

## BLACK AMERICANS IN CONGRESS SPEAK THEIR MIND

## LESSON PLAN SEVEN



**RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL:** Grades 7 to 12



### OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to accompany the *Black Americans in Congress* website, [history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/](https://history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/). Students have the opportunity to analyze a series of statements made by Black Americans who served in Congress. Students are encouraged to think about the role that quotations can play in the study of history. (Citations for the quotation exercise used in this activity appear in the “Historical Quotations” document.)



### CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. History, American Government, African-American Studies, Social Studies
- Reconstruction, World War II, Civil Rights Movement, Women’s Rights



### OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to analyze public statements made by historic figures.
2. Students should be able to analyze the relationship between public statements and the historical record.
3. Students should be able to discern between opinion and fact.
4. Students should be able to analyze the relationship between public statements and the African Americans who have served in Congress.



### LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
  - a. What are a few famous statements made by historical figures? What makes these statements memorable?
  - b. What are some of the reasons why people make public statements?
  - c. What is the relationship between opinion and fact in public statements?
  - d. What purpose can quotes play in the study of history? Provide several examples.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Distribute the “Historical Quotations” document to the class. Ask each group to read all of the quotes and either assign or have each group choose one of the quotations made by black Members. Distribute the “Quote Analysis” worksheet (p. 1 of Student Activity). Review the directions and ask students to complete the worksheet together.
3. If time permits, have each group read the *Black Americans in Congress* profiles for the quoted Members. Go to [history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/](https://history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/) and click on Member Profiles for a list of African Americans who have served in Congress. Then, ask students to draft an outline of the profile which includes: state represented; years of service; one opinion and one fact from the profile; two quotes (not including the one already analyzed); and three career highlights. As a class, display each of the outlines for the African-American Members on a bulletin board or in a central location. Lead a class discussion which encourages students to compare and contrast the quotes and the careers of the black Representatives and Senators. Also, ask students to talk about the difference between fact and opinion, and the role this plays in the analysis of quotes.
4. If time permits, conduct one of the Suggested Extended Activities.



## SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Assign a series of topics (historic and current) and have students create their own quotes to express their opinions. Encourage students to research the topics so that they can make an informed and factually-based quote on the subject.
2. Write a 500-word newspaper article on your Representative or one of your Senators which includes at least three quotes by the featured politician.
3. Invite a historian to speak to the class to explain the importance and usefulness of quotes in the study of history.



## ONLINE RESOURCES

### History, Art & Archives | U.S. House of Representatives

A collaborative project between the Office of the Historian and the Clerk of the House's Office of Art and Archives. Together, the offices serve as the House's institutional memory, and a resource for Members, staff, and the general public.

[history.house.gov](http://history.house.gov)

### Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

[bioguide.congress.gov](http://bioguide.congress.gov)

### Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

[senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate\\_Historical\\_Office.htm](http://senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm)

### Congress.gov | Library of Congress

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

[congress.gov](http://congress.gov)

### GPO Federal Digital System

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

[gpo.gov/fdsys](http://gpo.gov/fdsys)

**QUOTE ANALYSIS****STUDENT ACTIVITY**

Answer the questions below for the historical quotation.

- ① Who is the speaker?
  
- ② What is the main topic of the quote?
  
- ③ Are there any issues discussed?
  
- ④ When (approximately) do you think this statement was made? Provide evidence to support your answer.
  
- ⑤ Why do you think the speaker made this statement? In your opinion, are there multiple interpretations for the quote? Explain.
  
- ⑥ What does this statement reveal about the speaker?