Lesson Title – Investigating the KKK
From Kristen Blore

Grade – 8th grade

Length of class period – 55 minutes

Inquiry – What do primary sources tell us about the beliefs and methodology of the KKK during Reconstruction?

Objectives –
Students will analyze and evaluate parts of a Klansman’s Manuel, newspaper articles from the time, and an interview to make observations and deductions about the Klan during Reconstruction.

Materials –
Overview Article
Portions of the Klansman’s Manuel
Newspaper articles from the late 1860s and early 1870s
Interview of Abram Colby
Student analysis guide

Activities –

Warm Up – Hand out student analysis guide. Have students complete the warm-up question - What is the KKK? Why did the organization develop during Reconstruction? Discuss.

Group Activity – Divide students into partners or small groups. Distribute all materials to each group. Give them about a half hour to work their way through the various materials. Students should complete the questions on the students activity guide as they proceed. Encourage discussion within the groups regarding what they are seeing. What feelings do these items evoke?

Wrap – Up – As groups finish the activity, have them work on the wrap up questions on the worksheet.

1. This time period and events seem so far removed from today, but in some ways they are not. Intimidation and discrimination exists in our world today. Have you ever experienced, witness or heard of intimidation of some sort happening in today’s world? Explain.

2. What could we do to make a difference today?

Class Discussion – Gather class together. Discuss findings and wrap up questions.
How will you assess what students learned during this lesson?
Informally – class discussion and small group discussion
Formally – completion of worksheet, eventually unit assessment

CT Framework Performance Standards
• Explain how individuals and their beliefs influence U.S. History
• access and gather information from a variety of primary and secondary sources
• interpret information from a variety of primary and secondary sources
• demonstrate the ability to participate in social studies discourse through informed discussion, debate and effective oral presentation
The Rise of the KKK
Taken from American Experience – Ulysses S. Grant Online Materials

At the time of Ulysses S. Grant's election to the presidency, white supremacists were conducting a reign of terror throughout the South. In outright defiance of the Republican-led federal government, Southern Democrats formed organizations that violently intimidated blacks and Republicans who tried to win political power.

The most prominent of these, the Ku Klux Klan, was formed in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1865. Originally founded as a social club for former Confederate soldiers, the Klan evolved into a terrorist organization. It would be responsible for thousands of deaths, and would help to weaken the political power of Southern blacks and Republicans.

Racist activity in the South often took the form of riots that targeted blacks and Republicans. In 1866, a quarrel between whites and black ex-soldiers erupted into a full-fledged riot in Memphis, Tennessee. White policemen assisted the mobs in their violent rampage through the black sections of town. By the time the violence ended, 46 people were dead, 70 more were wounded, and numerous churches and schools had been burned. Just two months later, on July 30, a similar outbreak of violence erupted in New Orleans. This time, a white mob attacked the attendees of a black suffrage convention, killing 37 blacks and three whites who allied with them.

In this violent atmosphere, the Ku Klux Klan grew in size and strength. By 1868, the Klan had evolved into a hooded terrorist organization that its members called "The Invisible Empire of the South." The reorganized Klan's first leader, or "Grand Wizard," was Nathan Bedford Forrest, who had been a Confederate general during the Civil War.

White Southerners from all classes of society joined the Klan's ranks. In the name of preserving law and order in a white-dominated society, Klansmen punished newly freed blacks for a variety of reasons, including behaving in an "impudent" manner toward whites. They whipped the teachers of freedmen's schools and burnt their schoolhouses. But first and foremost, the Klan sought to do away with Republican influence in the South by terrorizing and murdering its party leaders and all those who voted for it.

In the time leading up to the 1868 presidential election, the Klan's activities picked up in speed and brutality. The election, which pitted Republican Ulysses S. Grant against Democrat Horatio Seymour, was crucial. Republicans would continue programs that prevented Southern whites from gaining political control in their states. Klan members knew that given the chance, the blacks in their communities would vote Republican.

Across the South, the Klan and other terrorist groups used brutal violence to intimidate Republican voters. In Kansas, over 2,000 murders were committed in connection with the election. In Georgia, the number of threats and beatings was even higher. And in Louisiana, 1000 blacks were killed as the election neared. In those three states, Democrats won decisive victories at the polls.
Nevertheless, the Klan's violent actions proved to many Northerners that the South had not learned its lesson in the recent war. In this way, the Klan's activities actually backfired. People realized that harsher laws would have to be passed in order to stop the violence and protect Southern blacks. And those laws were soon in coming.

In the 1868 presidential election, Republican Ulysses S. Grant won the office with the slogan, "Let Us Have Peace." Republicans also won a majority in Congress. Many Northerners, disgusted by Klan violence, lent their support to the Fifteenth Amendment, which gave the vote to black men in every state, and the First Reconstruction Act of 1867, which placed harsher restrictions on the South and closely regulated the formation of their new governments.

Other legislation attacked the Klan more directly. Between 1870 and 1871, Congress passed the Enforcement Acts, which made it a crime to interfere with registration, voting, officeholding, or jury service of blacks. More than 5,000 people were indicted under these laws; a little more than 1,000 were convicted.

In 1871 Congress also passed the Ku Klux Klan Act, which allowed the government to act against terrorist organizations. Grant did not rigorously enforce these laws, although he did order the arrest of hundreds of Klan members. But with the overwhelming support of the Klan in the South, convictions proved difficult to obtain, and the financial panic of 1873 would distract the North from the problems of Southern racism. In 1882 the United States Supreme Court declared Ku Klux Klan Act unconstitutional.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/grant-kkk/
nounces that one of its purposes is "to shield . . . . the chastity of womanhood."

The degradation of woman is a violation of the sacredness of human personality, a sin against the race, a crime against society, a menace to our country, and a prostitution of all that is best, and noblest, and highest in life. No race, or society, or country, can rise higher than its womanhood.

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is the chivalrous response of red-blooded, true-hearted American manhood to the cry of American womanhood that she be protected in her rights, her liberties, and in her person. The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan demands reverence for American womanhood, and insists that her person shall be respected as sacred, that her chastity be kept inviolate, and that she not be deprived of her right to the glory of an unspotted body.

5. The Helpless. "To protect the weak, the innocent, and the defenseless from the indignities, wrongs and outrages of the lawless, the violent and the brutal."

Children, the disabled, and other helpless ones are to know the protective, sheltering arms of the Klan.

4. American Interests. "To protect and defend the Constitution of the United States of America, and all laws passed in conformity thereto, and to protect the States and the people thereof from all invasion of their right from any source whatsoever."

"By a practical devotion to conserve, protect and maintain the distinctive institutions, rights, privileges, principles, traditions and ideals of Americanism."

The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is solemnly committed to the defense and perpetuation of every American interest and institution, to the support of the American Government, to the preservation of all the rights, liberties, and privileges of the American people, and to the upholding of all legal enactments that are in keeping with the spirit and teaching of the Constitution, as laws for the guidance and governance of all true citizens of this country.

VI. Racial.

"To maintain forever white supremacy." Or as the Declaration proclaims it, "To maintain forever the God-given supremacy of the white race."

Every Klansman has unqualifiedly affirmed that he will "faithfully strive for the eternal maintenance of white supremacy." The Con-
in this Article of the Constitution. So long as this law is in force there can be neither deviation nor modification. Klansmen must guard faithfully the entrance to the Invisible Empire by admitting no applicant to membership which does not possess the following qualifications:

I. RACIAL:

1. White. The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is a white Man’s organization dedicated to the interests of the White Race. It does exclude from its membership all colored races, and in this particular it is not unlike many other orders and organizations that permit no mingling of races in their membership. However, this Klan requisite means more than just the intention to organize and maintain an institution consisting only of white men. It must be emphasized that the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan was organized to fulfill a much needed mission in urging upon Americans the duty and necessity of preserving America’s precious race heritage. This country was founded by the finest elements of the White Race. This government was established by the same superior types of the white race. They passed it on to posterity to be maintained by white men as a white man’s country for the white race. They bequeathed to their descendants the responsibility of preserving the integrity of the race by keeping pure the blood of the white man’s race. The Klan’s contention is that the white race in America must and shall be preserved pure from all blood-taint and kept supreme in all the affairs of this white man’s country.

2. Gentile. The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan is a Gentile organization to which no man is eligible unless he is a Gentile. This does not mean that it is an anti-Semitic movement, even though it does exclude all Scourtes from its membership. Racially we are distinct and apart from the Jew, and ideally there is very little in common. As a Gentile organization, this movement has as its mission the interpretation of the highest ideals of the white Gentile peoples. Only those peoples who are racially related can appreciate and develop racial ideals in common.

II. MALESEXUAL

Every applicant must not only be ‘white’ and a ‘Gentile,’ but also a ‘male.’

III. NATIONAL:

1. ‘Native-born.’ The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan admits only ‘Native-born’ citizens of the United States of America to its membership. No foreign-born citizen of any kind can ever enter the portals of the Invisible Empire. This requirement is made, not with the purpose of discriminating against any foreign-born white American government, but to maintain the American moral and cultural standards. As a people, we are not so much interested in the principles of real Americanism as in the principles of a pure Americanism, that which is uncorrupted by foreign influences. It is for this reason that we insist on the ‘Native-born’ requirement.

IV. RELIGIOUS:

1. Christian. One must be a Christian and a member of the Church of Christ. The movement is not concerned with the principles of any other religion, but with the principles of the Christian faith. The Church of Christ is the only organization that can properly represent the Christian principles.

The article continues with further requirements and qualifications for membership in the Ku Klux Klan, emphasizing the group’s dedication to preserving white racial purity and the American way of life.
KU KLUX KLAN

Atton is to have a fruit-canning establish-
ment. Thousands of bushels of peaches
are fed to hogs or allowed to rot in the
orchards, which, if canned, would bring a
handsome return for the labor and trouble
incident to their preservation.

This is the last style of Ku Klux notices
in Darlington:

LAST WARNING FOR YOU.
Syles you have got to leave this nahbor-
hood vary soon or you may prepar for
deth hell and the grave
as ever. K. K. K.

Last warning for you
Syles you have got to
leave this nahborhood
vary soon or you may
prepair for deth hell
and the grave
as ever
K. K. K.

MARION STAR, July 12, 1871.

"Ku Klux Klan." Marion Star, 12 July, 1871. Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina.
Effingham.

Marion Star, 3 May, 1871.

Darlington County Historical Commission, Darlington, South Carolina.
The KKK During Reconstruction

1. Newspaper report from the *Shelby County Guide* (Columbiana), December 3, 1868, of Klan activities in central Alabama:

   **Movements of the Mystic Klan**

   *A reliable correspondent writes as follows to a friend in Memphis from Florence, Alabama:*

   About a week ago Saturday night the Ku Klux came into town to regulate matters. They were here from eleven p.m. to three o'clock a.m — five hundred in all. They shot one very bad negro, putting six balls through his head. Many heard the noise, but did not know what was going on. They also hung three or four negroes nearly dead, and whipped others severely in order to make them tell them about their nightly meetings, and what their object was in holding the same; also, as to who their leaders were. They made a clean breast of the whole matter, telling everything. The strongest thing about these Kuklux was that they did not hesitate to unmask themselves when asked to do so; and out of the whole party none were identified. — Every one who saw them says their horses were more beautiful than, and far superior to, any in the country round about. They spoke but little but always to a purpose. They went to several stores and knocked; the doors were opened at once. They then called for rope, and at each place a coil was rolled out to them. They cut it in suitable length to hang a man with. No one asked for money and they offered none. They did not disturb any one else, nor did they take any thing except some few Enfield rifles which were found in possession of some very bad negroes. — They called on the revenue officer and passed a few remarks with him. What transpired is not known, but it has made a great improvement in his conversation. The visitants advent has been productive of much good and benefit to the community, though all regret such steps should have to be resorted to, every one says "give us peace," and really I believe them to be truly sincere.

http://www.alabamamoments.state.al.us/sec28ps.html
The KKK During Reconstruction

On July 11, 1870 Klansmen lynched Canadian Methodist minister William Luke in Cross Plains, or Patona, Calhoun County. Luke's offense, in the eyes of the Klansmen, was having instructed black freedmen in reading and writing, thereby "stirring them up" to insubordination. Before they hanged him, the Klansmen acceded to Luke's request to write a farewell letter to his family. After the murder, the farewell note gained wide currency in Northern newspapers.

My Dear Wife:

*I die tonight. It has been so determined by those who think I deserve it. God only knows I feel myself entirely innocent of the charge. I have only sought to educate the negro. I little thought when leaving you that we should thus part forever so distant from each other. But God's will be done. He will be to you a husband better than I have been, and a father to our six little ones. . . .*

*Your loving husband,*

*William*


http://www.alabamamoments.state.al.us/sec28ps.html
The First-Class Men of Our Town –
An Interview with freedman and Georgian Legislature Abram Colby
Taken from American Experience – Reconstruction: The Second Civil War

Abram Colby, a former slave and member of the Georgia legislature, was called to Washington in 1872 to testify before a joint House and Senate committee investigating reports of Southern violence.

Members of the *Ku Klux Klan* had beaten Colby savagely in 1869 in an attempt to end his political activities as a Radical Republican, after earlier efforts to bribe the black legislator had failed. Colby, permanently injured by the assault which had nearly killed him, defied intimidation to remain active in eastern Georgia politics.

Colby: On the 29th of October 1869, [the Klansmen] broke my door open, took me out of bed, took me to the woods and whipped me three hours or more and left me for dead. They said to me, "Do you think you will ever vote another damned Radical ticket?" I said, "If there was an election tomorrow, I would vote the Radical ticket." They set in and whipped me a thousand licks more, with sticks and straps that had buckles on the ends of them.

Question: What is the character of those men who were engaged in whipping you?

Colby: Some are first-class men in our town. One is a lawyer, one a doctor, and some are farmers. They had their pistols and they took me in my night-clothes and carried me from home. They hit me five thousand blows. I told *President Grant* the same that I tell you now. They told me to take off my shirt. I said, "I never do that for any man." My drawers fell down about my feet and they took hold of them and tripped me up. Then they pulled my shirt up over my head. They said I had voted for Grant and had carried the Negroes against them. About two days before they whipped me they offered me $5,000 to go with them and said they would pay me $2,500 in cash if I would let another man go to the legislature in my place. I told them that I would not do it if they would give me all the county was worth.

The worst thing was my mother, wife and daughter were in the room when they came. My little daughter begged them not to carry me away. They drew up a gun and actually frightened her to death. She never got over it until she died. That was the part that grieves me the most.

Question: How long before you recovered from the effects of this treatment?

Colby: I have never got over it yet. They broke something inside of me. I cannot do any work now, though I always made my living before in the barber-shop, hauling wood, etc.

Question: You spoke about being elected to the next legislature?
Colby: Yes, sir, but they run me off during the election. They swore they would kill me if I stayed. The Saturday night before the election I went to church. When I got home they just peppered the house with shot and bullets.

Question: Did you make a general canvas there last fall?

Colby: No, sir. I was not allowed to. No man can make a free speech in my county. I do not believe it can be done anywhere in Georgia.

Question: You say no man can do it?

Colby: I mean no Republican, either white or colored.


http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/kkk/ps_colby.html
Investigating the KKK

Warm-Up – What is the KKK? Why did the organization develop during Reconstruction?

The Rise of the KKK

Intimidate – to fill with fear
Impudent – having a cocky boldness
White supremacist – people that believe the white race is better than all other races

1. Who became President in 1868?

2. What happened in 1866 in Memphis and New Orleans?

3. Who helped the mob carry out the violent attacks on African Americans?

4. Who joined the KKK? Who did the KKK tend to target and what methods did they use?

5. What happened in KS, GA and LA leading up to the election of 1868? What impact did this have on the results of the election?

6. What attempts were made to stop the Klan? Were they successful?

Klansman’s Manual

1. Explain the purpose of the KKK as outlined in the manual.

2. What are the requirements listed for membership?

3. Who do they define as “American”?

4. What conclusions can you draw based on this source?
Newspaper Clippings – Select three of the four articles. Answer the questions below.
1. For each of the three articles, give the title and list information that can be learned about the KKK from the article.
   1. ______________________  2._______________________          3.______________________

2. What can we infer from the fact that this information is published in the local newspapers?

3. What thoughts, questions or connections do these newspaper clippings leave you with?

The First Class Men Of Our Town
1. Who was Abram Colby? Describe what happened to him.

2. Who made up the KKK in this town?

3. What attempt had these men made prior to the beating to control Abram Colby?

4. What impact did this event have on the Colby family?

5. What do you think should have been done to help prevent these things from happening?

Wrap Up
This time period and these events seem so far removed from today, but in some ways they are not. Intimidation and discrimination exist in our world today. Have you ever experienced, witnessed, or heard of intimidation of some sort happening in today’s world? Explain.

What could we do to make a difference today?