



Lesson Plan: Remembrance: Examining African American Burial Traditions

Cemetery Spotlight:	Zion Cemetery
Subject Area:	World History, Psychology, Sociology
Grades:	6- 12

Theme: Anthropology, Archaeology, Heritage, History

Student Learning Objectives:

- 1) Students will be able to identify and describe the role African American burial traditions play in connecting the present with the past;
- 2) Students will be able to explore relationships between African American burial traditions and community identity;
- 3) Students will be able to analyze ways material culture associated with burial traditions can inform us about the past.

Cemetery Overview:

Zion Cemetery, located in Tampa FL, founded in 1901, is the first and oldest African American cemetery in Tampa. The land was originally purchased in 1901 by Richard Doby, an African American businessman. He used a portion of the property to build a schoolhouse and the remaining 2.5 acres to build what is known today as Zion Cemetery. However, during the early 20th century, segregationist policies erased the cemetery from city records and allowed storefronts to be built upon those buried in Zion Cemetery. When bodies were found during construction records indicate the City of Tampa made no effort to cease building and instead dedicated the new Robles Park Village in 1953. This housing was initially for white residents only. In 1962, a Robles Park resident discovered human remains while burying trash in his back yard. It is not until 2019, when death records repeatedly mentioning Zion Cemetery were discovered, that the city ordered Ground Penetrating Radar tests to discover if people were still laid to rest in this space. GPR and ground truthing confirmed the burial of over 175 individuals in this erased sacred space.

Curricular Connections

SS.6.W.1.6 Describe how history transmits culture and heritage and provides models of human character.

SS.912.P.10.3 Discuss the relationship between culture and conceptions of self and identity.

SS.912.S.5.7 Use various resources to interpret information about cultural life in the United States and other world cultures, both in the past and today.

Learning Activities Sequence

Lesson Opener:

With your laptop and project, begin the SWAY presentation, *Remembrance: Examining African American Burial Traditions*. <https://sway.office.com/4kyxtCUCfkthh8Wa?ref=Link> After introducing students to the learning objectives, advance to Slide 4: How do we remember past people, places, and events? Ask students to quietly take a few moments to record ideas in their notebook to answer the question. Ask for student volunteers to share the many ways people remember past people, places, and events.

Advance to the next slide. Explain to students, in this lesson plan they will focus on ways cemeteries offer opportunities to remember the past. Provide students with an opportunity to answer the project question, *What roles do cemeteries play in the remembrance of past people, places, and events?* After sharing student responses ask students, *What might happen to community connections to the past if a community cemetery is erased?* Provide students with an opportunity to share responses. Explain to students, this lesson examines the erasure of Zion Cemetery, an African American cemetery located in Tampa, Florida. The cemetery was recently rediscovered in 2019 under an apartment complex, Robles Park.

On the next slide, students will watch a 10-minute video detailing the erasure and rediscovery of Zion Cemetery. Remind students of the guided question, *What might happen to community connections to the past if a community cemetery is erased?* Encourage the students to outline the events leading to the erasure and rediscovery of Zion Cemetery discussed in the video. After the video, allow students time to offer ideas of how these events disconnected the present community from the past.

Main Learning Activity:

Advance to Slide 7: How can we learn about the pathways of remembrance if the cemetery is erased? With a shoulder partner, ask students to brainstorm ways we can learn about the past if it is erased. Next, tap the stack to show the photo of an archaeologist exploring a grave shaft at Zion Cemetery. With their shoulder partner, ask students to carefully examine the photo. Offer these guided questions to help students navigate the photo. *What do they see in the photo? What is the woman doing? Why is she exploring a grave shaft? What might she hope to find?* Additionally, teachers can tap the stack and explore the photo using Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) questions.

Advance to Slide 8: Examining the past through material culture. Move to the next slide and explain to students they will be examining material culture found by archaeologists at gravesites

in Zion Cemetery. Allow students time to examine the next stack of three photos featuring material culture (artifacts) found at Zion Cemetery. **Note: Teachers may use additional guided questions by click on the shadow drop box found in the upper left corner of the photos.** These questions include 1) What could these objects have been used for? 2) How might these items connect to remembrance? Ask students to hypothesize ways we might be able to discover answers to our questions.

Next, advance to Slide 11: Looking to the present for answers. Explain to students, one-way researchers like anthropologists and archaeologists can learn about the way items may have been used or held meaning in the past is to examine ways items are used or hold meaning in the present. To learn more about erased African American cemeteries we can look at existing African American cemeteries and the material culture found in those cemeteries.

Next, advance to slide 12 where students will discover a stack of photos taken at Rose Cemetery, a segregated African American cemetery in Tarpon Springs, also in the Tampa Bay area. Provide students time to examine the photos of material culture found at Rose Cemetery with their shoulder partner. **Note: students can learn more about the photos by clicking on the shadow drop box found in the upper left corner of each photo.** Explore with students, *why might these items be at a gravesite? How might these items connect people to the past? What might these items symbolically reflect? How might these items have been used in acts of remembrance?*

Lesson Closure:

Students will now explore possibilities in ways material culture found at Zion Cemetery may have been used in acts of remembrance. It is important to remind students researchers are not able to say for sure how material culture of the past was used as meanings and intent may change over time. For this lesson closure, students will be able to explore acts of remembrance virtually through Augmented Reality. For this portion of the lesson plans students will need to use their cellphone.

Advance to Slide 13: Exploring acts of remembrance through AR. Ask students to share any prior experiences they may have had with Augmented Reality (AR) technology. Teachers may take this time to explain what AR is and what students can expect to see (a virtual 3D representation of space they are able to explore with their phone.)

Advance to slide 14. Distribute the handout of the map seen on the slide. To begin the AR experience please following the instructions below:

- 1) Ask students to scan the QR code with their phone.
- 2) Ask students to go to the web-based platform identified by their scan.
- 3) Tell students to click the button on their phone that says, "Begin Experience."

4) Tell students to click the button on their phone that says, “Enable AR.” Explain to students they need to hold their phone approximately 18-24” above their desk at a 45-degree angle to allow the phone to scan and find a place to “place the cemetery.”

5) When the students see a sign that says “Tap to place” ask them to tap the sign. The Zion Cemetery will now appear on the students’ desk in 3D.

Provide students a few moments to explore the virtually recreated Zion Cemetery. They can move their phones to explore. When the students are ready, have the student click the next dot on the top of their phone screen. This will take students to the Remembrance Ceremony. Provide students with time to explore the Remembrance Ceremony. Guide the students through the scene using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS).

What do you see going on in this scene?

What do you see that makes you say that?

What more can we find?

Have students take note of remembrance artifacts: 1) a plate 2) a conch shell 3) a water glass 4) spirit bottles 5) candles. As they explore the scene explain to students they may touch these objects to learn more about their association with African American cemeteries. Ask the students, *what other evidence of remembrance can you find?* Direct students to listen carefully as song is another type of remembrance act that often does not leave behind material culture evidence. *Can the students think of other acts of remembrance that may not leave behind material culture evidence?*

When students finish exploring, direct their attention back to the Sway presentation. Advance to the final slide. Ask students to discuss the following questions presented. Explain to students when African American cemeteries are erased it erases community connection to the past and community sense of identity. It is important to preserve cemeteries to preserve the connection between the present and the past.

Evaluation

Cemeteries play an important role in understanding the past and local community history. As an evaluation, teachers may offer students the opportunity to write a letter to a local official explaining what they learned about the relationship between cemeteries, the past, and the present. Students may offer advice to their local officials on ways communities can come together to preserve erased cemeteries and create new pathways for remembrance.

Learner Accommodations

Sway presentations allow students to examine documents and primary sources in differentiated ways and at differentiated speeds. Teachers may incorporate multiple best practices to best meet

the needs of their students using Sway. Teachers are encouraged to print the SWAY presentation as an accommodation.

Materials & Resources

Sway Presentation: <https://sway.office.com/4kyxtCUCfkthh8Wa?ref=Link>

Projector

Laptop

Screen

Student access to personal cell phones or tablets

Zion Cemetery Map handout.

References

Guzzo, P. (n.d.). *A complete timeline of Tampa's erased Zion cemetery*. Tampa Bay Times. Retrieved March 17, 2023, from <https://www.tampabay.com/life-culture/history/2020/08/26/a-complete-timeline-of-tampas-erased-zion-cemetery/>