
Alice Allison Dunnigan

“If I can so live to inspire others to strive to achieve, I will not have lived my life in vain.”

Lesson Plan for the SEEK Museum



Description of Lesson:

In this lesson students will explore the life and legacy of Alice Allison Dunnigan, a groundbreaking and award winning journalist who through hard-work, determination, and a refusal to accept the racist and sexist policies that often closed the doors of opportunity to her, became the first African-American woman journalist to be Accredited to the White House, the first African-American woman to travel with the President of the United States, the first African-American woman to report from the U.S. Capitol press gallery, and so much more.

Students will get the opportunity to learn the basics of biographical reporting and will use these skills to create a biographical sketch of Dunnigan from a selection of audio and video clips about her life as well as excerpts from her autobiography, “A Black Woman’s Experience: From Schoolhouse to White House” and their own research.

Finally, students will be asked to choose a subject that serves as an inspiration in their own community, school, or to them personally. They will conduct an interview with this individual and create a short video newscast presenting a profile of their very own “Local Inspiration”.

This lesson plan was built in coordination with and for the SEEK Museum, Russellville, KY.

Grades: 6-12 (K-5 in development)

Time Needed: 2-5 class periods.

Materials:

- Computers or tablets with internet access.
- Student Headphones
- Printed Students Handouts (*digital copies are provided*)

Learning Objectives:

Students will...

RI.6.1, RI.7.1, RI.8.1, RI.9-10.1, RI.11-12.1

Cite relevant and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says.

RI.6.7, RI.7.7, RI.8.7, RI.9-10.7, RI.11-12.7

Analyze various accounts of a subject presented in different print and non-print formats.

RI.6.9, RI.7.9, RI.8.9, RI.9-10.9, RI.11-12.9

Analyze documents of historical significance, including how they address related themes.

C.6.1a, C.7.1a, C.8.1a, C.9-10.1a, C.11-12.1a

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

C.6.1g, C.7.1g, C.8.1g, C.9-10.1g, C.11-12.1g

Develop and strengthen writing by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose or audience.

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Examine how Kentuckians influence and are influenced by major national developments in U.S. history from 1877-present.

Subject Areas: ELA/ Social Studies

Introductory Activity

Step 1:

Instructors should begin the lesson by watching this short video (1:44) with the class introducing Alice Allison Dunnigan, created by the SEEK Museum.



 Civil rights and Alice Dunnigan

Now, engage students with a brief discussion over the video.

- What did the video say Dunnigan is known for?
- What does a journalist do?
- What year did Dunnigan become the first African-American woman to be credentialed to cover the White House?

Step 2:

Next, students will learn a little more about the life and legacy of Alice Allison Dunnigan. Break students into groups of 4-5 students and ask each group to learn about the life of Dunnigan by reading through the materials created by the SEEK Museum.

Each group should make at least three notes from each of the four readings for the group discussion afterward. These notes should focus on:

- How did Dunnigan become a journalist?
- What obstacles did she encounter, and how did she react to these obstacles?
- What were Dunnigan's greatest achievements?
- How is Dunnigan remembered?
- What fact or piece of information was the most interesting to you and your group as you read these articles?

SEEK Museum Reading List: *(these readings may be printed or used digitally)*

[ **Dunnigan: The Importance of the Negro Press**]

[ **Dunnigan: Civil Rights Pioneer**]

[ **Dunnigan: Discrimination**]

[ **Dunnigan: National Pioneer Journalist**]

Teacher Note: You may accommodate students with reading or comprehension difficulty by reducing the number of readings provided to each student group.

Step 3:

To wrap up our Introductory Activity, the Instructors should lead a class discussion over Alice Allison Dunnigan. Using the questions presented to students during step 2, introduce each question to the class and ask each group to participate by making a comment based on their notes for each question.

Finally, ask students to end the activity by explaining to the class what fact or piece of information from the readings they thought was the most interesting, and why that fact caught their attention.

Learning Activity

Instructors should begin by explaining to the class the day's objectives:

Alice Allison Dunnigan was a groundbreaking journalist who often asked such hard-hitting questions that the Eisenhower White House asked her to submit her questions in advance. The stories she wrote in Washington D.C. were published across the nation.

Today, we will learn the principles of writing a journalistic profile, and then we will listen to interview clips with Dunnigan, watch video clips of her family, and read excerpts from her autobiography to write your own journalistic profile of Alice Allison Dunnigan.

[[Lesson Handout: Resource Notes](#)]

[[Lesson Handout: 10 Steps to Writing a Journalistic Profile](#)]

Step 1:

Begin by reviewing yesterday's lesson with the class:

- What do you remember about Alice Allison Dunnigan?
- What else would you like to know about Dunnigan's life?
- If you were going to tell someone about the life of Dunnigan, what do you think the most important piece of information would be?

Step 2:

Now, explain to the class that the first thing a journalist must do when writing an article is research. Without researching a topic, a journalist has no idea how they should approach their subject. For this article, each student will be responsible for reviewing the resources provided about the life of Alice Allison Dunnigan, and finding at least one additional resource online. Students should take notes on at least five different sources, including at least one video source and one audio source. They will use these notes to help them write their journalistic profile of Dunnigan. Provide students with the **Lesson Handout: Resource Notes** to help organize their research.

Resources:

[[“Alice Allison Dunnigan.”](#) Historical Marker #1960. *Kentucky History*]

Teacher Note: The historical marker in honor of Dunnigan is located in Carrico Park, near the intersection of 4th St. and Main St, only a few blocks from the SEEK Museum.

[[“Alice Allison Dunnigan Was a National Pioneer Journalist for African Americans, Women.”](#) *The Logan Journal*]

[[“Alice Dunnigan, First Black Woman to Cover White House, Will Get Statue at Newseum.”](#) *New York Times*]

[[“Alice Allison Dunnigan: Kentucky Life”](#) KET]

[[“Alice Dunnigan: Connections”](#) KET]

[[Harvard Audio](#) (1977)]

[[Transcript of Harvard Audio](#)]

[[Columbia Interview](#) (1971)]

[[Alone Atop the Hill](#) : A condensed and reprinted edition of Dunnigan’s autobiography, *A Black Woman’s Experience: From Schoolhouse to White House*]

[[African American Journalist Alice Allison Dunnigan](#) C-SPAN]

[[Remembering Alice Allison Dunnigan: Pioneering White House Reporter](#) *Newseum*]

[[First two Black women in White House press corps honored with lifetime achievement awards](#) *CBS News*]

Teacher Note: Through the efforts of our Archivist & Curator, The SEEK Museum is digitizing hundreds of additional archival documents regarding Dunnigan. Please contact the museum with any inquiries about additional research.

Step 3:

As students are working, walk through the classroom and check in on students to ensure they are able to identify portions of each resource that will help them complete their article. Ask students what information they intend to include in their work.

Once the class has taken notes over 2 to 3 resources, ask them to stop for a moment. Explain that we will now go over how to write our journalistic profiles.

Provide a copy of the **Lesson Handout: 10 Steps to Writing a Journalistic Profile** to each student and read through each step with the class. Ensure that students understand the requirements and how they should proceed to complete the assignment. Then, ask them to finish up their research.

Step 4:

When students have finished their research, talk to each student to ensure they understand how to create a basic outline of their article. This should be done by placing pieces of information they have gathered in their notes in either the introduction, the body, or the conclusion of their article. Encourage students to also identify which quotes from their research they would like to use, and where those quotes might be the most effective in their writing.

Step 5:

Circulate through the class as students write. As students finish, encourage them to find a quiet corner of the classroom, or make use of the hallway, to quietly read their articles aloud. Help students that have finished share their article with another student for proofreading.

Extension Activity

Now that the class has an idea of how to write a journalistic profile, ask them to flex that muscle a little.

Every community contains people who, like Alice Allison Dunnigan, provide us with an example of what we can achieve, who we can be, how we can succeed where no one has before.

This week we have celebrated the legacy of just one of these individuals. **Now, we are asking you to share a person from your community, your school, your church, or your family that is an inspiration to you.**

Who has inspired you to do better? Who has shown you how to succeed? For this assignment, we won't be conducting research online. Once you have identified a person, create a list of questions about their life. In addition to basic biographical details, focus on the aspect of their life that you find inspirational. How did they reach their goals? What did they do to succeed? What advice would they offer you and your friends?

Then, be a journalist and ask that person for an interview. Ask your questions and take notes when they answer. (It may be helpful to record the interview on a phone, but make sure to ask your subject's permission to record them before beginning.) If your subject will allow it, take their picture to include in your article.

Finally, follow the steps we took in our previous assignment and write your own journalistic profile: "Inspiring Tomorrow."

We would love for your students to share their Community Inspirations with us. If they would like their work to be featured in our collection of inspirational individuals, ask them to submit their work to the SEEK Museum web page under "Local Inspirations."