

Wilmington Race Riot of 1898



Lesson Plan

OBJECTIVE: *To become familiar with the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and its impact on North Carolina and the United States.*

Social Studies Objectives: 5.05, 9.02

Social Studies Skills: 1, 2, 3

Language Arts Objectives: 1.03, 1.04, 2.01, 5.01, 6.01, 6.02

Resources / Materials

- Background of the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898
- *Activities* page

Procedures

- Students will read and discuss the summary of the Wilmington Race Riot independently, as a small group or as a whole class.
- Students will complete *Activity* page.
- Discussion and extensions follow as directed by the teacher.

Evaluation

- Student participation in reading and discussion of the riot
- Student performance on *Activities* page.

Bibliography

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Wilmington Race Riot of 1898



Background

In 1898, Wilmington was a thriving port city on the coast of North Carolina. About two-thirds of Wilmington's population was African American. African Americans were business people who owned barbershops, restaurants, tailor shops, and drug stores. African Americans also held positions as firemen and policemen. Overall, the African American and white races existed peacefully but separately.

Good relations continued until the election of 1896, when the white Democrats lost control of state politics. A group of predominately white Populists and African American Republicans won political control of the state. The white Democrats promised to avenge their defeat at the hands of white Populists and African American Republicans in the election of 1898. Daniel Schenck, a Democratic party leader, warned, "It will be the meanest, vilest, dirtiest campaign since 1876" (the election that ended reconstruction in the South).

The Democratic campaign focused on white women's fears of African American males and the threat of African American men being lynched. Prior to the election, a white newspaper in Wilmington published a controversial speech given by a Georgia feminist. In her speech she supported the lynching of African American males for inappropriate relationships with white women. Alex Manly, an African American newspaper editor in Wilmington, was infuriated by the newspaper article. Mr. Manly wrote editorials in his newspaper arguing that white males were just as guilty of having inappropriate relationships with African American women. The exchange of words between the two newspapers increased racial tensions. Alfred Moore Waddell, a former Confederate officer and U.S. Congressman, called for the removal of the Republicans and Populists then in power in

Wilmington. He proposed in a speech that the white citizens, if necessary, should "choke the Cape Fear with carcasses."

African American voters turned out in large numbers for the election of 1898. However, the Democrats who favored white supremacy stuffed the ballot boxes and won the election. Two days after the election, violence erupted into the "Wilmington Race Riot." About 500 white men had assembled at the armory, and Waddell lead them to the Daily Record office several blocks away. The crowd following Waddell grew to about 2,000 people as they moved across town.

During what is now called the Wilmington Race Riot, a mob set Alex Manly's newspaper office on fire, and tensions between African Americans and whites exploded. The whites demanded that Manly and his newspaper cease to publish and that Manly be banned from the community. Manly escaped from Wilmington because he was mistakenly thought to be white. African Americans armed themselves and whites began to hunt and gun them down. The mob of whites included clergymen, lawyers, bankers, and merchants who all believed that they were asserting their rights as citizens. When the riot ended the next day, it was reported that twenty-five African Americans had been killed. However, it was strongly suspected that hundreds of African Americans had been killed and their bodies dumped into the river. In addition, hundreds of African Americans were banished from the city of Wilmington. This event, the Wilmington Race Riot, marked a turning point in North Carolina's history because more restrictions were placed on African American voters.

Wilmington Race Riot of 1898



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Activities

Personal Response

How did the treatment of African Americans in Wilmington before and after the Riot of 1898 make you feel?

Analyzing Information

Directions: Answer each of the following questions in complete sentences.

- List the jobs held by African Americans in Wilmington in 1898.
- In Wilmington, what percentage of population was African American in 1898?
- Explain Daniel Schenck's quote.
- Explain the causes of the Wilmington Race Riot.

Interpreting Meaning

Directions: Find the term in the passage. Copy the sentence that contains the terms. Explain the terms by using context clues and/or a dictionary.

- thriving
- predominately
- lynched
- banished
- campaign
- riot
- asserted
- infuriated
- controversial
- clergymen

Creative Response

1. During the Wilmington Riot, a white mob burned the office of Alex Manly and attacked and killed African Americans. Pretend you are a newspaper reporter and write a news article depicting this event. Include drawings or other graphics. Use other resources to help you accomplish this task.

2. Create a "biographical postcard" featuring Alex Manly. On the front side of the card, draw or cut and paste a picture of Alex Manly. On the back side of the card, write the story of his life.

3. Draw a map of North Carolina. Locate and label Wilmington and where you live. Entitle your map "The Wilmington Race Riot." Using words, phrases, and graphics include information about the riot on the map.

4. **NCFMP:** Recently the citizens of Wilmington—African American and white—devised a plan to memorialize the Riot of 1898 as a means to heal old wounds and to recognize the terrible costs of this event that took place over 100 years ago. Described as "a community effort for remembrance and reconciliation," citizens formed the 1898 Foundation with the goal of creating a public art project to honor the dead and to remember the tragedy.

Visit <http://www.spinnc.org/1898/> and study the plans for this public art project. Write a page describing your reaction to the artwork proposed and whether you believe there is value in creating a public space where citizens may come, visit, reflect, and remember such a tragic event. Or should we only commemorate heroic or positive events in history? Why or why not?

Additional questions for discussion and debate among the whole class:

What does the term "heritage tourism" mean?

What does the term "reconciliation" mean?

What other museums and monuments have you visited that commemorate tragedies?

What are some museums and monuments you have visited that celebrate historic achievements?

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Activities

Personal Response

How did the treatment of African Americans in Wilmington before and after the Riot of 1898 make you feel?

Responses will vary.

Analyzing Information

Directions: Answer each of the following questions in complete sentences.

1. List the jobs held by African Americans in Wilmington in 1898.

African Americans owned barbershops, restaurants, tailor shops, and drug stores. African Americans were also firemen and policemen.

2. In Wilmington, what percentage of population was African American in 1898?

Sixty-six percent of the population was African American in 1898 in Wilmington.

3. Explain Daniel Schenck's quote.

Responses will vary with the interpretation.

4. Explain the causes of the Wilmington Race Riot.

Causes of the Wilmington Riot include: election campaign of 1898, a white newspaper published a controversial speech, Alex Manly responded to the white newspaper article causing racial tensions to increase, whites drove black officeholders out of office, and violence erupted.

Interpreting Meaning

Directions: Find the term in the passage. Copy the sentence that contains the terms. Explain the terms by using context clues and/or a dictionary.

- thriving (doing well) -- In 1898, Wilmington was a thriving port on the coast of North Carolina.
- predominately (most of) -- A group of predominately white Populists and black Republicans won political control of the state.
- lynched (to put to death by mob action without due process of law) -- The Democratic campaign focused on white women's fears of African American males and the threat of African American men being lynched.
- banished (to drive out) -- In addition, hundreds of African Americans were banished from the city of Wilmington.
- campaign (a series of events designated to bring about a desired result) -- Daniel Schenck, a Democratic party leader, warned, "It will be the meanest, vilest, dirtiest campaign since 1876."
- riot (public violence or disorder) -- During what is now called the Wilmington Race Riot, a mob set Alex Manly's newspaper office on fire, and tensions between African Americans and whites exploded.
- avenge (to get back at someone) -- The white Democrats promised to avenge their defeat at the hands of white Populists and African American Republicans in the election of 1898.
- infuriated (to make someone angry) -- Alex Manley, an African American newspaper editor in Wilmington, was infuriated by the newspaper article.
- controversial (dispute, quarrel) -- A white newspaper in Wilmington published a controversial speech given by a Georgia feminist.
- clergymen (ministers, preachers) -- The mob of whites included clergymen, lawyers, bankers, and merchants who all believed that they were asserting their rights as citizens.

Creative Response

See *Activities* page for questions. Responses will vary.