Key for Teachers

Activities

For most activities, responses will vary.

■ Have students use map skills to find the distance from each city mentioned and create a mileage chart to and from each of the cities.

MILEAGE CHART

	Chapel Hill	Ellerbe	Greensboro	Raleigh
Chapel Hill	0	90.0	48.0	26.6
Ellerbe	90.0	0	72.4	103.5
Greensboro	48.0	72.4	0	80.3

■ All activity projects can be graded with a rubric that the teacher and students construct or access ready-made rubrics at

http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/rubrics

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