

Teacher's Guide: Understanding Character: The Life of Percy Julian

Recommended Grade Level: 5-8

(also applicable to grades 9-12 for students requiring significant support in learning)

Suggested Time: About 50-60 minutes spread over one or more class periods, plus additional time to complete a writing assignment

Goals

Following are the big ideas that students should take away after completing this lesson:

- It is possible to understand a lot about people's character from their actions.
- People can overcome difficult situations by working toward their goals.

Vocabulary

(See definitions on page 6.)

- character
- infer
- persevere
- racism
- trait

Key Literacy Strategies

Following are the primary literacy strategies students will use to complete this activity:

- Making inferences (screens 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9; writing assignment 2)
- Categorizing basic facts and ideas (screen 11)
- Constructing summaries (writing assignment 1)

Note: In addition to the key literacy strategies listed above, students will also use each of these strategies to complete this lesson:

- Monitoring comprehension
- Synthesizing
- Making predictions
- Developing vocabulary
- Connecting prior knowledge to new learning
- Developing a topic in writing
- Identifying and using text features (photographs, captions, diagrams, and/or maps)

Overview

Understanding Character: The Life of Percy Julian is a student-directed learning experience. However, while students are expected to work through the lesson on their own, teachers should be available to keep the lesson on track, organize groupings, facilitate discussions, answer questions, and ensure that students meet all learning goals.

The following is a summary of the lesson screens:

- Screen 1: Students think about what it means to persevere in the face of challenges.
- Screen 2: Students read a brief summary of Percy Julian's life and how he defied the racism of his day to finish school and become a scientist, persevering in spite of constant opposition.
- Screen 3: Students learn what the goals are for the lesson, which strategies they will be using to complete the lesson, and the important vocabulary words they will use during the lesson.
- Screen 4: Students read about how Julian worked to get his undergraduate and master's degrees in the United States, but was not allowed into any U.S. Ph.D. programs. They then watch a video about Julian's struggle to get an education, from high school through graduate school. After watching the video, they write notes identifying two of Julian's character traits, and support their answer with examples from the video.
- Screen 5: Students watch a video showing how Julian was eventually hired by the Glidden Company in Chicago. They then write down new information that they learned about Julian from this video and how this additional information reveals more about his character.
- Screen 6: Students watch a video about the attacks the Julian family suffered when they moved to the white suburb of Oak Park, Illinois, and write down their predictions of how they think Julian reacted to these attacks.
- Screen 7: Students watch a video dramatizing how Julian reacted to the attacks on his home and family and write down how Percy Julian's response was similar to or different from what they predicted.
- Screen 8: Students read about how making inferences helps them understand what they read or view. They then write about how the video they watched on screen 6 gives them information they can use to make inferences about how Julian showed perseverance in Oak Park.
- Screen 9: Students answer three multiple-choice questions to show their comprehension of Julian's situation (facing racism in education and business) and his character.
- Screen 10: Students read a passage that recounts the struggles Julian endured to achieve his goals in life.
- Final
Assignment: Students select and complete a writing assignment about the lesson topic.

Before the Lesson

- ❑ Go through each screen of the lesson, including all the interactive activities, so that you can experience ahead of time what students will be doing. As you go through each screen, jot down your own expectations for students' responses.
- ❑ Determine if students will be working individually or in pairs on the lesson. Some students may be able to work independently with little or no support. Students who are less familiar with the subject area or who struggle with literacy skills may benefit from working with another student. An effective way to do this is to pair a stronger student with a less able reader. You can also have students work individually on certain tasks and in pairs on others, depending on their experience and needs. If students will be working in pairs on any portion of the lesson, let them know if they will be expected to type in their notes individually or together.
- ❑ Provide instruction on key vocabulary (vocabulary words are defined in the lesson, and on page 6 of this guide).
- ❑ Determine what students already know about racism in the early 20th century in the United States, including segregation laws. Record their ideas on a chart. This will give you a sense of students' possible misconceptions and the background knowledge they have before beginning this lesson. If time allows, return to the chart after students have completed the lesson to add new learning and correct misconceptions. Note: You may want to record their new learning in a different-colored ink so they can see how much they've learned.
- ❑ Arrange computers with Internet access so students can work individually or in pairs.
- ❑ Before students begin, suggest a timeline for completing the lesson, mention the different types of media they will encounter, and let them know how you expect them to submit their work. You may want to provide an outline of this information on a chart, chalkboard, or whiteboard, or as a handout.

Lesson Assessments

The following are descriptions of the lesson features that will be part of the packet of materials that students will submit. Students will use the packet for reference when writing their final assignment. It also serves as a formative assessment tool to monitor students' work as they are progressing through the lesson.

- **Notes** - Students take notes on screens 4 through 8. If time allows, review their notes before students begin their final writing assignment.
- **Multiple-choice questions** - Students complete the three questions on screen 9. Walk around to make sure students answer all three questions before they continue. If students click to go to the next page before they finish, their work will not be saved.
- **Match It!** - Students complete a vocabulary activity on screen 11. They begin by placing the vocabulary terms into the correct sentences. After they finish and save their work, they will be able to check their answers against an answer key. When they are done, they will be asked to choose two vocabulary words and write a new sentence for each

word. Sentences should demonstrate a clear understanding of the meaning of each word. (For example, a sufficient response would be “Julian demonstrated his perseverance by completing his doctorate in Vienna when no university in the United States would accept him.” An example of an insufficient response is “Julian had perseverance.”)

- **Arrange It!** - Students complete the comprehension activity Arrange It! on screen 11. Students determine whether events in Julian’s life took place during his early years, his career, or his life in Oak Park. Students will not be able to check their answers online, so you will need to provide them with correct answers when they are finished with the lesson. You can choose to review the answers as a class or return the corrected packet of materials to students before they begin the final assignment.

Following are the descriptions students will drag and drop onto the concept map in the appropriate category:

Julian’s early years

- Moved to Indiana to finish high school
- Could not get into a doctoral program in the United States
- Got his doctoral degree in Europe

Julian’s career

- Synthesized a new chemical
- Director of his own lab at the Glidden Company
- Opened his own lab

Life in Oak Park

- Was named Chicagoan of the Year
 - His home was attacked by racists
 - Refused to leave Oak Park
- **Final Assignment** - Students complete one final writing assignment. You can choose to let students make their own selection, or assign one according to your goals for the lesson. Use the rubric on page 7 to assess the writing assignments.

Lesson Aids and Extensions

Use the following suggestions to help students if they are stuck on a particular screen, as follow-up discussions to reinforce learning, and to prepare students for completing their writing assignments.

- **Watching Videos** - Encourage students to watch the videos more than once. After the initial viewing, provide students with a specific content focus to frame their next viewing(s) of the video. This will help them draw connections between the main topic and the information that the videos have to offer. To learn more about best practices for viewing videos in the classroom, check out Effective Video-Based Lessons (<http://www.teachersdomain.org/resource/vtlpd.pd.hints.frfofo/>).

- **Participating in Discussions** - Organize class discussions or encourage students to talk about their questions in pairs. You may want to use the following discussion starters:
 - o Why do you think Julian was so determined to go to school when he knew how hard it would be?
 - o Why do you think Julian moved to Oak Park?
 - o At what moments do you think Julian felt most discouraged and might have given up? Why do you think so?
 - o If you were Julian and your house and family were being threatened, would you have stayed in Oak Park? Why or why not?
- **Reading the PDF Text** - Before they read the PDF text on screen 9, ask students to make predictions about which events will be the hardest for Julian to overcome.
- **Sharing Student Work** - It may be motivational, and a further learning opportunity, for students to post their final essays so that their classmates, peers, and/or parents can see them. This may also provide an opportunity for students to comment on and discuss each other's essays.

If you do not already have access to an online writing community, Teaching Matters™ provides TeXT, free classroom publishing tools that allow teachers and students to create and publish their own online eZine. More information and a free sign up are available at Teaching Matters: TeXT (<http://text.teachingmatters.org>).
- **Reflection and Self-Assessment** - After students have turned in their writing assignments, you can choose to have them assess their learning. Bring students together as a whole class or in small groups to discuss the questions below. You may want to return to the chart of their ideas developed before the lesson and record their new learning. You may also have students respond individually to the questions, and then convene the class to discuss the chart.
 - o What did you learn?
 - o What was surprising?
 - o What questions do you still have?
 - o What was the easiest for you to understand and do?
 - o What was the most difficult?

Vocabulary Definitions

character

A person's way of acting and thinking.

infer

To use what you already know and combine this with new information to try to understand a person or event.

persevere

To continue doing something even when it is difficult for you.

racism

Judging people and assigning character traits to them based on their skin color.

trait

A characteristic or quality that someone has. Perseverance is a character trait.

Final Assignment Rubric Understanding Character: The Life of Percy Julian

1. Describe three challenges Percy Julian faced throughout his life, and how he overcame them. What does this tell you about Percy Julian's character?
2. Julian said it would be wrong for his family to leave Oak Park. He could have said it would be sad, shameful, or depressing, but he chose the word wrong. Knowing what you know about Julian's character, why do you think he saw it as wrong?
3. Think of another character in literature or history, or a person you know, who persevered in spite of a challenge. Describe a specific event in the person's life, and tell how you can infer this person has this trait from what happened.

4	3	2	1
Provides a clear and accurate response to the question. Ideas are elaborated, with three or more relevant supporting details from the reading passage, video, and other materials in the lesson.	Provides an adequate response to the question. Topic and ideas are generally well organized, with two relevant supporting details from the reading passage, video, and other materials in the lesson.	Provides a generally accurate response, with one supporting detail from the reading passage, video, and other materials in the lesson.	Provides an inaccurate response to the question or fails to address the question. May include misinterpretations. Understanding of the topic is not apparent.
Uses at least three vocabulary words (or a form of the vocabulary words) from the lesson, and uses them all correctly.	Uses two vocabulary words (or a form of the vocabulary words) from the lesson, and uses them both correctly.	Uses one vocabulary word (or a form of the vocabulary word) from the lesson, and uses it correctly.	Does not use any vocabulary words, or uses vocabulary words incorrectly.

Scoring the Rubric

Here are two suggestions for scoring the final assignment rubric. Select the option that best meets your needs or develop your own grading system.

Option 1: This option provides one score for each submitted assignment.

Assign a score of 4 or below for the written response (first row of the rubric) and a score of 4 or below for the use of vocabulary (second row of the rubric), for a total maximum score of 8. The interpretation of scores is as follows:

Score	Grade	Narrative Interpretation
7-8	A	Excellent
5-6	B	Good
4	C	Adequate (Fair)
3 or below	D	Minimal

Option 2: This option provides two scores for each submitted assignment: one for written content and one for the use of key vocabulary. An advantage of separate scores is that you can weight students' comprehension and composition differently than you do their knowledge of vocabulary. It can also help you identify specific needs for future instruction.

Assign a score of 4 or below for the written response (first row of the rubric) and a score of 4 or below for the use of vocabulary (second row of the rubric) and then score them separately. The interpretation of scores is as follows:

Score	Grade	Narrative Interpretation
4	A	Excellent
3	B	Good
2	C	Adequate (Fair)
1	D	Minimal

The final grade may look like this: A/B (A for content and B for vocabulary use).