

THE DULUTH LYNCHINGS OF 1920

High School level

Grade	Strand	Standard	Code	Benchmark
9	History	Change, Continuity and Context	9.4.18.6	World History Era 6
9	History	Change, Continuity and Context	9.4.19.13	U.S. History Era 7
9	Ethnic Studies	Ways of Knowing/Methodologies	9.5.25.4	Explore how criminality is constructed
9	Ethnic Studies	Resistance	9.5.24.2	Examine the characteristics of freedom movements
9	Ethnic Studies	Identity	9.5.23.4	Investigate how the establishment of the Minnesota and U.S. government upheld and violated ideas of freedom, equality and justice to individuals and groups

Core Concept: What events led to the 1920 Duluth Lynchings and how has it impacted Minnesota history?

Note: This outline is mainly a condensed version of the plan developed by the Open Doors project. For more information, you can access the full lesson plan and resource list on the [District of Minnesota Federal Court website](#).

Preliminary Activities

- MN Historical Society articles:
 - [The Lynchings](#)
 - [Legal Proceedings](#)
 - [Incarcerations](#)
- News articles:
 - [MinnPost | "On June 15, 1920, a Duluth mob lunched three black men"](#)
 - [MPR | Minn. Grants state's first posthumous pardon to Max Mason, in case related to Duluth lynchings](#)

- [Duluth News Tribune | New anti-lynching law recalls Duluth's history](#)
- [Minnesota Lawyer | For attorney Gordon, posthumous pardons redress injustice](#)

In-class videos:

- [PBS News Hour | Minnesota governor marks 100th anniversary of Duluth lynching](#)

Discussion Questions

Discussion questions ([full list here](#)):

1. Why were Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Tusken so readily believed on such flimsy evidence?
2. Why were the perpetrators of the lynchings and riot left almost wholly unpunished?
3. Why were the police officers on duty told to put their guns away and to instead use water hoses? Why did the commissioner of public safety not call in the National Guard which was stationed a few blocks away for weekend duty?
4. In what ways did our justice system fail in 1920?
5. Why is it so important for us to talk about and commemorate something that happened 100 years ago?
6. Why is it necessary to pardon someone 100 years after conviction?
7. Why do you think the Duluth lynchings typically have not been a part of the curriculum in a Minnesota History course?