

**Title: Groveland Four and Media Responsibility**

**Grade Level: 9-12<sup>th</sup>**

**Subject: ELA/ Social Studies**

**Keywords: Sensationalize, Journalism, bias, lynching**



<b>Lesson Plan:</b>	The Groveland Four and Media Responsibility
<b>Subject:</b>	English Language Arts/ Social Studies/ African American History
<b>Grade:</b>	9-12 <sup>th</sup> grade
<b>Description/ Abstract of Lesson</b>	Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.  Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources
<b>SS.912.A.1.5</b>	Evaluate the validity, reliability, bias, and authenticity of current events and Internet resources. Use research and inquiry skills to analyze American history using primary and secondary sources.
<b>SS.912.A.7.6</b>	Understand the rise and continuing international influence of the United States as a world leader and the impact of contemporary social and political movements on American life
<b>SS.912.A.6.4</b>	Examine efforts to expand or contract rights for various populations during World War II.
<b>LAFS912.RH.1.1</b>	Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information
<b>LAFS.910.W.3.8</b>	Research to Build and Present Knowledge
<b>Objective(s):</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Students will be able to report the responsibility of the News Media</li><li>Analyze primary and secondary sources of the author's point of view</li></ul>
<b>Materials:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Grover Four Case</li><li>Newspaper or Newsela</li><li>PEELS – Graphic Organizer</li><li>Computers</li></ul>
<b>Duration:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1-2 class periods</li><li>Block Scheduling (90 min.) 2 class period</li></ul>
<b>Lesson Lead In/</b>	1. Open the class discussion from the Warmup or Do Now.

<b>Opening:</b>	2. Ask the question: What is bias and are news media written in bias forms?
<b>Activity 1:</b>	Warm up or Do Now: What is the job of the News Media?
<b>Activity 2:</b>	Provide students with The Grover Four Case. Using the Graphic Organizer PEEL have student complete the graphic organizer while reading the case as a whole group (you may want to read the case to the students)
<b>Activity 3:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students research news articles using Newsela or Newspaper.</li> <li>• Allow students to choose a story that may show bias writing.</li> <li>• Have students share their evidence of bias writing due to the article.</li> <li>• Have students rewrite the article as an objective writer (remind them to use multiple sources)</li> </ul>
<b>Activity 4:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students roll play a television news broadcast</li> <li>• Allow students to choose their roll as (anchors, writers, investigative reporter, set designer)</li> <li>• Present broadcasting</li> </ul>
<b>Higher Order Thinking Questions:</b>	What are the goals of the news media? Which Amendment the due process of law and were the men granted their rights?
<b>Suggested Books:</b>	<i>Devil in the Grove: Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland Boys, and the Dawn of a New America.</i> By Gilbert King
<b>Web Resources</b>	<p>Florida Terror: <a href="https://www.pbs.org/harrymoore/terror/groveland.html">https://www.pbs.org/harrymoore/terror/groveland.html</a></p> <p>Irvin's statement to Williams: <a href="https://www-tc.pbs.org/harrymoore/terror/images/irvin1_lg.gif">https://www-tc.pbs.org/harrymoore/terror/images/irvin1_lg.gif</a></p> <p>Norman Padgett's Testimony: <a href="https://www-tc.pbs.org/harrymoore/terror/images/norma_lg.gif">https://www-tc.pbs.org/harrymoore/terror/images/norma_lg.gif</a></p> <p>Orlando Sentinel <a href="https://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/editorials/os-op-orlando-sentinel-apologizes-groveland-four-20190109-story.html">https://www.orlandosentinel.com/opinion/editorials/os-op-orlando-sentinel-apologizes-groveland-four-20190109-story.html</a></p>

## The Groveland Four, 1949 Case

### Background of Groveland

In 1949, Groveland, Florida Black soldiers returning to home from serving their country. Although they had taken part in changing the history of the world, their world was little changed. Blacks were expected to work in the fields, especially at harvesting time when a shortage of labor meant oranges falling to the ground to rot. Sheriff Willis McCall, whose brutal treatment of blacks had become widely known. McCall's major job was to keep union organizers out of the county and make sure there was a steady supply of fruit pickers who were willing to work for low wages.

### Victims

Sammy Shepherd and Walter Irvin returned home to their parents' Groveland homes after serving in the Army. Shepherd and Irvin were violating several of McCall's rules. By wearing their Army uniform and they refused to work in the fields. Their fathers had demonstrated an independence that did not sit well with the whites. They had their own farm and had done well.

Charles Greenlee who was 16 years of age at the time, was job hunting. Ernest Thomas was at home with his family.

### Case

A young white couple, Willie and Norma Padgett, told police that they were on their way home from a dance when their car stalled on a lonely road. The two said that Shepherd, Irvin and two other blacks, Charles Greenlee and Ernest Thomas, had stopped to help them. But Willie Padgett claimed that the four attacked him and left him on the side of the road while they drove off with his wife. Seventeen-year-old Norma Padgett told police that she was raped.

Within hours McCall had the prisoners, Greenlee, Shepherd, and Irvin were in jail. Thomas fled the county and avoided a posse led by McCall until he was shot and killed about 200 miles northwest of Lake County.

In Orlando, the president of the Orlando NAACP asked the national office for help and NAACP attorney Franklin Williams promised to come. Williams gathered information that showed the evidence was highly questionable. When Williams met with the three suspects, he found their bodies covered with cuts and bruises - the result of beatings administered by deputies to obtain confessions. The three told Williams that they had been hung from pipes with their feet touching broken glass and clubbed. [View Walter Irvin's statement to Williams]

Williams had doubts whether the rape had even taken place. Although Norma Padgett claimed to have been raped and kidnapped, a white restaurant owner who gave her a ride after the alleged rape said she did not appear upset and did not mention the rape. Also, she did not claim to have been raped until after talking with her husband. Williams

suspected that William Padgett had beaten his wife and the two wanted to hide the truth from her parents, who had warned him against hitting their daughter.

### **Orlando Sentinel**

Ormond Powers, a reporter for the Orlando Morning Sentinel who covered the case, reported there were an estimated 200 cars carrying 500 to 600 men demanded that McCall turn the three men over to them for lynching. McCall refused and hid the suspects in a nearby orange grove.

The day of the trial, The Orlando Morning Sentinel, ran a front page cartoon with three electric chairs and the caption, "No Compromise." Powers said, "We always ran our cartoons on page one and in color, so you couldn't miss it. It was big and it provoked, oh man, they started investigating the newspaper and this upset the publisher very much."

### **A Night of Terror**

The members of the mob rejected McCall's advice. Unable to find the three, the mob looked for a new target. They turned on Groveland. The men drove to Groveland in a caravan and once they arrived, they began shooting into black homes and set them afire. But local blacks apparently had been warned of the approaching caravan and fled. Powers said he remembered blacks being loaded into trucks to get them out of town.

Even with the coming of dawn, the mob was not through. In Groveland, a number of black-owned homes had suffered damage, although the mob saved its greatest vengeance for the home of Henry Shepherd, which was destroyed. They set up blockades on the highway into Groveland and waited for unsuspecting blacks.

On July 18, Governor Fuller Warren yielded to the calls of the NAACP and sent in the National Guard. Over the following six days, the Guard gradually restored order.

### **The Trial**

As the trial began, Williams the attorney for the three gentlemen request a change of venue, due to the Orlando Sentinel bias editorial. The judge rejected the request for a change of venue.

Despite evidence showing that Shepherd and Irvin were in Orlando at the time of the crime, and Greenlee was nineteen miles away, a jury took just ninety minutes to find them guilty. Norma Padgett testified that she had been raped.

Powers of the Orlando Sentinel describe her in his article of a "small slightly built, very young, she was 17 at the time, a little country girl. She was wearing a house dress. . . . She looked as though a slight breath of wind would blow her over... I thought she was a good witness."

Irvin and Shepherd were sentenced to death and the 16-year-old Greenlee was sentenced to prison.

United States District Attorney Herbert Phillips of Tampa, whose views of race and the guilt of the three defendants was not significantly different from that of the members of the Groveland mob. He refused to call key witnesses and any attempt at a fair investigation vanished.

### **The Shooting**

McCall drove to Raiford State Prison to bring Irvin and Shepherd back to Tavares for a retrial. McCall said that during the nighttime trip back, he mentioned that one of his tires seemed to be low. McCall said that when he stopped the car to check the tire, and to let Irvin go to the bathroom, Shepherd and Irvin tried to overpower him, even though they were handcuffed together. McCall said he pulled his gun and shot both prisoners. Shepherd was killed, but despite being shot twice, Irvin survived.

Irvin lived to tell a completely different story about that night. He said that McCall pulled the car over to the side of the road and told the two to get out. He pulled his gun and shot Shepherd and Irvin in the upper right chest. Irvin said he pretended to be dead and heard McCall brag on his police radio, "I got rid of them." When a deputy arrived and turned his flashlight on Irvin, he noticed that he was still alive and suggested to McCall that Irvin be killed. The deputy pulled the trigger, Irvin said, but the gun misfired. After inspecting his gun, the deputy fired again and shot Irvin in the neck.

Powers, Orlando Sentinel, went to see McCall in the hospital and that the sheriff did have a bump on his head and was bleeding. "He looked pretty bumped up, so something happened to him." The coroner's inquest cleared McCall and even praised him. Due to Powers reporting, the Case won national support from other news outage, from Mississippi to Tulsa, Oklahoma with the same sentiments as Powers.

In 1962, Greenlee was paroled and Irvin was released in 1968. Greenlee moved to Tennessee after his release and never returned to Florida. Irvin initially moved to Miami, but returned to Lake County for a visit in 1970. He died there of a heart attack.

All four men were posthumously pardoned on January 11, 2019 by Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

## P.E.E.L. Graphic Organizer

Use the following chart to help you organize your P.E.E.L. written response.

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>P</b>	Point 1-2 sentences explain the main idea of your written response	
<b>E</b>	E1	Explain your first supporting idea
	E2	Explain your second supporting idea
	E2	Provide evidence from the text to support your second supporting idea
<b>E</b>	E3	Explain your third supporting idea
	E3	Provide evidence from the text to support your third supporting idea

L

Link: Make a connection to yourself, another text, or to the world. Include a concluding sentence