



Chicago Historical Society



DEMONSTRATING OUR RIGHTS

Grade level: Late elementary school through middle school

Estimated time: One week to one month

Topic: Protest

Subtopic: Creating an organized protest

Teacher background information

Great changes and events in history often started with protest. Changes in the nation, the world, and our lives, communities, and cities, sometimes begin with disagreements that lead to protest. From town hall meetings and rallies to demonstrations and wars (the gravest of all protest measures), protest is an important tool that is used to make change in our society.

This lesson is an authentic learning exercise during which students will conduct their own protest or demonstration. Students should be familiar with protest terms and methods before completing this activity. Refer to the “Protest Vocabulary List” to familiarize students with the different types and tools of protest.

Before beginning this lesson, it is good idea to discuss it with the administration of your school. The administrators will be able to provide you with an idea of appropriate subjects to protest, the appropriate size of the protest, and the feasibility of change occurring because of specific protests.

Key concept

Organizing peacefully as a group can often lead to change.

Key questions

What are we protesting? What tools should we use? How do we present our views to others? How do we effectively argue against the views of the opposing side?

Goal of this lesson

To help students learn their potential power as citizens to organize and come together to make a difference.

Objective

Students will demonstrate their knowledge of protest by organizing and carrying out an actual protest or demonstration.

Materials

Master copies of the protest image and vocabulary sheet are provided.

1. Bridgeport Community Protest image
2. Protest Vocabulary List
3. Basic art supplies: colored pencils, crayons, markers, pens, paper, and poster board



Procedures

1. Divide the students into small groups and provide each group a copy of the “Bridgeport Community Protest” image. Discuss the event depicted in the image, using the caption as a guide. The caption reads: “Bridgeport residents cheer their victory in a fight against the Michigan Motor Freight Company, June 1952. The residents protested that the company’s trucks raised dust that then settled in surrounding homes, and the company agreed to pave its lot.”
2. Instruct students to examine the image and, on a separate piece of paper, make a list of all the elements or ingredients of protest they can identify in the picture. It would be helpful to provide students with the protest vocabulary list for reference during this activity. Explain to students that they may also use words that are not on the vocabulary list to describe the picture. Allow students enough time to analyze the picture and create a descriptive list.
3. Ask each group to read their list aloud, and keep track of the student responses on the board. Close the activity by asking students to consider whether or not this protest was effective and have them state the reasons for their opinion.
4. In the same working groups, ask students to consider a cause they could protest in their community or at their school. Allow time for brainstorming and discussion. Remember to control the discussion of possible protests within the boundaries of reason; the issue students select should be manageable, and the potential for change should be realistic.
5. If the students are unable to think of a cause or if you wish to keep this activity on a smaller scale, use one of the suggestions below. Possible school-centered protests include:
 - Changing the time for the start or end of the school day
 - Challenging uniform policies or lack thereof
 - Changing the time or frequency of recess

- Banning homework on Fridays
- Protesting the variety of the cafeteria menu

6. Allow enough class time (as many days as you wish to set aside) for students to research their issue and create picket signs, banners, speeches, cartoons, slogans, etc. You can compile a checklist of possible techniques and require that students use a certain number of them in their protest. When their preparations are complete, invite another class to watch the student demonstrations and to vote on which one was most effective.

Suggestions for student assessment

Grade student presentations according to criteria (developed and shared with students ahead of time) based on clarity of issue and message, significance of issue, chances for success, protest techniques used, and so forth.

Additional resources

www.historyplace.com

Extension activities

Help students organize a protest clinic to help solve the disputes of others. Empower them to teach others how to peacefully settle disagreements.

This lesson fulfills the following Illinois Learning Standards:

English Language Arts

State Goal 4: Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations.

State Goal 5: Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information.

Social Science

State Goal 14: Understand political systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

State Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals, and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States, and other nations.

History Lab is made possible through a generous grant from the Polk Bros. Foundation. These materials were written and researched by Cynthia Townsend. Images and artifacts included in this lesson are for classroom reference and research use only and are not to be used for commercial reproduction, display, broadcast, or publication unless authorized by a letter of permission from the Chicago Historical Society. *History Lab* project coordination by Heidi Moisan and Gordon Karim of the History Programs Department, Chicago Historical Society. The Chicago Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the Chicago Park District’s generous support of all of the Historical Society’s activities.

PROTEST VOCABULARY LIST

activists	<i>a person or persons that take(s) direct action to achieve a political or social goal</i>
banners	<i>a type of flag with words</i>
boycott	<i>a joining together of people to refuse to deal with or buy from another person or group</i>
chant	<i>to say or shout the same thing over and over</i>
demonstration	<i>to show feelings or views publicly by acting as a group with others</i>
empower	<i>to give power or authority to a person or a group</i>
leaflet	<i>a sheet of printed material that is often folded; a brochure</i>
march	<i>to walk together as a group</i>
petition	<i>a formal document signed by many people that asks for something</i>
picket	<i>a person stationed outside of a place in order to demonstrate against something</i>
protest	<i>to speak strongly against or to express disapproval</i>
rally	<i>a coming together to motivate people for a common purpose</i>
rebel	<i>to disagree with and to act against authority</i>
revolution	<i>an overthrow of a government or social system</i>
revolt	<i>to rebel against authority</i>
riot	<i>a violent public disturbance</i>
signage	<i>a public display of a group of signs</i>
slogan	<i>a saying associated with a political party or group; a phrase used with advertising</i>
speech	<i>a talk given to an audience</i>
war	<i>an armed (with weapons) conflict between two or more groups</i>

AMERICA and PROTEST



Bridgeport residents cheer their victory in a fight against the Michigan Motor Freight Company, June 1952. The residents protested that the company's trucks raised dust that then settled in surrounding homes, and the company agreed to pave its lot.

HISTORY LAB | FEEDBACK FORM

Please give us your feedback! After reviewing and using this *History Lab* lesson, please send us your feedback. Your ideas and honest assessment will ensure that these lessons keep improving and will provide us with useful insight for future teacher fellows. To fill out this form online or discover additional *History Lab* activities, visit the educators section of the Chicago Historical Society's website at www.chicagohistory.org.

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

School: _____ Grade you teach: _____

Are you a CHS member? (circle one): yes no

Name of unit you are evaluating (check one):

☐ America's Documents of Freedom

☐ Chicago's World's Fairs

☐ African American Life in the Nineteenth Century

☐ Face-to-Face with the Great Depression

☐ The Civil War: Up Close and Personal

☐ America and Protest

Name of lesson you are evaluating: _____

1. On a scale of one to five (with five being the best) rate this lesson in terms of the quality of the student learning experience it provides (circle one):

5

4

3

2

1

2. What were the strengths of this lesson? _____

3. What aspects of this lesson needed additional fine-tuning? _____

4. What advice, tips, or suggestions would you give to future users of this lesson? _____

5. Where does this lesson fit in your course of study (scope, sequence, unit)? _____

6. If applicable, how did the use of primary sources impact student learning? _____



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Thank you for your time. Please send the completed form to:

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Attn: History Programs **Fax: 312-266-2077**

