



## Lesson Plan:

### THE FILM:

This lesson plan is designed to be used in conjunction with the 30-minute film *Hardwood*. *Hardwood* is a personal journey by director Hubert Davis, the son of former Harlem Globetrotter Mel Davis, who explores how his father's decisions affected his life. Set against the backdrop of our country's race relations in a time of social strife, this moving film is a portrait of one African American man's ultimately successful efforts to be a good father and an example of how modern society has redefined our notion of family. Now a coach for young basketball players, Mel recalls falling in love at first sight with Hubert's mother, a white woman, at a time when racism made their union impossible, and then his subsequent marriage to a black woman and the birth of their son. Both women in Mel's life, the mothers of his two sons, speak movingly about love and betrayal, and both sons speak of the pain caused by their absent father and its effect on their mothers. In addition to acknowledging the complexity of the history of racism in North America, this film provides wonderful examples of working through difficult father-son relationships.

This lesson provides students with an opportunity to explore and discuss the difficulties and importance of communication across generations and the larger effect of personal storytelling.

You can obtain copies of *Hardwood* for educational use from [www.filmakers.com/indivs/Hardwood.htm](http://www.filmakers.com/indivs/Hardwood.htm).

### OBJECTIVES:

In this lesson, students will:

- Examine the current debate over sex education
- Understand the difference in approach between abstinence only and comprehensive sex education
- Know which approach to sex education is used in their school district and understand the reasons for adoption of that approach
- Understand U.S. historical approaches to information about sex and sexuality
- Be able to identify the content and purpose of the Comstock Act
- Use the Internet for research, with special focus on .gov sites
- Take notes and write summary paragraphs and a short persuasive essay

**GRADE LEVEL:** 19-12

**SUBJECT AREAS:** History, Civics, Government (see related learning standards below)

**MATERIALS:**

- Student Handouts
- VHS/DVD of *Hardwood*, VCR/DVD player & monitor
- Internet access for student research

**ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED:** 4 class periods

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

*Hardwood* is an excellent tool for the high school classroom because it presents a compelling human story which will resonate with the family experiences of all kinds of students. To provide context for the story, this lesson asks students to examine the 1967 U.S. Supreme Court case *Loving vs. Virginia*, that found laws against miscegenation—marriage between whites and non-whites—illegally discriminated on the basis of race.

As preparation for viewing the film, or as part of a unit on the civil rights movement, have students research the history of interracial marriage in North America. While viewing *Hardwood* have students take note of discussions about interracial marriage. After viewing, discuss the differences between attitudes towards interracial relationships in the 1960's, when Megan and Mel met, and today. As a homework activity have students prepare a report on changing laws and attitudes towards interracial marriage in the United States. Alternately, have them write a personal reflection on what they think the significance is of the changing attitudes and laws pertaining to interracial marriage, either in *Hardwood* or in their own lives.

Because the film and the lesson deal with questions related to sensitive subject matter, we strongly recommend pre-screening and careful preparation. Students should be mature enough to discuss the issues using academic and political language.

Historical Background on Loving vs. Virginia

In reviewing the supreme court case with students, you may want to mention the following:

resented here is the actual text of the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of Loving v. Virginia, the case which overturned the laws against interracial marriage still in effect as late as 1967 in 16 states. Many other states had enacted such laws in previous years, but had repealed them by the time of the Loving Decision.

The case is not only about intermarriage, but also, about how this country defined people in terms of "race", for not only did the Virginia statute in question prohibit the intermarriage of "whites" with "coloreds" and American Indians, it also assigned

multiracial people to one or the other of these groups (but never to more than one or to a separate mixed category), depending upon the degree and type of mixture.

A white person was someone with no trace of any but "Caucasian blood", with the exception of a person who had 1/16 or less of American Indian ancestry (and no other non-white ancestry), an allowance notably covering some wealthy and well-respected descendants of Pocahontas and John Rolfe. A black person was anyone with any "ascertainable" negro blood, the classic expression of the infamous "one-drop-rule". An American Indian was anyone with at least 1/4 Indian ancestry, or anyone with at least 1/4 Indian blood and no more than 1/16 "Negro" blood and who was also a member of an Indian tribe

Richard and Mildred Loving were married in 1958 in Washington D.C. because their home state of Virginia still upheld the antimiscegenation law which stated that interracial marriages were illegal. They were married, then lived together in Caroline County, Virginia. In 1959 they were prosecuted and convicted of violating the states's antimiscegenation law. They were each sentenced one year in jail, but promised the sentence would be suspended if they agreed to leave the state and not return for 25 years. Forced to move, they returned to Washington D.C. where, in 1963, they initiated a suit challenging the constitutionality of the antimiscegenation law. In March of 1966, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals upheld the law, but in June of 1967, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled the law unconstitutional. Thus, in 1967 the 16 states which still had antimiscegenation laws on their books were forced to erase them

### **ACTIVITY:**

#### **Class 1:**

- a) Let students know that they are going to do a brief unit examining the history of intermarriage in the United States and that the unit will begin by looking at historical context.
- b) Distribute the text of the Chief Justice Warren's opinion and give students a brief background on the law (see background section).
- c) Distribute the research questions handout and assign students to use the Internet to answer the questions on the history of interracial marriage. Students can write in note form rather than full paragraphs, but let them know that you will be asking for their answers during the next class period.
- d) You may also wish to restrict student research to .gov websites. To create a list of sites that you find acceptable, you may want to go to [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com). This site allows for a comprehensive search of all government sites. Type in "Loving v. Virginia".

#### **Class 2:**

- a) Ask students to share what they have learned about the case. Discuss and summarize, helping students see that how
- b) Let students know that they are going to shift from the kind of public discourse addressed in the "Loving v. Virginia" to the person way in which this type of discourse affected one family in particular.

- c) In preparation for showing *Hardwood*, remind students of the questions on their research handout and assign them to take notes during the film that will provide answers to those questions.
- d) Show *Hardwood*.

**Class 3:**

- a) Encourage students to share their reactions to the film. For general discussion questions see the discussion guide.  
[http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2005/shelbyknox/resources\\_guide.php](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pov2005/shelbyknox/resources_guide.php)
- b) Assign as homework the task of turning notes on the *Loving vs. Virginia* and *Hardwood* into summary paragraphs.

**Class 4:**

- a) Start a class discussion by asking students to list the similarities and differences between .....Discuss how the history of restricting speech about sex influences the current debate over sex education in schools. Also discuss the difference between general public dissemination of information, and information taught in a public school classroom.
- b) Let students examine their school district's sex education policy. If this policy is available in writing, distribute copies. If not, you may wish to invite an administrator or school board member to your class to provide the information to students.
- c) Wrap up the discussion by asking students to identify the difference between sharing information (a school's responsibility) and sharing values (a family's responsibility). As time allows, invite students to share their views on their school's approach to sex education.

**ASSESSMENT:** Collect homework (summary paragraphs) and use it to assess student comprehension.

Optional: Assign students to write an op/ed for or against abstinence-only education using at least one historical reference to back up your position, or write a letter to your school board indicating support for or opposition to current school policy.

**WORKSHEETS / HANDOUTS:**

1. Student research questions
2. Text of Comstock Act – Note: the paragraph breaks and numbers are to help with comprehension and discussion. They are not in the original document.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**  
for *THE EDUCATION OF SHELBY KNOX*

	<b>COMSTOCK ACT</b>	<b>THE EDUCATION OF SHELBY KNOX</b>
FOR SUPPORTERS OF THE LEGISLATION OR POLICY:		
What did the legislation/policy say?		
What problem(s) was the legislation/policy intended to address?		
How would the legislation/policy solve the problem(s)?		
FOR OPPONENTS OF THE LEGISLATION OR POLICY:		
Did they agree that there was a problem?		
If they agreed that there was a problem, how did they define that problem?		
Why didn't they think the proposed legislation/policy would solve the problem(s)?		
Describe any alternative solutions proposed.		
FOR SUPPORTER AND OPPONENTS:		
How did the way that people defined the problem(s) influence the solutions they crafted?		

**FORTY-SECOND CONGRESS. Sess. III. CH. 258. 1873.**  
**CHAP. CCLVIII. - An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of,**  
**Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That whoever, within the District of Columbia or any of the Territories of the United States, or other place within the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States,

- (1) shall sell, or lend, or give away, or in any manner exhibit, or shall offer to sell, or to lend, or to give away, or in any manner to exhibit, or shall otherwise publish or, offer to publish in any manner,
- (2) or shall have in his possession, for any such purpose or purposes,
- (3) any obscene book, pamphlet, paper, writing, advertisement, circular, print, picture, drawing or other representation, figure, or image on or of paper or other material,
- (4) or any cast, instrument, or other article of an immoral nature, or any drug or medicine, or any article whatever, for the prevention of conception, or for causing unlawful abortion,
- (5) or shall advertise the same for sale,
- (6) or shall write or print, or cause to be written or printed, any card, circular, book, pamphlet, advertisement, or notice of any kind, stating when, where, how, or of whom, or by what means, any of the articles in this section hereinbefore mentioned, can be purchased or obtained,
- (7) or shall manufacture, draw, or print, or in any wise make any of such articles,
- (8) shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction thereof in any court of the United States having criminal jurisdiction in the District of Columbia, or in any Territory or place within the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States, where such misdemeanor shall have been committed; and on conviction thereof, he shall be imprisoned at hard labor in the penitentiary for not less than six months nor more than five years for each offense, or fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than two thousand dollars, with costs of court.

SEC. 2. That section one hundred and forty-eight of the act to revise, consolidate, and amend the statutes relating to the Post-office Department, approved June eighth, eighteen hundred and seventy-two, be amended to read as follows:

- (9) "SEC. 148. That no obscene, lewd, or lascivious book, pamphlet, picture, paper, print, or other publication of an indecent character,
- (10) or any article or thing designed or intended for the prevention of conception or procuring of abortion,
- (11) nor any article or thing intended or adapted for any indecent or immoral use or nature,
- (12) nor any written or printed card, circular, book, pamphlet, advertisement or notice of any kind giving information, directly or indirectly, where, or how, or of whom, or by what means either of the things before mentioned may be obtained or made,
- (13) nor any letter upon the envelope of which, or postal-card upon which indecent or scurrilous epithets may be written or printed, shall be carried in the mail,
- (14) and any person who shall knowingly deposit, or cause to be deposited, for mailing or delivery, any of the hereinbefore-mentioned articles or things, or any notice, or paper containing any advertisement relating to the aforesaid articles or things,
- (15) and any person who, in pursuance of any plan or scheme for disposing of any of the hereinbefore-mentioned articles or things, shall take, or cause to be taken, from the mail any such letter or package,
- (16) shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction thereof, shall, for every offense, be fined not less than one hundred dollars nor more than five thousand dollars, or imprisoned at hard labor not less than one year nor more than ten years, or both, in the discretion of the judge."

## EXTENSIONS & ADAPTATIONS:

- Look at FCC laws governing indecency. What kinds of messages are prohibited by U.S. law? Ask students to examine the media they use most (video games, music, magazines, etc.) and assess whether or not they circumvent the intent of the FCC regulations.
- Ask students to find examples of current media messages about sex. Discuss what kinds of messages are being communicated and whether or not the messages promote healthy behavior.
- Ask students to interview their parents or guardians about their views on the types of information about sex that schools and/or media should disseminate.
- Research sex education policies from other countries and compare to current U.S. policy. In what ways are motives and methods similar and different?
- If your school's Internet blocking policies made research on the Comstock Act difficult or impossible, you may want to engage students in a discussion of the pros and cons of requiring schools or libraries to use blocking software. This could be extended to a school-wide survey about appropriate Internet access policy and eventual student recommendations to administrators and the school board.

## RESOURCES:

[www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/tguide/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/pill/tguide/index.html) - The website of the PBS series, *American Experience*. This episode is on the history of The Pill. The site includes brief histories of the Comstock Act and the work of Margaret Sanger.

[www.ppnep.org/timeline.htm](http://www.ppnep.org/timeline.htm) – Planned Parenthood has created this timeline of reproductive rights, including rights involving contraception.

[www.womenshealth.about.com/library/blandreatone.htm](http://www.womenshealth.about.com/library/blandreatone.htm) - This excerpt from historian Andrea Tone's *Devices and Desires: A History of Contraception in America*, provides details on how the Comstock Act came to be law.

[http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/rcah/html/ah\\_009600\\_birthcontrol.htm](http://college.hmco.com/history/readerscomp/rcah/html/ah_009600_birthcontrol.htm) - Historian Linda Gordon provides a brief overview of the history of birth control information in the U.S.

## **STANDARDS:**

### **Level IV [Grade: 9-12]**

#### **Health**

Standard 10: Understands the fundamental concepts of growth and development

10.2 Understands how physical, mental, social, and cultural factors influence attitudes and behaviors regarding sexuality

#### **Civics**

Standard 1: Understands ideas about civic life, politics, and government

1. Understands how politics enables a group of people with varying opinions and/or interests to reach collective decisions, influence decisions, and accomplish goals that they could not reach as individuals (e.g., managing the distribution of resources, allocating benefits and burdens, managing conflicts)

2. Knows formal institutions that have the authority to make and implement binding decisions (e.g., tribal councils, courts, monarchies, democratic legislatures)

4. Understands the sources of political authority (e.g., consent of the governed, birth, knowledge) and its functions (e.g., create and enforce laws)

5. Understands why politics is found wherever people gather as a group (e.g., it enables groups to reach collective, binding decisions that can be enforced)

7. Understands some of the major competing ideas about the purposes of politics and government (e.g., achieving a religious vision, glorifying the state, enhancing economic prosperity, providing for a nation's security), and knows examples of past and present governments that serve these purposes

8. Understands how the purposes served by a government affect relationships between the individual and government and between government and society as a whole (e.g., the purpose of promoting a religious vision of what society should be like may require a government to restrict individual thought and actions, and place strict controls on the whole of the society)

Standard 11: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society

Source: [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)