

LESSON

Thomas C. McRae Sanatorium

The belief in separating the black and white races, called segregation, had always been practiced to some degree in the American south. However, segregation grew much worse during the 1890s, and in 1896, the United States Supreme Court, in a case known as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, ruled that segregation was constitutional as long as equal facilities and services were available to both races.

In reality, however, the segregated south never provided equal facilities and services to African Americans. This was true of medical care, for example. In Arkansas, all medical facilities were segregated by race, with few hospitals available for black citizens. Still, black Arkansans worked hard to obtain the medical care they needed. An example of this is the building of a hospital for black tuberculosis patients (known as a TB Sanatorium).

History of the Creation of the First Sanatorium for Blacks in Arkansas

The earliest supporter of a sanatorium to care for black tuberculosis patients was Miss Erle [sic] Chambers of Little Rock, executive secretary of the Arkansas Tuberculosis Association. Miss Chambers was white, but she was concerned about all races. As early as 1919, Miss Chambers called upon the General Assembly to deal with the growing death rate from tuberculosis among blacks. It took another decade before funds were appropriated for a black sanatorium.

In 1923 Gov. Thomas C. McRae of Prescott succeeded in securing passage of legislation to create a black sanatorium, but funding was not forthcoming. McRae went ahead and named a board for the still unformed facility, appointing Miss Chambers, state senator Peter Deisch of Helena—both white, and three black members—Elizabeth Jordan of Brinkley, Mrs. S.T. Boyd of Prescott, and Dr. G. W. S. Ish, a Little Rock physician. Racially integrated state boards were extremely rare in the 1920s.

The board located a site near Alexander, about 10 miles southwest of Arkansas, and took an option to buy the land. Then, Gov. Tom Terrell abolished the board—and the entire project was delayed. Finally, the black sanatorium project received a major lift when Harvey Parnell of Chicot County won the governorship in 1928. He named a new sanatorium board, including Dr. Ish and other black members as well as a white woman by the name of Mrs. W.T. Dorrough of Little Rock. The legislature appropriated \$26,000 to build the sanatorium hospital. By October 1930 the first building at the new Thomas C. McRae Sanatorium for Negroes was complete.

The Search for a Director for the Thomas McRae Sanatorium

The facility could not open for it did not have a director. It would have been easy to hire a white doctor to run the sanatorium, but the board held out for a black administrator. This was unusual for 1930 Arkansas. Dr. Ish and Mrs. Dorrough finally settled on offering the directorship to a young black physician by the name of Dr. Hugh A. Browne of Kansas City. Browne was a

remarkable man. The son of a physician, Browne had a hugely profitable practice in Kansas City, was the chief resident doctor for the Wheatley-Provident Hospital, and specialized in pulmonary diseases, including tuberculosis (TB). Indeed, Dr. Browne had suffered from TB himself.

As a high school student in Kansas City, Browne had taken a routine physical examination in order to participate in sports. To his shock, he learned that he had TB. The examining physician suggested that Browne take off a couple of years to have a good time before he died. Browne had other plans.

Embarking on an effort to learn everything he could on tuberculosis, young Browne spent almost all his time outdoors, but resting constantly—even when reading. After two years, his lungs were clear—and Browne entered college. He completed his M.D. degree from Howard University in Washington, D.C.

When Dr. G. W. S. Ish approached Browne about taking over the new McRae Sanatorium in Arkansas, he was rebuffed. With a comfortable monthly income of \$1,500, Dr. Ish's offer of \$200 per month as administrator and medical supervisor of the new institution must have seemed paltry. A travel delay, however, caused Dr. Browne to spend the night in Little Rock—which gave the highly respected Ish an opportunity to stress “Arkansas offered Dr. Browne a field for serving his people that might not come again.” The next morning found Dr. Browne accepting the offer.

Dr. Browne's Services to Black Tuberculars

On January 1, 1930 the McRae Sanatorium for Negroes opened with 26 patients. Within a matter of days, the waiting list numbered in the hundreds. Dr. Browne, his family, the entire staff, and all the patients lived in one large building. Finally, in 1935 Dr. Browne secured funding from the Federal Works Progress Administration to build a new multipurpose structure at the sanatorium. The building, which was named for Miss Erle Chambers, contained a modern surgical unit, dining facilities, and craft areas.

Dr. Browne believed in treating his patients for more than tuberculosis. He initiated educational programs, as well as vocational rehabilitation. He reached out to private groups, like the women's auxiliary of the black state medical society, to secure volunteers and private funding. New buildings arose with regularity, and new services were offered—such as a wing dedicated to children.

In 1950 Browne had a heart attack, followed by a stroke in 1959. He retired in 1962. Dr. Ish, the man who hired him 31 years earlier, presented Browne with a certificate, noting that the sanatorium had grown to 411 beds, 390 patients, and 146 employees. Governor Orval E. Faubus praised Browne and the McRae Sanatorium, remarking that more than 7,000 patients had been treated in the facility. Sadly, Dr. Browne died within two months of his retirement.

The McRae Sanatorium merged with the State Sanatorium in Booneville in 1967. Shortly afterward, in 1972, the state closed the combined hospitals because new drugs made residential treatment unnecessary.

(Courtesy of Mr. Tom W. Dillard, from his column on McRae Sanatorium in Remembering Arkansas, published in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette on May 14, 2006. The above lesson is excerpted and modified).

Please note:

The lesson plan is suggestive of a beginning point for teachers. Teachers are advised to modify to meet their specific classroom needs.

LESSON PLAN

Lesson: Thomas C. McRae Sanatorium

Recommended grade levels: 7-8

Time required: 3-5 class periods of 50 minutes duration

Curriculum fit: Arkansas History, English

Arkansas History Curriculum Frameworks: WWP.9.AH.7-8.12

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate comprehension of the racial attitudes that prevailed during the mid-twentieth century in Arkansas by a writing activity and creating a poster or PowerPoint.
- demonstrate comprehension of the development of the Thomas C. McRae Sanatorium by a writing activity and creating a poster or PowerPoint.

Procedure:

Phase 1: Filling out Worksheet

- 1) Divide the class into four or five groups.
- 2) Instruct (and assist) students to read the lesson, *Thomas C. McRae Sanatorium*.
- 3) Instruct student-groups to fill out the Activity Sheet (See attached Activity Sheet).
- 4) Call upon student-groups to present their Activity Sheets to the class.
- 5) Facilitate class discussion.

Phase 2: Creating a Poster or PowerPoint

- 1) Provide the student-groups with instructions to create a poster or PowerPoint (See attached instruction sheet).
- 2) Instruct the student-groups to create a poster or PowerPoint presentation.
- 3) Call upon groups to present their work to the class.
- 4) Provide feedback.

Phase 3: Extra Credit: See attached instruction sheet. Provide feedback at the end of the task.

(Modified from http://www.aetv.com/class/pdf/experience_it.pdf)

ACTIVITY SHEET

Leaders in history, sports, government, arts, science, and medicine tend to share certain personal characteristics. Use this worksheet to list examples of behavior illustrating each quality that pertains to Dr. Hugh A. Browne. Not every characteristic will apply to Dr. Browne. You may also discover that Dr. Browne could have more than one example for each trait.

Characteristics	Behavior that illustrates characteristic
Perseverance	(persistent belief in one's goals; holding to a course of action without giving up)
Industriousness	(willingness to work hard)
Proficiency	(quality of being an expert or highly skilled in a specific field)
Assertiveness	(ability to express oneself forcefully)

Ingenuity	(inventive skill; imagination)
Aptitude	(natural talent, gift or tendency)
Courage	(daring; willingness to risk social disapproval)
Persuasiveness	(ability to communicate ideas effectively, bring people to agreement)

Instructions to Create a Poster or PowerPoint

The poster or PowerPoint might include information about Dr. Hugh Browne's greatest achievements and a timeline of his life. You may make your poster or PowerPoint interesting and appealing by using illustrations and visuals.

Instructions for Extra Credit

Find out the oldest institution existing in your town or county. Examples could be schools, hospitals, etc. Arrange to visit the institution, tour it, conduct research about its history, identify the people who founded it, and related issues. Also conduct interviews with current officials at the institution if possible. Write down your findings and reflections about your experience.

Thomas C. McRae Sanatorium

ASSESSMENT

1. Which United States Supreme Court case ruled separate-but-equal opportunities to citizens?
A. <i>Aaron v. Cooper</i>
B. <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka</i>
C. <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>
D. None of the above
2. The earliest supporter of the creation of a sanatorium for black tuberculars in Arkansas was:
A. Ms. Erle Chambers
B. Ms. Elizabeth Jordan
C. Ms. S. T. Boyd
D. Ms. W. T. Dorough
3. The Arkansas governor who succeeded in securing passage of legislation in 1923 to create a black sanatorium was:
A. Gov. Orval Faibus
B. Gov. Harvey Parnell
C. Gov. Tom Terrell
D. Gov. Thomas McRae
4. The board of the unformed black sanatorium chose the facility to be built near _____:
A. Little Rock
B. Prescott
C. Alexander
D. Brinkley
5. In whose governorship did the black sanatorium project in Arkansas receive a major lift?
A. Gov. Orval Faibus
B. Gov. Harvey Parnell
C. Gov. Tom Terrell
D. Gov. Thomas McRae
6. The first administrator and medical supervisor of the black sanatorium was:
A. Dr. G. W. S. Ish
B. Dr. Hugh A. Browne
C. Mr. Peter Deisch
D. Mrs. W. T. Dorough

7. The first black sanatorium in Arkansas was named after:
A. Gov. Orval Faubus
B. Gov. Harvey Parnell
C. Gov. Tom Terrell
D. Gov. Thomas McRae
8. The multipurpose structure that was built at the black sanatorium in 1935 was named after:
A. Ms. Erle Chambers
B. Ms. Elizabeth Jordan
C. Ms. S. T. Boyd
D. Ms. W. T. Dorough

READING OPEN-RESPONSE ITEM

Give three reasons why you would consider Dr. Hugh A. Browne a remarkable leader. Explain your reasons using examples from the lesson.

RUBRIC FOR READING OPEN-RESPONSE ITEM

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
4	The response clearly explains all three reasons.
3	The response clearly explains all three reasons, but some part of the discussion is unclear.
2	The response clearly explains two reasons.
1	The response clearly explains one reason.
0	The response is incorrect or irrelevant.
B	Blank – No Response. A score of “B” will be reported as “NA” (No Attempt – Zero Score).

Thomas C. McRae Sanatorium

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abolish	to get rid of; to do away with
Auxiliary	a part of a larger group
Federal Works Progress Administration	The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was a federal agency, established to assist unemployed persons on a large scale by spending money on a wide variety of programs, including highways and building construction, slum clearance, and rural welfare.
Legislation	making of laws; the process of writing and passing laws
Paltry	too little; too small
<i>Plessey v. Ferguson</i>	a decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896 which allowed for racial segregation of schools, hospitals, and almost every other part of life. The Plessey ruling supposedly guaranteed “separate but equal” facilities and services for African Americans, but in reality this was seldom the case.
Pulmonary	relating to the lungs
Rebuffed	turned down; refused; rejected
Sanatorium	a medical facility where people affected by long-term illnesses can receive treatment
Segregation	keeping one group of people apart from another and treating them differently, especially because of race or cultural differences
Tuberculars	persons affected by tuberculosis
Tuberculosis	an infectious disease that can attack many parts of the body, especially the lungs