

Katrina and with local, state, and federal governments' handling of the crisis. Be clear that for purposes of doing this lesson, "insiders" are defined as those who witnessed/experienced the events associated with Hurricane Katrina and the breach of the levees. "Outsiders" are those who did not. Identify which are which with students. Use Handout 1, "Identifying Perspectives Worksheet," to complete this task. Be sure that students understand that even if someone is an eyewitness to an event, his or her perspective can still be partial and biased and that there may be multiple "insider" views just as there are multiple "outsider" views.

- C. Look up the meaning of the word *bias* and decide whether it applies in the case of each person considered in this lesson. How would you decide?
- D. Students will be assigned to one of five groups, taking the perspective of one of the insiders featured in the film (Mayor Ray Nagin, Governor Kathleen Blanco, and Phyllis Montana LeBlanc) or one of the outsiders (Barbara Bush and Kanye West). Use the series of question prompts in Handout 2 to get each person's likely historical perspective. Teachers can create more groups and draw on other voices from the film or on Handout 1 if they wish.
- E. Students will then be jigsawed into groups where one member from each perspective is present. Upon reading a copy of their own narrative and speaking from their assigned perspectives, group members will respond to

each perspective and challenge or comment on their point of view. They will consider the question of whether these competing perspectives can be reconciled.

- F. Students can certainly go beyond the film for further evidence. Teachers can suggest accounts of Hurricane Katrina online as well as in newspapers or books that provide a broader line of vision than that which is articulated in the individual accounts on the documentary film. See, in particular, Douglas Brinkley's *The Great Deluge*, Jed Horne's *Breach of Faith*, Ivor van Heerden's *The Storm*, and Christopher Cooper and Robert Block's *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security*.
- G. Students will use Handout 4 to help them form their own judgments about how history should tell the story of Katrina and the levees and who should be held accountable. What kind of blame has been dispensed for the flooding of New Orleans? Who is dispensing the blame? What might be some consequences of a blame game?

Closure

Students share their viewpoints, defending their perspectives by calling upon the evidence they found most convincing. The teacher should wrap up the lesson by returning to the essential questions: Why have there been so many competing perspectives on the "blame game" concerning Katrina? Can these differing views be reconciled? Where do you come down on these issues?



HANDOUT 1 High School History Lesson 1

Identifying Perspectives Worksheet

<i>Person/Group</i>	<i>Description of Situation/Experience</i>	<i>Position/Opinion on Causes and Responses to Hurricane Katrina</i>
<i>Governor Kathleen B. Blanco</i>		
<i>Phyllis Montana LeBlanc</i>		
<i>Harry Belafonte</i>		
<i>Darnell Herrington</i>		
<i>Mayor Ray Nagin</i>		
<i>General Russel Honoré</i>		
<i>Kanye West</i>		
<i>Barbara Bush</i>		
<i>Calvin Mackie</i>		

**HANDOUT 2**
High School History Lesson 1**Creating a Perspective-Based Historical Narrative**

Directions: Storytellers usually tell stories from the point of view of one person. Historians try to bring multiple perspectives to bear in recounting past events. Certainly, the events surrounding Hurricane Katrina produced multiple perspectives through which to analyze and evaluate its legacy. Journalists and historians have been at work since the event occurred trying to sort through those perspectives to get an overall perspective. This is not an easy thing to do and it will take time to compile all the evidence—to write a complete history, in other words.

In this exercise, you are still working from one perspective only. Using your assigned perspective, write a brief set of responses to the questions below. Be sure to think and write from the viewpoint you have been assigned and not from your own viewpoint.

- ◆ Why was New Orleans not better prepared for the arrival of Hurricane Katrina?
- ◆ What were the largest problems created in New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina?
- ◆ How did different individuals respond to the emergency? Why were there these individual differences?
- ◆ What are the roles of the local, state, and national governments in facing crises such as Katrina?
- ◆ Can you imagine what it must have been like to live through this disaster? What feelings does this stimulate in you as you imagine what the experience was like—for children, parents, the sick and disabled, the elderly, the poor, middle class, and rich?
- ◆ Has Hurricane Katrina changed America? If so, how?

**HANDOUT 3**
High School History Lesson 1**Jigsaw Discussion****Talking Points Worksheet—
The Many Voices of Katrina**

Directions: Using the historical narrative written from your assigned perspective, you will now engage in a conversation with those representing other perspectives. You will address the same questions as those in your own writing but will interact with views other than your own. In conducting the conversation, make sure you:

- Present your perspective clearly and accurately.
- Do not compete; the goal is to understand, not to “win.” Ask questions and raise points from your assigned point of view with the intent of trying to have others clarify their own positions.
- Take note of whose perspectives are similar or dissimilar to your assigned perspective and begin to hypothesize why that might be.
- Identify points of common ground and agreement and what future actions would best serve the common good.
- Evaluate where your own initial opinions or ideas about Hurricane Katrina might have been revealed as naive or oversimplified.

Taking Action

One group whose experiences have been somewhat overlooked has been the disabled. Learn about their experiences and then investigate whether disaster preparations in your students’ local community takes account of this group’s needs. See “Disabled People Left Behind in Emergency Planning,” by Megan Tady, *The New Standard*, August 15, 2006, <http://newstandardnews.net/content/index.cfm/items/3537>.

LESSON 2**“Who the Heck Is in Charge Here?”
Courage, Callousness, and (In)competence
Among Leaders in a Crisis**

One of the key questions that surfaced in the aftermath of Katrina and the breaching of the levees was the issue of leadership. Three elected leaders were prominent during the crisis: Mayor Ray Nagin of New Orleans, Governor Kathleen Blanco of the state of Louisiana, and President George W. Bush of the United States. Many other leaders emerged during the crisis, people like Lt. General Russel Honoré of the U.S. Army, who was sent in to get control of the city, and members of the U.S. Coast Guard, who did a heroic job of rescuing stranded individuals in and on top of their homes.

Historical examples abound of leaders and their mettle during times of crisis. In the following mini-unit, which will take

several days to unfold, students examine several examples of leaders in such times: President Lyndon Baines Johnson during Hurricane Betsy, Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy. Teachers might also want to consider adding in other leaders, such as Harry Truman and Winston Churchill, who were not popular nor terribly well regarded when they left office but whom history has judged more favorably.

This lesson assumes a good amount of historical background knowledge about the presidencies of the teachers and leaders here. Although a comprehensive lesson plan is offered, teachers may wish to review their knowledge of these historical figures, either through their own library resources or the recommended reading offered here, before tackling this lesson.

Essential Question

- ◆ How effective were public leaders in the face of the Katrina crisis?

Key Concepts

Leadership, crisis, opportunity, management

Skills Orientation

- Reading comprehension
- Historical comparison
- Application of criteria to evaluating actions
- Development of analytic skills in interpretive discussion

Notes

1. *When the Levees Broke* does not provide much detail about Allen's leadership in search and recovery efforts, where he chose to violate Coast Guard policy in order to save lives. A brief summary of his work can be compiled from various sources online and from a *U.S. News & World Report* article, "Always Ready for the Storm" (<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/061022/30allen.htm>). Allen's inclusion serves as an interesting example of what some would consider effective leadership in times of crisis.
2. The total film time of all segments is 64 minutes. Teachers may want to use one to three clips per day over the course of two or three days so that each can be viewed and analyzed by students.
3. Spike Lee's views as reflected in the film should not serve as the only source of information for students investigating the issue of leadership in this situation. Teachers are encouraged to consult the many excellent books now available on the handling of the storm, as well as newspaper articles and Web essays dealing with this historical event, so that students can gain multiple perspectives on this matter.

Directions

Use the worksheet in Handout 2 to take note of the major events that occur as you watch the clips, keeping track of which leaders were most active on which days.

I. Questions for consideration:

- ◆ How does LBJ's response to Betsy compare to George W. Bush's response to Katrina?
- ◆ Did Blanco/Nagin/Bush/Brown demonstrate personal limitations or was their behavior a function of circumstances beyond their control?
- ◆ Reflecting back on the historical examples of Lincoln/King/Kennedy,
 - ◆ How were the crises different?
 - ◆ Do different types of crises demand different forms of leadership and different types of response to the crisis or catastrophe?
 - ◆ How was Blanco/Nagin/Bush/Brown different in a time of great crisis?
 - ◆ How might the situation in New Orleans have been different if Thad Allen had been mayor? Or Lincoln? Robert F. Kennedy? (Or Giuliani, or Obama, or Clinton? Or someone else that the teachers or students wish to include in this analysis.)

Closure

Teachers lead a summative discussion about the following questions: How effective were public leaders at the local, state, and federal levels in the wake of Katrina? Can you draw any conclusions (make any generalizations) about leadership based on this lesson?

Although this lesson has focused on public leaders, many "everyday heroes," who were not official leaders of any sort,


HANDOUT 1
High School History Lesson 2
Historical Context: Hurricane Betsy vs. Hurricane Katrina

<i>Category of Context</i>	<i>Hurricane Betsy (1965)</i>	<i>Hurricane Katrina (2005)</i>	<i>Other Crises</i>
<i>Extent and Type of Hurricane Destruction</i>			
<i>National Government Response</i>			
<i>State/Local Government Response</i>			
<i>Reactions of Individuals</i>			
<i>Other Salient Current/World Events That Required Government Attention/Spending</i>			
<i>Other Contextual Differences Between the Two Events</i>			

**HANDOUT 2**
High School History Lesson 2**Daily Timeline of Hurricane Katrina**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Major Events</i>
<i>August 28</i>	
<i>August 29</i>	
<i>August 30</i>	
<i>August 31</i>	
<i>September 1</i>	
<i>September 2 and After</i>	

emerged in the days after Katrina and the breach of the levees. Students should discuss whether the qualities of character and courage found in these individuals are the same or different from those they seek in publicly elected officials. They might focus on the questions: What makes a hero in a time of crisis? Does everyone have the potential to be a hero?

Taking Action

Students consider the issue of student leadership at their school. They might ask their student government leaders if they could present their conclusions about leadership to the student body. They might also consider the disaster preparedness plans at their school and what role students and other school leaders will play in case of a crisis or disaster at their school. In light of school and college shootings in recent years, this might be a very useful exercise.

LESSON 3

Looking Beyond New Orleans
Hurricane Katrina and Other Disasters in
American and World History

Disasters are an ever-present aspect of the human condition. They occur around the globe, and with all-too-regular frequency. In a five-year period, they included but were certainly not limited to the terrorist attack on New York City in 2001,

the tsunami in South Asia in 2004, the Hurricane Katrina tragedy, and the Pakistani earthquake of 2005.

Within minutes, disasters can destroy a community and change the lives of its residents forever. The United States has experienced a number of calamities throughout its history, particularly in relation to flooding and heat waves, which have caused problems for underserved populations, just as Hurricane Katrina did. For example, the Johnstown Flood disaster of 1889 was the result of several days of extremely heavy rainfall, made worse by the failure of a dam situated upstream of the town of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, which unleashed a torrent of additional water.

The San Francisco earthquake of 1906 was a major earthquake that struck San Francisco and the northern coast of California on April 18, 1906. The most widely accepted estimate for the magnitude of the earthquake is 7.8; however, other values have been proposed, from 7.7 to as high as 8.3. The epicenter occurred offshore about 2 miles (3 km) from the city. The earthquake and resulting fire are remembered as one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the United States. The toll from the earthquake and resulting fire represents the greatest loss of life from a natural disaster in California's history.

As the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 approached New Orleans, Louisiana, dynamite was set off on the levee at Caernarvon, and sent water pouring through. This prevented New Orleans from experiencing serious damage, but flooded much of St. Bernard Parish. To residents of New Orleans at the time of Katrina, this seemed yet another decision designed to protect the rich at the expense of the poor.

In 1995, the Chicago heat wave brought temperatures of 120 degrees to numerous low-income communities, which did not have the resources to escape the scorching heat.

In all of these disasters, historians have attributed the loss of life and infrastructure damage to poorly conceived urban development policies that benefited the wealthy, while ignoring the plight of the less fortunate.

This lesson will focus on parallels between the Johnstown Flood of 1889, the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, the Chicago heat wave of 1995, and Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans. With some additional teacher research, other comparisons could be made, for example, to the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the December 26, 2004, South Asian tsunami, or the October 8, 2005, Pakistan earthquake.

Essential Question

- ◆ What does the study of history tell us about the nature and effects of so-called natural disasters?

Key Concepts

Floods, disaster prevention and relief, social inequality

Skills Orientation

- Viewing video segment
- Reading comprehension
- Analysis of written and visual texts
- Analysis of maps

Relevant Sections of the Film

Act I, Chapter 3. Note in particular the following scenes:



HANDOUT 1 High School History Lesson 3

“Race and Hurricane Katrina: Two Questions”

—Excerpt from Web log of Amardeep Singh, Professor of English at Lehigh University, Wednesday, August 31, 2005, <http://www.lehigh.edu/~amsp/2005/08/race-and-hurricane-katrina-two.html>

First, have you noticed that numerous articles refer to the affected region as “third world” in its devastation? (Example: CNN) I always cringe when I read that.

But it’s worth thinking about. Remember how after the Bombay flood last month (37.1 inches in 24 hours), there were numerous articles in the Indian media lamenting the city’s inability to keep things running smoothly? Well, it doesn’t just happen in India. Natural disasters happen to everyone; it isn’t something to be embarrassed about. (Still, I wish they wouldn’t use poorer parts of the world as a benchmark for the scale of the disaster.)

Here the authorities had access to good predictions for the storm, and were able to execute a large-scale evacuation of part of the population quickly. It would be great if monsoon rains could be predicted with as much accuracy. Does anyone know the science behind this? Why did no one have any idea that 37 inches of rain were about to hit the city of Bombay last month?

It is also worth considering that the area in question with Katrina is much less densely populated than Bombay (1.5 million people in the entire New Orleans metro area; compare to 20 million+ in greater Bombay).

The second issue circles around race within the U.S. If you watch the news footage of the post-Katrina rescue opera-

tions, you’ll notice again and again that the people being rescued seem to be overwhelmingly African American.

There could be any number of reasons for this. One is, it’s quite plausible to infer that more African Americans ignored or didn’t get the message about the mandatory evacuation before the storm. Some folks may not have had the physical means to get out (i.e., a car & a credit card), or a place to go. Another factor might be topography: it’s possible that many Black neighborhoods are in low-lying areas (though I admit I don’t know the New Orleans area very well). And finally, one shouldn’t forget that in terms of sheer demographics, these areas as a whole have large African American populations.

I’m not trying to imply racism is afoot. Only this: the fact that Blacks seem to have been disproportionately affected by this tragedy reminds us of the inequities that existed before the Hurricane happened. When we see folks being airlifted to safety, it should probably be on our minds that they were the ones who lived in the most vulnerable housing to begin with, and were also in many cases unable to think of leaving it behind. . . .

The mayor of Biloxi, Mississippi called Katrina “Our Tsunami”, and judging from the pictures of Biloxi and Jackson, he may be right (though, as massive as the disaster is, it is still much smaller in scale than the Tsunami, which caused huge damage in eight countries, and left nearly 1000 times more people dead). But as with the tsunami, there is here a story behind the tragedy—a pattern of ongoing suffering that existed before the storm—that people aren’t talking about.

G. The South Asian tsunami catastrophe of 2004:

1. Have students consider the impact of disasters from a global perspective. In the South Asian tsunami in the 2004, 275,000 people were killed.
2. Discuss the following questions:
 - ◆ Why were so many casualties reported in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand?
 - ◆ What are some similarities between this disaster and Hurricane Katrina? What are some differences? For the 2004 Tsunami, did the worst destruction occur in underserved and low elevation areas?
 - ◆ Do you agree with the assertion made by an interviewee in *When the Levees Broke* that the U.S. government provided more immediate assistance to victims of the 2004 tsunami than to its own citizens after Hurricane Katrina? How does this debate relate to usage of the term “refugee” in *When the Levees Broke*?
 - ◆ What are the dangers of leaving several hundred casualties in one place for several days? Was this also a concern during Hurricane Katrina? Which communities suffered the most casualties? Why?

3. Have students read the excerpted version of Professor Singh’s Web log (Handout 1), in which he cites the mayor of Biloxi, MS, who compares Katrina to “our tsunami.”

Closure

Discuss the following questions: What does Professor Singh believe to be the connection between the Katrina disaster and the tsunami disaster? What reasons does he give for the fact that it seemed that so many of those who were being rescued were African Americans? Does he believe racism is at work here? From what you know about the tragedies of September 11 and the Hurricane Katrina tragedy, what are the similarities and differences between the two? What are the similarities and differences between the Katrina tragedy and the South Asian tsunami? Why is it that there comes a point when “people aren’t talking about” the disasters anymore? Is this a problem?

Taking Action

Students can check out the National Service Learning Clearinghouse for ways to respond to recent disasters: <http://servicelearning.org/>. They can also look into the possibilities for responding to Katrina on the HBO Web site at <http://www.hbo.com/docs/programs/whentheleveesbroke/resources.html>.