

# CURRICULUM GUIDE

## The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana in the 1920s

*by Janet Brown*

*for the Indiana Historical Society Indiana Experience*

## You Are There 1924: *Tool Guys and Tin Lizzies*



INDIANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Cover Image: “George Greenlee Ford Garage” (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection,  
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This lesson coordinates with the *You Are There 1924: Tool Guys and Tin Lizzies* component of the *Indiana Experience* at the Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center. In this experience, visitors are invited to step back in time to 1924 to visit the re-created Liniger brothers' plumbing, tinning, and roofing shop in Hartford City, Indiana. Auto mechanics from the George Greenlee Ford dealership next door worked in this space through an agreement Greenlee had with the Linigers. The Linigers conducted most of their work in homes and businesses around town, leaving the space available for use by Greenlee's mechanics. The curriculum is intended to provide historical context for life in Indiana and, in particular, life in Blackford County and Hartford City, Indiana, in the 1920s. The lesson may be used to prepare students for a visit to *You Are There 1924: Tool Guys and Tin Lizzies* or it may be used as a follow-up to a visit. In addition, the historical context and themes will be relevant to classroom instruction even if a visit is not possible. *You Are There 1924: Tool Guys and Tin Lizzies* opens March 20, 2010, and will remain open until February 27, 2011.

## Overview/Description

The Ku Klux Klan has a long history in America. Using primary sources, students will have a chance to think and write about the Klan's activities in Indiana in the 1920s.

## Grade Level

Elementary (grades 4 and 5) and middle/intermediate (grades 6, 7 and 8)

## Academic Standards

- Indiana Standards
  - Grade 4
    - Social Studies 4.1.11—Identify and describe important events and movements that changed life in Indiana in the early twentieth century.
    - Social Studies 4.2.7—Use a variety of information resources to take a position or recommend a course of action on a public issue relating to Indiana's past or present.
  - Grade 5
    - Language Arts 4.4.2—Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view based upon purpose, audience, length, and format requirements for a piece of writing.
    - Language Arts 4.4.3—Write informational pieces with multiple paragraphs.
    - Social Studies 5.2.10—Use a variety of information resources to identify and evaluate contemporary issues that involve civic responsibility, individual rights, and the common good.
    - Language Arts 5.4.3—Write informational pieces with multiple paragraphs.
  - Grade 6
    - Social Studies 6.1.24—Identify issues related to an historical event in Europe or the Americas and give basic arguments for and against that issue utilizing the perspectives, interests, and values of those involved.
    - Language Arts 6.4.3—Write informational pieces with multiple paragraphs.
  - Grade 7
    - Language Arts 7.4.3—Write informational pieces with multiple paragraphs.
  - Grade 8
    - Language Arts 8.4.3—Write informational pieces with multiple paragraphs.
- National Standards (National Council for the Social Studies)
  - II Time, Continuity, and Change
    - Develop critical sensitivities such as empathy and skepticism regarding

- attitudes, values, and behaviors of people in different historical contexts.
- IV Individual Development and Identity
  - Identify and interpret examples of stereotyping, conformity, and altruism.
- V Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
  - Identify and describe examples of tensions between belief systems and government practices and laws.
  - Describe the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change.

Klan Celebration,” ca. 1923  
(Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID BROADSIDES\_1923)

- “Klan Parade,” 1924  
(Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0290\_Box2\_Folder7\_Klan\_Parade\_2\_Images)
- “Ku Klux Klan Membership Application,” ca. 1923  
(Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID M0409\_BOX3\_FOLDER2)

## Social Studies/Historical Concepts

Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s

## Learning/Instructional Objectives

Students will:

- Use primary sources to understand that the Ku Klux Klan played a significant role in Indiana politics and society in the 1920s.
- Analyze the role of the Ku Klux Klan and understand some of the prejudices the organization fostered.

## Time Required

One class period

## Materials Required

- Paper
- Pencils
- Student Handout: How Do We Treat Others?
- Images from the Indiana Historical Society collection. See pages 6 through 9 of this lesson.
  - “WKKK Godfrey Klan No. 93,” 1923  
(Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID PhotoSubjColl\_WKKK\_Godfrey\_Klan)
  - “Announcing a Tremendous Ku Klux

## Background/Historical Context

The Ku Klux Klan, a white racist organization, was first founded in Tennessee during the period of Reconstruction following the Civil War. Though it was suppressed by the federal government in the early 1870s, the Klan reappeared in Georgia in 1915 following the release of D. W. Griffith’s film, *The Birth of a Nation*, which romanticized Klan activities.<sup>1</sup> The second Klan also drew strength from a growing anti-immigrant movement in the United States that was hostile toward immigrants from southern and eastern Europe and Asia. Immigrants from these countries did not fall into the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) profile and were more likely to be Catholic, Jewish, or another faith, such as Buddhist or Confucian.

Though membership in the second Klan grew slowly during World War I, interest spiked following the war when soldiers returned home to find that their jobs had been filled by immigrants or African Americans. By 1922 the Klan claimed a membership of one million. By 1925 that number had doubled to two million.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“Ku Klux Klan in the Twentieth Century,” The New Georgia Encyclopedia, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2730>.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley K. Schultz, “The Politics of Frustration: The 1920s” in *American History 102: The Civil War to the Present*, Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System, 1999, <http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/lectures/lecture16.html>.

The group gained particular strength in Indiana, where recruiting efforts were led by D. C. Stephenson, the state's Imperial Representative. Stephenson depicted the Klan as the guardians of morality, defined by the following elements: Protestantism, Charity, Motherhood, Temperance, and Education.<sup>3</sup> He claimed that the organization would protect America from the evil influences being spread throughout the country by Catholics, blacks, and foreign-born people. The Klan believed that Catholics bowed to a "political autocrat" intent on taking over the world (the Pope) and were incapable of being loyal Americans. Klan members also saw Jewish people as being unable to form strong attachments to America because they were "internationalists."<sup>4</sup> As was the case in the Klan's first incarnation, members of the second Klan believed that African Americans were intent on overthrowing whites and taking over American society. In contrast, the Klan positioned itself as a patriotic and religious organization that was pro-America and pro-Christianity. Stressing these wholesome notions of God and country, Stephenson was able to recruit, according to some accounts, a full third of Indiana's white male population as Klan members.

In the early to mid-1920s, the Klan became a political force in Indiana as well as nationwide. The Klan associated itself with the Republican Party and the two groups mutually supported each other. It became difficult for anyone without Klan backing to be elected to public office in some areas. In November 1924, Hoosiers elected Klan-backed Edward Jackson as Indiana's governor. Calvin Coolidge, also supported by the Klan, was elected as president. Several members of the Indianapolis city council were also purported to be Klan members. In Blackford County, Indiana, the Klan elected the sheriff, Prosecutor Hugh Madrox, and Circuit Court Judge Vic Simmons.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Schultz, <http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/lectures/lecture16.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Schultz, <http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/lectures/lecture16.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Cecil Beeson, "Speech on the Klan in Blackford County," S97 Cecil Beeson Collection. Indiana State Library, Manuscript Section, Indiana Division.

Hartford City, Indiana, hosted Klan speakers Helen Jackson and L. J. King, a supposed defrocked Catholic nun and a former Catholic priest. Jackson and King warned locals about the "Catholic threat" and told tales of young Protestant girls being kidnapped and forced into abbeys where they became sex slaves to Catholic priests or African American and Jewish men. These stories and the pressure to prove "100 % Americanism," combined with a desire to be part of the supposedly family and church-focused social network built by the Klan, resulted in high Klan membership rates not only for Blackford County males, but for females and even children for whom there were women's and junior auxiliary clubs.

Membership in the Klan declined after 1925, as did the group's influence. This happened in large part due to a scandal involving Stephenson. In March 1925, Stephenson kidnapped, attacked, and raped a young secretary named Madge Oberholzer. He took her by train to Hammond, Indiana, where she managed to escape for a short while. She bought some poison and took it, thinking it would force Stephenson to take her back to Indianapolis so that she could receive medical attention. Though Stephenson did bring her back to Indianapolis, he held her at his home and refused to let her see a doctor. She died on April 13, 1925, from blood poisoning. Stephenson and two accomplices were subsequently charged and indicted for her murder. Stephenson was sentenced to life in prison.<sup>6</sup> The Klan also declined in power due to internal feuding and increased anti-Klan activities.

## Teacher's Instructional Plan

### Introduction

Introduce the lesson by asking students what they know about the Ku Klux Klan. Write their answers on the board and discuss with them the time period in which they think the Klan operated. Distribute copies of the "Ku Klux Klan Membership Application" to students and allow them time to read the document. Ask if anything on the application concerns students.

<sup>6</sup> Beeson speech.

For example, the application asks if the applicant is a white male Gentile, if the applicant believes in white supremacy and pure Americanism, and if the applicant will “strictly obey the authority of the fraternity.” It also states that only members will receive protection and that members must accept whatever penalty is imposed if they are deemed to be “untrue.” Discuss the students’ responses to this question.

### Procedure

- Show students the image entitled “WKKK Godfrey Klan No. 93.” Locate Hartford City on a map. Use a guided questioning technique to help students arrive at the conclusion that women as well as men were Klan members and that the Klan operated in Indiana.
- Show students the images titled “Announcing a Tremendous Ku Klux Klan Celebration” and “Klan Parade.”
- Divide the class into small groups and have the groups brainstorm the purpose(s) of these events.
- Instruct students to pretend that they are newspaper reporters covering one of these events. Each student will write a newspaper article about what they might have experienced at the event. They should describe the sights, sounds, and smells they might have encountered. They should also write about the emotions of the people participating and those watching the event. Students might consider whether or not there were protestors at the event. Their descriptions of the event should also address how they might have felt if they had been there. As good newspaper reporters, students should answer the following questions in their articles: “Who?” “What?” “When?” “Where?” and “Why?”
- Discuss with students how things have changed since the Klan’s downfall. Distribute copies of the Student Handout: “How Do We Treat Others?” and instruct students to complete this worksheet.
- Discuss with students how we believe that everyone should be treated fairly even if they are different from us. Note how groups

such as the Klan do not have the same power over businesses and politics now that they did in the past.

### Assessment

Use a teacher-developed rubric to assess students’ newspaper articles and verbal discussions for understanding. The rubric should evaluate historical accuracy, clarity of thought and presentation, thoroughness, and quality of writing.

### Suggested Modifications

- Have students compose ten questions they might ask a person involved in one of the Klan events. In pairs students can role-play being a newspaper reporter posing the questions to a participant and then switch roles.
- Students may research D. C. Stephenson to learn more about his influence in the Klan and his role in bringing about the Klan’s downfall.
- Students may find evidence to support or negate Stephenson’s comment, “I am the law in Indiana.”
- Students may research different techniques or uses of propaganda.

### Additional Resources

#### Publications

Coleman, Evelyn. *Circle of Fire*. Middleton, WI: American Girl, 2001.

In 1928 Mendy puts herself in danger when she discovers that the Ku Klux Klan is planning to bomb the Highlander Folk School in order to disrupt a visit from Mendy’s hero, Eleanor Roosevelt.

Russell, Cynthia Stanley. *Mim and the Klan: Hoosier Quaker Farm Family’s Story*. Carmel: Guild Press of Indiana, 1999.

This is a story about the effect of the Klan on a family and its church.

Stauffacher, Sue. *Bessie Smith and the Night Riders*. New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, 2006. Blues singer Bessie Smith stands up to the Klan.

Vander Zee, Ruth. *Mississippi Morning*. Boston: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2004. A young boy in Mississippi faces racial hatred in 1933.

## Web Sites

Northern Indiana Center for History. "Indiana History Part 7: The Golden Era of Indiana (1900–1941)." Northern Indiana Center for History. [http://www.centerforhistory.org/indiana\\_history\\_main7.html](http://www.centerforhistory.org/indiana_history_main7.html) (accessed September 3, 2009).

A history of the Klan in Indiana.

*Indiana Magazine of History*. "A Closer Look at Indiana's Klan." Indiana University Department of History. [http://www.iub.edu/~imaghist/for\\_teacher/mdrnprd/lstmp/Klan.html](http://www.iub.edu/~imaghist/for_teacher/mdrnprd/lstmp/Klan.html) accessed September 3, 2009).

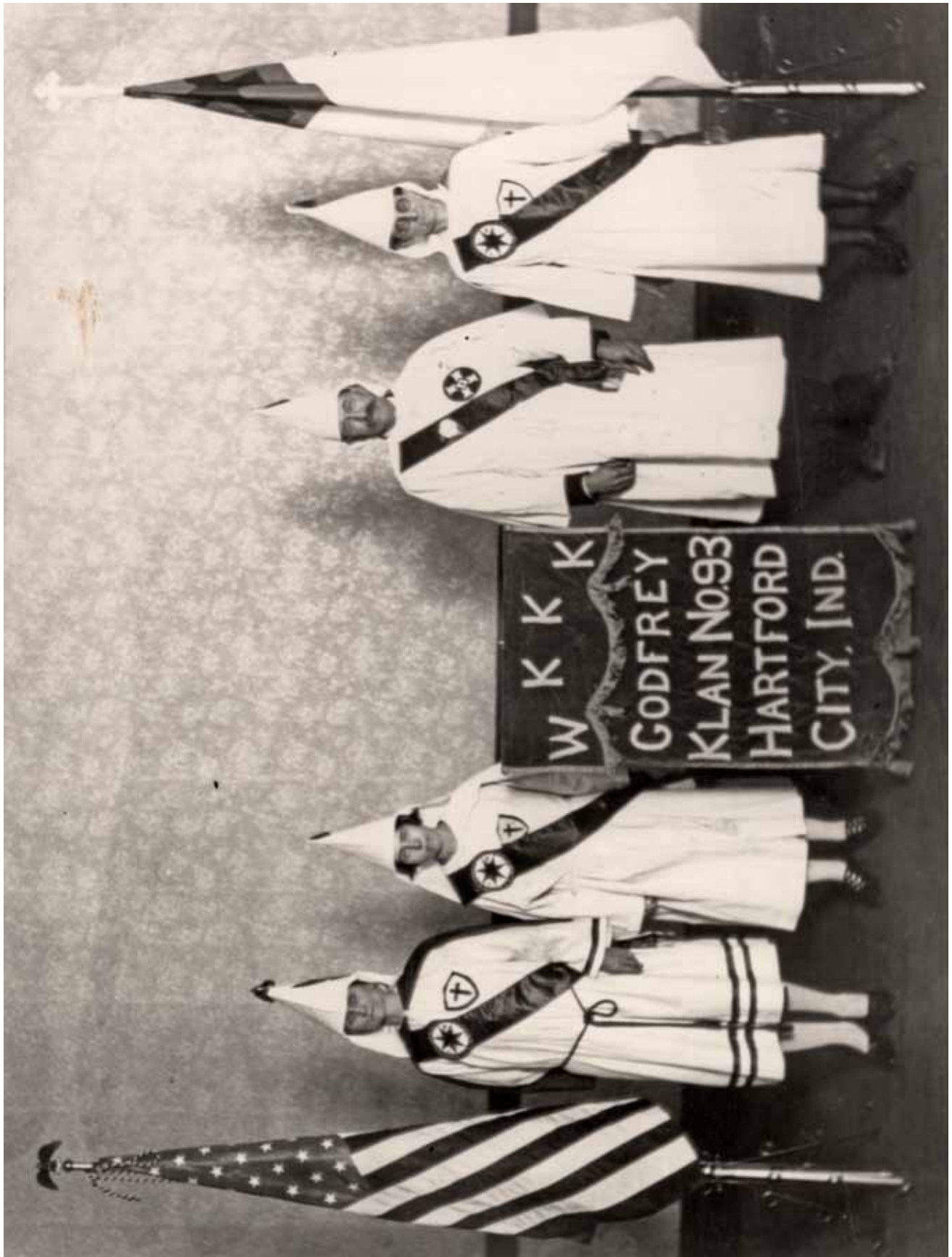
A lesson plan from the *Indiana Magazine of History* including documents showing rates of Klan membership in Indiana counties.

Indiana State Library. "Ku Klux Klan in Indiana." <http://www.in.gov/library/2848.htm> (accessed September 3, 2009).

Bibliography of materials related to the Klan available at the Indiana State Library.

Indiana State Museum. "The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana." [http://www.indianamuseum.org/uploads/docs?LP\\_47\\_KKK.pdf](http://www.indianamuseum.org/uploads/docs?LP_47_KKK.pdf) (accessed August 3, 2009).

Lesson plan for grades nine to twelve on the Klan in Indiana.



“WKKKK Godfrey Klan No. 93,” 1923 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID PhotoSubjColl\_WKKKK\_Godfrey\_Klan)



**ANNOUNCING A TREMENDOUS  
KU KLUX  
KLAN CELEBRATION**

**- AT -**

**KOKOMO, INDIANA**

**Saturday, June 30, July 1, 2, 3 & 4**

**OTHER REALMS ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE**

**Greatest gathering of National and State Speakers  
ever assembled together before speaking on vital  
subjects of the conditions of our country.**

**Continuous program, best of band music and many  
surprise features.**

**MELFALFA PARK**

FOUR MILES WEST OF KOKOMO. GO WEST ON SYCAMORE STREET PIKE THREE MILES (Look for Cross Road Marker.) TURN SOUTH ONE MILE TO WILDCAT CREEK BRIDGE.

Come on Saturday and Camp. Plenty of cold spring water. Toilet facilities for both men and women.

Bring your Drum Corps, Bands and Glee Clubs. Bring your bathing Suits. Swimming pool in operation FREE to everyone. Pool lighted at night. Plan now to charter a Car, a Bus or come as an Auto Caravan.

Ground well lighted at night for those arriving during the night.

Those intending to camp are invited to have their mail addressed to R. R. 1, Box 60, Kokomo, Indiana, and it will be delivered to the grounds daily.

Concession Stand in operation day and night. Don't bother taking lunch. Plenty of eats at the right price.

**Come one and all! This celebration open to public!**

GENERAL ADMISSION 25c FOR ALL FIVE DAYS. FREE PARKING AND CAMPING PRIVILEGES. (Under Twelve Years Admission Free)

FOR ADDITIONAL BILLS OR INFORMATION: ADDRESS R. R. NO. 1, BOX 60, KOKOMO, INDIANA

“Announcing a Tremendous Ku Klux Klan Celebration,” ca. 1923 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID BROADSIDES\_1923)



1924  
Hartford City, Indiana



"Klan Parade," 1924 (Indiana Historical Society, Digital Image Collection, Item ID P0290\_Box2\_Folder7\_Klan\_Parade\_2\_Images)



APPLICATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

IN THE  
INVISIBLE EMPIRE

# Knights of the Ku Klux Klan

(INCORPORATED)



To His Majesty the Imperial Wizard, Emperor of the Invisible Empire, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan:

I, the undersigned, a native born, true and loyal citizen of the United States of America, being a white male Gentile person of temperate habits, sound in mind and a believer in the tenets of the Christian religion, the maintenance of White Supremacy and the principles of a "pure Americanism," do most respectfully apply for membership in the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan through Klan No. ...., Realm of .....

I guarantee on my honor to conform strictly to all rules and requirements regulating my "naturalization" and the continuance of my membership, and at all times a strict and loyal obedience to your constitutional authority and the constitution and laws of the fraternity, not in conflict with the constitution and constitutional laws of the United States of America and the states thereof. If I prove untrue as a Klansman I will willingly accept as my portion whatever penalty your authority may impose. The required "klectokon" accompanies this application.

Signed..... Applicant

Endorsed by

Kl.....

Residence Address .....

Business Address .....

Date .....

192.....

The person securing this application must sign on top line above. NOTICE—Check the address to which mail may be sent.

### NOTICE

The sum of this donation MUST accompany application, if possible. Upon payment of same by applicant this certificate is made out and signed by person securing application, then detached and given to applicant, who will keep same and bring it with him when he is called, and then turn it in on demand in lieu of the cash.

DO NOT detach if donation is not paid in advance.

### OFFICIAL CERTIFICATE OF DONATION

This certifies that

has donated the sum of TEN DOLLARS to the propagating fund of the  
**Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Inc.)**

and same is accepted as such and as full sum of "KLECTOKON" entitling him to be received, on the acceptance of his application, under the laws, regulations and requirements of the Order, duly naturalized and to have and to hold all the rights, titles, honors and protection as a citizen of the Invisible Empire. He enters through the portal of



Klan No. ...., Realm of .....

Date....., 192.....

Received in trust for the  
KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN, (INC.)

By Kl.....

## Student Handout: How Do We Treat Others?

	Today	1920s
Catholics		
African Americans		
Jewish people		
Immigrants		

## Who or What Influences How We Treat Others?

	Today	1920s
Business		
Politics		
Personal decisions		