NCSS Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

*Ghost Boys*

Written by Jewell Parker Rhodes

Lisa H. Matherson, Ed.D.
The University of Alabama

Sydney Haag, Graduate Assistant MA
The University of Alabama

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ages</td>
<td>10 &amp; up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexile Measure</td>
<td>HL360L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISBN</td>
<td>978-1423157540</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommended for</td>
<td>Grades 5-9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Length</td>
<td>This lesson plan length is three class periods of 50 minutes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Book Summary**

*Ghost Boys*, written by Jewell Parker Rhodes, focuses on a twelve-year-old, Jerome Rogers, who is shot while playing with a toy gun by a police officer. The novel, examining two perspectives - “dead” and “alive”-, details Jerome’s observations of his life as an African American boy living in Chicago and the aftermath of his death on his family and community.

Before his death, Jerome meets Carlos, a new student who desperately needs a friend. Together, the boys experience a short-lived friendship that extends beyond Jerome’s life. As a ghost, Jerome meets another ghost, Emmett Till, who was a victim from a different historical period who experienced a strikingly similar fate. Jerome and Emmett, along with other ghost boys that roam the streets, explore the racism and prejudices haunting America. Jerome also meets Sarah, the police officer’s daughter, who struggles to understand her father’s actions. Jerome and Sarah form a unique relationship which allows Jerome to cope with his pain; “bearing witness” Jerome also empowers Sarah to fight against discrimination and racial bias. Realizing his purpose as a ghost boy, Jerome leaves the audience with a call to action: “Only the living can make the world better. Live and make it better.”


**NCSS Themes**

- Theme 1: Culture
- Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity
- Theme 5: Individual, Groups, and Institutions
- Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

**Common Core**

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7](http://www.corestandards.org/ela-literacy/reading-highschool/reading-philosophy/history-social-studies/1/6-8)
  Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

**C3**

- D2.His.2.3-5. Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today
- D2.His.3.3-5. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.
- D2.His.2.6-8. Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.
D2.His.3.6-8. Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.

| | “Glory” Dance Performance by the Capitol Movement Pre-Professional group choreographed by Shontal Snider [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0rj10In-io](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0rj10In-io)  
| | Student copies of *Ghost Boys*  
| | If possible, student access to technology via the Internet  
| | Butcher Paper  
| | Markers  
| | Colored Pencils  
| | Crayons  
| | Laptop/desktop computer  
| | Multimedia projector  
| | A safe classroom environment that allows students the freedom to engage  
| | Optional (other resources for students to use while creating their mural):  
| | Chalk  
| | Magazines  
| | Newspapers  
| | Construction paper  
| | Glue  

| Objectives | Day One:  
| 1. Given the book *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes, the students will define what it means to “bear witness” and analyze Jerome’s last words by answering questions in a think-pair-share.  
| 2. Given pictures from different periods, students will describe what they see, think, feel, and wonder about by completing a gallery walk.  
| 3. Given the choreographed performance of “Glory,” the students will be able to interpret the purpose of the dance by answering questions in small groups of three or four.  
| Day Two and Three:  
| 4. Given the class discussions of “bearing witness,” the students will create a mural in groups of four “bearing witness” to issues relating to *Ghost Boys* and themes discussed in class by using a planning guide and following a rubric.  

| Essential Question | What does it mean to “bear witness”?  

| Procedures Exploration | 1. To begin the lesson, the students will be instructed to turn to page 204 in *Ghost Boys* and read Jerome’s last words:  
| | “Bear witness. My tale is told.  
| | Wake. Only the living can make the world better.  
| | Live and make it better. Don’t let me  
| | (Or anyone else)  
| | Tell this tale again.”  
| 2. The students will answer questions responding to Jerome’s last words. The students will answer these questions in a think-pair-share activity (10 minutes). These questions are:  
| | - How does Emmett Till define “bearing witness”? (Hint: look at page 161).  
| | - To what do you think the book *Ghost Boys* “bears witness?”  


- What about Jerome’s last words stands out most to you?
- What do these last words make you think or feel? Why?

3. After the students have answered and discussed the four questions about the book, they will be informed that to “bear witness” to inequities, injustice, and suffering that Jerome and the other ghost boys experienced, they are going to analyze different art forms that display similar experiences.

4. The students will be instructed that they are going to complete a gallery walk with photos from different periods (See Appendix A). They will be using the corresponding handout to describe how these photos make them think, feel and wonder about (See Appendix B). The students can fill out the “See, Think, Feel, Wonder” Chart by jotting down words or phrase (no need to use complete sentences). After the students walk around examining photos individually, they will return to their seats to answer the three questions at the bottom of the chart in small groups of three or four (20 minutes).

5. After the students complete the gallery walk and answer the questions, the teacher will call on different groups to discuss their answers with the class using equity sticks (5 minutes).

6. After discussing what the photos “bear witness” to, the teacher will then inform the class they are going to watch the Capitol Movement Pre-professional dance company as they perform a Shontal Snider Choreography to “Glory” by John Legend and Common https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0rj10In-ii. The teacher will inform the students to pay attention to the lyrics of the song, the dance moves, and the props used by the dancers. To create equitable learning, this video may be played more than once for students to analyze.

7. After the students have watched the choreography, the teacher will inform the students they will answer the four questions below the lyrics. The students will answer the first question alone, and the other three questions the students can work with partners to complete (15 minutes). The instructor will walk around to formatively assess the students’ discussions and participate in the discussions when necessary.

8. On day two, the teacher will inform the students to take out their handouts from the previous day. The teacher will lead the students in a discussion about similarities and differences of what Ghost Boys, the photos from the gallery walk, and the dance to “Glory” are “bearing witness” to and why the students think it’s important to “bear witness” to these issues (racial violence, prejudice, Black Lives Matter, equality, etc.). The teacher will also ask the students to brainstorm some ways that students can “bear witness” to these issues today. The students will take out a scratch sheet of paper and brainstorm for a minute about ways they can create awareness of these issues (7 minutes).

9. After the students have brainstormed, the teacher will call on students using equity sticks to share some of their ideas (3 minutes).

10. The teacher will inform the students they will be creating murals about issues relating to topics covered in Ghost Boys and their in-class discussions thus far. The students will be asked to follow a specific set of instructions and guidelines to create their mural. The instructor should also share that murals are a way to creatively display information using visuals to spread awareness about a topic. The teacher will also show the students examples of murals to model the final products and inspire students via the website https://www.muralarts.org/. This website is for Mural Arts Philadelphia, which is “the nation’s largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change.” The students will be able to use technological devices to research/gain more inspiration for murals if they have access to technology (5 minutes).

11. The teacher will pass out the student planning guide and rubric for the mural activity (See Appendix D and E). The teacher will explain to the students that they will be creating a
mural about an issue they want to “bear witness” to based on the in-class discussions. The teacher will go over the student planning guide and rubric with the students before putting them into groups (5 minutes).

12. After the teacher has explained the planning guide and rubric, the students will be informed that they will be working in groups of four to create their mural. The students will first need to complete the student planning guide before receiving materials to create the mural. After the students have completed their planning guide, they will need to get their ideas checked off by the teacher before beginning to construct the mural. After, the students will be able to get their butcher paper and supplies to begin constructing their mural. Throughout the planning and mural creation process, the teacher will be monitoring the classroom to answer questions, discuss the murals with students, and ensure all group members are contributing (30 minutes).

13. On the third day, the students will have an entire in-class period to create their murals. The students will also need to describe their mural by using their planning guide and answering the following questions in paragraph form. The description will be displayed along with the students’ murals. The teacher should project or write these questions on the board for the students to collectively answer.

1. What topics or themes from Ghost Boys and the in-class activities were included in your mural?
2. In your own words, what does it mean to “bear witness”?
3. To what important message did your mural or poster campaign “bear witness”?
4. Why should we “bear witness” to this issue?

14. Allow the students to display their murals in the hallways around the school, if possible. Also, to allow the students to “bear witness” to the issues visualized in their murals, create an official “launch” celebration to allow the students to show off their murals to peers, family members, and the community if possible. This could take place during school or after school, depending on school rules. Another optional component would be allowing the audience to interact with the art. Having a “reaction box” next to each mural encouraging the audience to tell the artists how the mural made them feel, any personal connections to the mural, or any questions they have. This allows the students to see the impact of the mural on the peers, family, and community members and encourages the audience to “bear witness” to the issues depicted in the murals.

Extensions:

- The teacher could contact local businesses or places in the community to let students create temporary or permanent murals around their community.
- The teacher could contact other local schools to allow their students to participate or visit to view the murals to incorporate collaboration or more public awareness.
- The teacher could incorporate the NAACP “M is for Murder” primary source edited text to allow students to see the NAACP’s historical role in “bearing witness” to the injustices in society for minority groups. [https://digitalcollections.usm.edu/uncategorized/digitalFile_e13e21cf-d86f-40c7-a1b4-16fb8a1b6a90/](https://digitalcollections.usm.edu/uncategorized/digitalFile_e13e21cf-d86f-40c7-a1b4-16fb8a1b6a90/)
- The teacher could show the “Our Lives Matter PSA” from the Just Us Project to increase student engagement. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUG811lqtRs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUG811lqtRs)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Resources</th>
<th>NAACP- <a href="https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/naacp">https://www.history.com/topics/civil-rights-movement/naacp</a> <a href="https://www.naacp.org/">https://www.naacp.org/</a></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art and Activism- <a href="https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/art-and-activism">https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/art-and-activism</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Mural/ Poster Campaign which the mural component of this lesson plan is based on - <a href="https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/student-tasks/do-something/community-mural-poster-campaign">https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/student-tasks/do-something/community-mural-poster-campaign</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Mamie Till, mother of Emmett Till, weeping at her son’s funeral on Sept. 6, 1955. Although Mississippi officials wanted to bury Emmett to hide his brutal murder, Mamie Till insisted on an open casket in order to “Let the world see what [she has] seen”.


3. “Children carry signs during a demonstration organized for Michael Brown calling for national solidarity in Ferguson, Missouri, March 20, 2015”
4. “Martin Luther King, Jr. (center), with other civil rights supporters at the March on Washington, D.C., in August 1963.”
https://www.britannica.com/event/American-civil-rights-movement/images-videos

5. “Pastor Michael W. Waters (left) listened as Allison Jean, Botham Jean's mother, called for Dallas police reforms Friday at Joy Tabernacle AME Church. The group, including Bertrum Jean, Botham's father, (right) held signs bearing the names of unarmed people killed by Dallas police” in 2014.
See, Think, Feel, Wonder Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>What do you <strong>see</strong>?</th>
<th>What do you <strong>think</strong> about what you see?</th>
<th>How does this make you <strong>feel</strong>?</th>
<th>What do you <strong>wonder</strong> about?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **What are some similarities you notice between these photos?**

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. **What are some differences you notice between these photos?**

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. **What do you think these photos “bear witness” to?**

   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
### “Glory” by John Legend and Common

| One day when the glory comes It will be ours, it will be ours Oh one day when the war is won We will be sure, we will be sure Oh glory Oh Hands to the Heavens, no man, no weapon Formed against, yes glory is destined Every day women and men become legends Sins that go against our skin become blessings The movement is a rhythm to us Freedom is like religion to us Justice is juxtapositionin' us Justice for all just ain't specific enough One son died, his spirit is revisitin' us Truant livin' livin' in us, resistance is us That's why Rosa sat on the bus That's why we walk through Ferguson with our hands up When it go down we woman and man up They say, "Stay down", and we stand up Shots, we on the ground, the camera panned up | King pointed to the mountain top and we ran up One day when the glory comes It will be ours, it will be ours Oh one day when the war is won We will be sure, we will be sure Oh glory Oh Now the war is not over, victory isn't won And we'll fight on to the finish, then when it's all done We'll cry glory, oh glory Oh We'll cry glory, oh glory Oh Selma's now for every man, woman and child Even Jesus got his crown in front of a crowd They marched with the torch, we gon' run with it now Never look back, we done gone hundreds of miles From dark roads he rose, to become a hero Facin' the league of justice, his power was the people Enemy is lethal, a king became regal Saw the face of Jim Crow under a bald eagle The biggest weapon is to stay peaceful We sing, our music is the cuts that we bleed through Somewhere in the dream we had an epiphany Now we right the wrongs in history No one can win the war individually It takes the wisdom of the elders and young people's energy Welcome to the story we call victory The comin' of the Lord, my eyes have seen the glory |  |

1. **How does watching this dance make you feel and why?**

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

2. **What do you think the lyrics “justice for all just ain’t specific enough” means?**

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

3. **Why do you think the dancers had an “All Lives Matter” banner at the end of the performance?**

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

4. **What does this dance performance “bear witness” to?**

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

The QR code will direct you to the Wiki Page for the resources to go along with the lesson plan.