

A portrait of Reginald F. Lewis, a man with a mustache, wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, and a red tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a blurred cityscape with a tall building visible on the right. The entire image is framed by a thin yellow border.

The Making of a Billion-Dollar Empire:
THE REGINALD F. LEWIS STORY

National Conference On Social Studies

Using Reginald F. Lewis' Story in Your Classroom

Activities for Grades 8-12

November 22, 2019 (Friday) • 4:15pm to 5:10pm

The Making of a Billion-Dollar Empire: THE REGINALD F. LEWIS STORY

Using Reginald F. Lewis' Story in Your Classroom (Grades 8-12)

OVERVIEW

In the PBS documentary **"Pioneers: Reginald F. Lewis and the Making of a Billion Dollar Empire"**, American financier Michael Milkin called Reginald "the Jackie Robinson of business", being the first Black billion-dollar deal maker and the richest African American in the 1980s. Growing up, Reginald had role models in his own family and community to model himself after, but while pursuing his dreams, the field he aimed to succeed in lacked individuals with his same background. Stories like that of Reginald F. Lewis can inspire young people who may not see themselves in every field and may not view themselves as capable in. **This discussion and activity guide is intended to guide students in conversation about representation, planning, and pursuing one's dreams.**

Please visit the following links or scan the code to access the film.
<https://www.thirteen.org/programs/pioneers> or www.RFL.film



ACTIVITY ONE: GOAL SETTING

Even at the young age of 9, Reginald F. Lewis had the goal of becoming the richest black man in America. By setting this goal, he put himself on a path that would lead him to success, and he began to lay out steps to move him closer towards his goal.

Introduction

1. Ask students, "What is the difference between a wish and a goal?"
2. Ask students, "What makes it more likely that someone will achieve their goal?"
3. Discuss the difference between a short-term and long-term goal.

Watching the Film

1. As they watch the film, "Pioneers: Reginald F. Lewis and the Making of a Billion Dollar Empire", ask students what some long-term and short-term goals they saw expressed in Reginald F. Lewis' story.
2. Let students know that an effective plan to achieve a goal involves:
 - a. Defining the Goal
 - b. Identifying the steps needed to achieve it
 - c. Considering the possible challenges along the way and identifying potential solutions
 - d. Setting deadlines for the goal
3. Have the class identify the steps Reginald F. Lewis took as he moved towards his goals
4. Have the class identify challenges Lewis faced as he moved closer towards his goals

Bowl o' Goals Activity

1. Have students identify one long-term goal they have on a strip of paper and write their initials. Examples of long-term goals can include possible career paths, achieving certain skills, or being accepted into specific college programs.
2. Have each student place their goal into a bowl.

3. Separate the class into pairs and have the pairs select a goal out of the bowl. Then ask them to create a plan for the goal they selected. Have the pair write the goal, the original student's initial, and the plan on a piece of paper.
4. Have students share out some of the plans they wrote for their peers.
5. Place all of the plans on a table and allow students to find their original goal and read their plan when they return to their seats.
6. Provide time for each student to adjust their plans as needed.
7. Ask the class to share how creating goals for others may differ from creating goals for themselves. Then ask the class how planning a path towards their goals is a helpful practice.

Personal Goal Setting

1. Have each student of the class create a goal for the school year and identify steps needed to achieve that goal. Ask the partners they were paired with before to be their accountability partner. With their partner, they should share their goals, why they chose them, what steps they will take, possible challenges along the way and their deadlines.
2. Check-in with the class throughout the year to see if they are on track with their goals and establish a reward system for those making their deadlines.



ACTIVITY TWO: DISCUSSING REPRESENTATION

1. Ask students to call out different jobs or careers they are interested in pursuing in their future. Label this list "Careers we mentioned."
2. Once this list is completed, ask students to create another list of jobs that were not included on their list and label this list "Careers we did not mention"
3. Ask students why the jobs on this second list were not included on the original list. Is it that the jobs are undesirable or that students don't often see people in their communities normally represented in these positions?
4. Discuss the idea of representation, or how different members of society are presented to audiences. How we see our communities portrayed shapes our expectations for ourselves and others in our community.
5. Ask students why learning a story like that of Reginald F. Lewis is important. Who should hear his story? Why?
6. Have students research professionals in fields mentioned on the "Careers we did not mention" list. Can they find anyone in these professions with a similar background?

ACTIVITY THREE: "WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A PIONEER?" RESEARCH PROJECT

As a pioneer in the field of business, Reginald F. Lewis left behind a legacy that paved the way for many entrepreneurs pursuing their dreams. Lewis is one of many African-American pioneers who challenged what was expected of them and created their own legacies.

1. Define "pioneer" as a person who is the first or among the earliest in any field or industry.
2. Have students research other African American pioneers of the past and identify the challenges they faced as they pursued their dreams and what qualities they possessed that made them pioneers of their time.
3. As an extension, students can do a research project on any individual alive today they believe to be a pioneer in their field.

Potential Pioneers of the Past to Research:

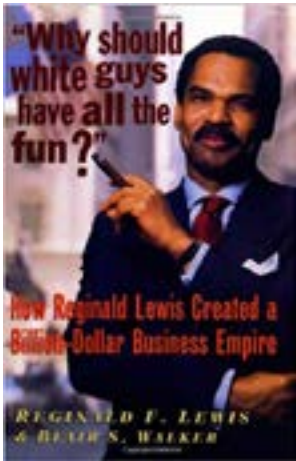
- Elijah McCoy
- Madam CJ Walker
- Jackie Robinson
- Annie Malone
- Stephen Smith
- Clara Brown
- Booker T. Washington
- George Washington Carver
- John H. Johnson

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Standards

- 2f. Use knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history, along with elements of historical inquiry, to inform decision-making about and action-taking on public issues;
- 4e. Identify and describe ways family, groups, and community influence the individual's daily life and personal choices;
- 4f. Explore factors that contribute to one's personal identity such as interests, capabilities, and perceptions;
- 4h. Work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals;
- 5d. Identify and describe examples of tensions between and among individuals, groups, or institutions, and how belonging to more than one group can cause internal conflicts;
- 6a. Examine the rights and responsibilities of the individual in relation to his or her social group, such as family, peer groups, and school class.

Books on the Life and Legacy of Reginald F. Lewis

Click on the books or codes to get these books on Amazon.com.



**“Why Should White Guys Have All the Fun?”
How Reginald Lewis created a Billion Dollar Business Empire.**

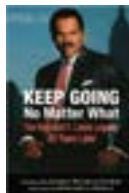
Author: Reginald F. Lewis and Blair Walker



Lonely at the Top
Author: Christina Lewis



Reginald F. Lewis Before TLC Beatrice: The Young Man Before the Billion Dollar Empire
Author: Lin Hart



“Keep Going No Matter What”— The Reginald F. Lewis Legacy 20 Years Later
Edited by: Ponchitta Pierce



Reginald F. Lewis: A Tribute
Edited by: Elliott Wiley



For more info, visit: www.ReginaldFLewis.com