

JUANITA CRAFT GRADE 6-8



JUANITA CRAFT A Texas-Sized Civil Rights Icon

Juanita Craft - A Texas-Sized Civil Rights Icon

Juanita Craft, born Juanita Jewel Shanks in 1902, was an American civil rights activist, politician, and an icon for her ability to organize and guide youth groups. Her work was pivotal in the civil rights movement, particularly in Dallas, Texas.

The granddaughter of slaves, Craft felt the impact of racial discrimination early in life. In 1918, when Craft was 16, her mother died of tuberculosis because she was denied hospital treatment based on the color of her skin. Understandably this tragedy, possibly avoidable had her mother been cared for properly by medical personnel, had a huge impact on Craft's future as an unwavering champion of social justice. Craft went on to attain a college education but upon moving to Dallas could only find work as a bell woman at the Adolphus Hotel. A trained seamstress and milliner, she later worked as a dressmaker.

Interested in fighting job discrimination, Craft joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1935, and there found her life's purpose. First appointed membership chair in Dallas, she went on to become a Texas NAACP field organizer, helping establish more than 180 branches of the NAACP. Craft was the first black woman in Dallas County to vote in a public election and served two terms on the Dallas City Council between 1975 and 1979. She also worked successfully to integrate the University of Texas Law School, University of North Texas and Dallas Independent School District.

Dallas public schools had a particularly harsh road to desegregation. In 1954 the Supreme Court ruled against the Topeka Board of Education, declaring segregation in schools was unconstitutional. Dallas dug in,



- ★ Social Studies: 2(A)(B), 11(A)(B), 21(D)
- ★ ELAR: 1(A)(C)
- ★ Art: 1(D), 2(C), 3(A)(C), 4(B)

7th Grade Standards

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- ★ Social Studies: 1(A), 7(D)(E), 22(A)
- ★ ELAR: 1(D), 6(E)
- * Art: 1(D), 2(C), 3(A), 4(B)



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refusing to abide by the ruling and continued to have segregated schools. Although progress toward desegregation began in 1961, there was a long fight ahead of Craft and other activists to truly change the racial injustices within the school district. Not until 2003 was Dallas ISD officially ruled desegregated.

Craft's house in South Dallas was often used as an organizing space for both youth and adult activists, and still stands today as a monument to the Civil Rights Movement. Situated in what was once an all-white neighborhood near the intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X boulevards, the area was targeted by racist bombings in the early 1950's in an attempt to scare Craft and other activists away. However, she was not intimidated and lived in the same house the rest of her life.

Craft's work with youth is legendary. The NAACP Youth Council she organized in Dallas in the 1940's was the first of its kind and became the model for other youth branches throughout the country. Under Craft's guidance, youth in the council were inspired by speakers who were active in the Civil Rights movement, including college students who became role models for the younger participants. Through these sessions, youth learned why the NAACP existed, studied the causes supported by the NAACP, were well-informed of what was happening in other cities and absorbed the tenets of civil disobedience.

Craft was a leader in teaching and modeling the importance of assembling in order to advocate successfully for what is right and just, and worked with the Youth Council to organize sit-ins, picket lines and other peaceful assemblies across the city to protest racial injustice. The youth silk-screened t-shirts and made posters to support their local demonstrations and also recruited new members (both youth and adult) for the NAACP.

Fighting against the segregation of the State Fair of Texas was a pivotal part of her work. For decades, the State Fair deemed "Negro Achievement Day" the only day that black people could visit the Fair. Starting in 1955, Craft organized years of peaceful protests with her youth and others until the Fair was fully desegregated in 1967. She went on to build strong relationships with Fair officials, and her memorial service was held at the Hall of State in Fair Park in 1985. To commemorate her legacy, the State Fair of Texas established an annual award in her honor in 2018.

Celebrated for her tireless efforts in fighting for civil rights, she received the NAACP Golden Heritage Life Membership Award in 1978 and the Eleanor Roosevelt Humanitarian Award in 1984. Multiple Dallas locations are named in her honor, including the Juanita Craft Recreation Center, The Juanita J. Craft Swimming Pool, the Juanita Craft Post Office and the Juanita J. Craft Civil Rights House. She attended the inauguration of three US presidents — something that was uncommon during her lifetime. Although Craft passed away in 1985, her legacy and tireless efforts fighting for racial justice and civil rights remain, and the young people she mentored continue as adults to work toward a complete and just society.

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In this lesson students will:

- ★ Explore and discuss the life and legacy of Juanita Craft
- ★ Define and discuss unalienable rights
- ★ Identify and provide examples of exercising individual freedoms to create change
- ★ Create a presentation based on their knowledge and understanding of the impact of Juanita Craft's work on civil rights
- ★ Create an artwork based on an event in Juanita Craft's life and inspired by the style of Faith Ringgold

Before You Go

★ Materials: Pencil, two sheets of blank paper, student access to the provided Juanita Craft biography in digital or hard copy, and technology (Chromebook, iPad, or another device if allowed)

On the Board or Projector

- ★ Display the four questions below and instruct students to copy them down on a sheet of paper. They should leave space to answer each question. Also, mention that answering the Essential Question on the second sheet of paper will be an exit ticket for the day.
 - Define unalienable rights. How were African Americans denied these rights?
 - Which amendment allows petition and assembly for a cause?
 - What impacts did Juanita Craft have on What role did Juanita Craft play in desegregating the State Fair of Texas?



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- ★ Social Studies: 19(A)(B), 29(B), 30(B)(C)
- ★ ELAR: 1(A), 6(E)
- * Art: 1(D), 2(C), 3(A), 4(A)





Essential Question

* How did Juanita Craft expand opportunities for African Americans in Texas?

After students have written down the questions, take time to read each question to students so that they know what they should be able to answer throughout the lesson.

Then discuss the first question about unalienable rights. (This may be something you've already talked about in other lessons, so this is a great opportunity to re-spiral the information). Be sure to explain that unalienable rights, as listed in the Declaration of Independence, are rights that cannot be taken away by the government and these three distinct rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Ask students if they can think of instances where these rights have been denied. Discuss how until the 1960's African Americans were denied these rights due to segregation laws. Explain that this was changed using

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the First Amendment, which gives the right for people to assemble and petition their government. (This is also a time to mention that the First Amendment has five freedoms, and this is only two of those).

Have students view the following video to introduce the issues of segregation in Texas. Instruct students to write down five things they observe in the video to discuss after. https://texaslakestrail.com/plan-your-adventure/historic-sites-and-cities/sites/juanita-j-craft-civil-rights-house

- After the video, discuss with students the issues created by the Jim Crow laws.
- Ask students how the Jim Crow laws created obstacles for African Americans in Texas.
- * Students should explain how the laws created barriers using flaws to suppress African Americans' rights as citizens.

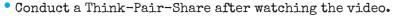
Next, play the following news clip and instruct students to write down five things they observe in the video that they would like to discuss after watching. They should do this on the back of the paper where they wrote the questions that you displayed. This video provides a first-hand account of a person who experienced segregation and how Jim Crow laws prevented him from attending a Texas university. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sc03d8iTfQ4











- * Give students 30 seconds to think and write something they want to share and one minute to discuss with a partner what they saw in the video and wrote down.
- * Next, spend a few minutes asking students to share something that they learned or discussed with their partners (adjust the time at your discretion).

 Either call on students randomly or ask for volunteers.
- Be sure to explain that this is an example of why people joined organizations to desegregate Texas.
- * Take this opportunity to point out that youth were advocating for equal rights too—it was not limited to adults.





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After the class discussion, show students the following video to introduce them to Juanita Craft and her work in Dallas. Instruct them to write down at least five things they observe to discuss after. https://vimeo.com/270924864

- ★ When the video concludes, have students read the provided biography of Juanita Craft individually or as a group, then ask students to Think-Pair-Share.
 - Give them 30 seconds to think and write something they want to share and one minute to discuss with a partner what they saw in the video or read in the bio and wrote down.
 - Next, spend a few minutes asking students to share something that they learned or discussed with their partners (adjust time at your discretion). Either call on students randomly or ask for volunteers.
 - Be sure to touch on these main points, if they are not brought up by the students:
 - * Juanita Craft was an activist in the NAACP. (Explain what an activist is and provide some examples.)
 - * She was the first black woman to vote in Dallas County.
 - * She helped desegregate several Texas institutions, particularly in the Dallas area, including the State Fair of Texas.
 - * Her home was an organizing space for youth and adult organizers.
 - * Her home was also a meeting space for heads of state, Presidents and other national leaders.
- ★ Ask students to imagine what life may have been like as an African American living in Dallas, TX in the 1950s, before desegregation.
 - Explain that historically the State Fair of Texas only allowed African Americans to attend on one day, Negro Achievement Day. Even then, not all of the vendors and rides were open to them.
 - Explain to them that Craft and others wanted to change this and advocated for desegregation.
 - Be sure to define the word activist for students.
 - Tell students to brainstorm ways to advocate and have them write down some examples.
 - Give them about two to three minutes.
 - First, have them discuss this with a partner, then as a class. They should come up with things like, protesting, petitions, organizing, and boycotts. (And if they don't, talk about these and what they are).

Next, explain how in 1955, Craft activated the Youth Council of the Dallas NAACP to picket outside of the State Fair on Negro Achievement Day. She urged African Americans to visit the Fair every day but Negro Achievement Day to draw attention to the unfairness of the segregation at the event. Explain that the Fair did not fully desegregate until the 1960s.

• Have students take turns reading aloud the following article to the class or have them work in small groups or with partners to read over the piece. https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/artifacts/naacp-state-fair-spotlight-012315

To close, have students answer the essential question on a new sheet of paper.

- Tell them their response needs to be at least three sentences long.
- Give students five to eight minutes.
- Have them turn the activity in as they leave class.



The Juanita Craft Humanitarian Awards Ceremony

- ★ This link will take you to the site for this year's ceremony: https://bigtex.com/event/juanita-craft-humanitarian-awards-ceremony/
- ★ If you can attend, instruct students to document the honorees and how they are continuing Juanita Craft's legacy.



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While You're There

Provide copies of the Student Edition and have students complete the activities while at the State Fair.

Students should take notes while at the State Fair and bring them to class for a discussion of their findings.

Essential Question

- ★ How did the contributions of Juanita Craft shape the culture in Dallas?
- ★ How did she influence the overall fight for civil rights in America?
- ★ What responsibility do we have in working toward equality in today's society?
- ★ How do our experiences shape who we are and what we are passionate about?

Juanita Craft House Museum

- ★ This link will take you to the National Park

 Service (NPS) website for the Juanita J. Craft Civil

 Rights House: https://www.nps.gov/places/texasjuanita-j-craft-civil-rights-house.htm
- ★ Before going to the Fair, have students read about the Juanita J. Craft Civil Rights House and, if possible, visit the house. The information and experience will give them more insight into Ms. Craft and her contributions to Dallas and the State Fair of Texas.
- ★ Have them write notes to bring back and discuss with the class.

African American Museum

- ★ Explain to students that Fair Park, home to the State Fair of Texas, has an African American Museum that houses exhibits on significant individuals and their contributions to society.
- ★ Have them relate what they observe in the displays to Juanita Craft's activism.
- ★ Students should take notes while at the State Fair and bring them to class for a discussion of their findings.

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After the Fair

Option 1:

Have students create a video or a slide show presentation to share with the class that outlines the legacy of Juanita Craft and her contributions to Dallas.

Suggested criteria:

- ★ Slide Show (Google Slides, PowerPoint, Prezi):
 - The presentation should be at least five slides and include a slide of works cited.
 - Include pictures and backgrounds on each slide.
 - There should be at least three sources on the works cited slide.
- ★ Video (Flipgrid, iVideo or other approved method):
 - The video should be at least two minutes long.
 - It should be informative and provide examples of Craft's activism.
 - It should have credits at the end to cite sources.

Option 2:

Using a camera, students should document the items they see in their everyday lives around their neighborhood or school. This includes streets, houses, store fronts, signage, seating in restaurants, trees, parks, etc. The more photographs they can take of everyday things, the better.

Next, instruct students to research these same objects

or areas during the time that Juanita Craft was alive. Alternatively,

create a list of objects to focus on as a class and have everyone capture them in their photographs and then find those specific items in their research.

As the students are researching images to compare with their photographs, ask them to keep these questions in mind:

- ★ How does the area look the same as it did during Craft's lifetime?
- ★ In what ways does it look differently?
- ★ How have the changes that you notice impacted society?
- * What other changes could be made to further impact access and equality in the community?
- ★ How can you help to make these changes happen?

The students should present their findings to the class following the presentation format in Option 1.



Explain to students that they need to answer the following questions in their

presentation:

- 1. What were unalienable rights denied to African Americans that prompted Craft to bring awareness and change?
- 2. How did Craft exercise rights promised to all citizens in the Bill of Rights?
- 3. Provide an example of how Craft was a responsible citizen. (Was she informed on public issues? Did she exercise her right to vote?)
- 4. What was the cause and effect of Craft's activism with the NAACP?
- 5. Why was it important to other Americans that Craft cared about equality and equal treatment?
- 6. What legacy did she leave for Dallas?
- 7. Why is it important that we celebrate her and those like her?
- 8. How can we work together to ensure equality today?

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Arts Connection

American artists of our time. Her work reflects her travels to Nigeria and Ghana and has had a significant influence on the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

Some of her most well-known pieces are her quilts. They are powerful works that combine fabric and paint to tell a visual story of the lives and histories of Africans and African Americans. Ringgold creates a painting that resides in the middle of the piece and then surrounds the image with fabric pieces that she often adds paint to as well. The result is a vibrant artwork that uses pattern, color and shape to move the viewer's eye across the work.



"Dancing on the George Washington Bridge," 1988.

For their project, provide the students with a large sheet of paper and fabric scraps. Draw a square in the middle of the paper and have the students create a drawing or painting within the square. The theme of their work should center on Juanita Craft's contributions to the Civil Rights Movement or something interesting they learned about her during their trip to the State Fair of Texas, the Juanita J. Craft Civil Rights House or the awards ceremony.

When the students finish the painting in the center of the paper, instruct them to glue fabric around the outside of the paper using the work of Faith Ringgold as a guide. When finished, join each of the student "quilts" together to form one large piece that tells the story of Craft's life and work.