

Protests of the Past and Present

Variation of PBS's [Peaceful Protest Lesson Plan](#)

Overview

Students learn about nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience. Then, students learn about the history of nonviolent protest, focusing on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and conduct independent research on nonviolent protest movements throughout history and the goals and impact of those efforts. Finally, students connect these topics to current protests regarding Israel and Palestine.

Grade Level

9-12

Time

Total: 90 minutes

Warm up (10 minutes), primary documents (15 minutes), independent historical research (45 minutes), current activity (20 minutes)

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define “nonviolent resistance” and “civil disobedience”
- Explain and apply the points raised by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his letter from the Birmingham jail
- Summarize at least one major nonviolent resistance movement in the United States or another country, the nonviolent actions its leaders took, and the impact of the movement
- Describe and categorize protests currently taking place regarding Israel and Palestine

New Jersey Content Standards

6.2.12.HistoryCC.5.g: Assess the impact of Gandhi’s methods of civil disobedience and passive resistance in India and determine how his methods were later used by people from other countries.

6.1.12.EconEM.13.a: Explain how individuals and organizations used economic measures as weapons in the struggle for civil and human rights (e.g., the Montgomery Bus Boycott, sit downs).

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Resources Needed

- Student devices with internet access
- Copies of the Protest Analysis Worksheet
- Copies of the Public Statement by Eight Alabama Clergymen and Martin Luther King's Letter from the Birmingham Jail
- Copies of the Nonviolent Resistance Student Organizer

Warm Up

Ask students to think about different ways people have voiced objections to war and/or unfair laws and policies. (*Protests, marches, hunger strikes, writings, etc.*) Explain that today's lesson will highlight peaceful protests that are currently taking place in relation to Israel and Palestine, situating these within histories of nonviolent resistance tactics.

Ask students to define the following terms:

- Nonviolent resistance: using symbolic protests, civil disobedience and other non-violent acts in order to achieve specific goals
- Civil disobedience: the refusal to obey certain laws or requirements of a government and is considered to be a form of nonviolent resistance

Ask students to list examples of nonviolent protests with which they are familiar. (*Mohandas Gandhi's Salt March, Martin Luther King's civil rights efforts, Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, etc.*)

Primary Documents

Distribute the [Public Statement by Eight Alabama Clergymen](#) and [Martin Luther King's Letter from the Birmingham Jail](#). Ask students to read the letter from the Eight Alabama Clergymen and then to read Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s response. Ask students to identify the main points made in each document. As students read King's letter, ask them to find out what he says are the basic steps to a nonviolent movement, as well as what his views are on following rules.

After students have read each letter, ask them to describe the main points made by the clergymen in writing their letter and the main points raised by Martin Luther King, Jr. in his response.

Ask students to list what King says are the four basic steps to a nonviolent campaign. (*Collection of facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self purification and direct action.*)

Independent Historical Research

Ask each student to select a nonviolent protest movement to research. Here are some possibilities:

- The Fisher Body Plant Sit-down strike, Flint, Michigan (December 30, 1936 - February 11, 1937)
- Madres of the Plaza de Mayo (also known as “The Mothers of the Disappeared”) Demonstrations, Buenos Aires, Argentina (beginning in 1977)
- March 1st Movement; Samil Movement, Korea (March 1, 1919)
- Monday Demonstrations, East Germany (1989 - 90)
- Non-cooperation Movement, British India (September 1920 - February 1922)
- Nonviolent protests by women, children and men in the Palestinian village of Budrus in the West Bank (2003)
- Nonviolent protests by women in Ivory Coast (2011)
- Orange Alternative Movement, Poland (1980s)
- Peace Torch Marathon (August 27, 1967- October 21, 1967)
- People Power Revolution, the Philippines (1986)
- Reaction to menorah hate crime, Billings, MT (December 2, 1993)
- Singing Revolution, The Baltic States (1987-90)
- Tiananmen Square Protests (April 15- June 4, 1989)
- Trinidad and Tobago nonviolent protests (1834)
- Velvet Revolution, Czechoslovakia (1989)

For additional options, students can search the “Nonviolent Conflict Summaries” in the “Movements and Campaigns” section on the [International Center on Nonviolent Conflict’s website](#).

Distribute the [Nonviolent Resistance Student Organizer](#). Ask students to explore the following about their selected movements and to record their findings on their student organizers:

- The name of the movement and date(s) the movement occurred.
- Names of the principal leaders/organizers of the movement.
- Details about the participants, including the approximate number of people involved in the movement.
- Details about the movement, including how it started, the goals of the movement and the nonviolent methods used to achieve those goals.
- The impact of the movement (on the participants and others).

After students have completed the organizers, ask them to present their findings to the class. Once all students have shared, prompt students to compare and contrast the methods used in the movement which they just studied to the methods used in the other examples of nonviolent protest highlighted throughout the lesson. Additionally, ask students to reflect upon the impact of nonviolent resistance movements and to discuss the pros and cons of different types of nonviolent actions, as well as how these nonviolent actions fit within King's framework.

Current Event Activity

Split the class into three groups. Assign each group with an example of a recent type of protest related to Israel and Palestine:

- [Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions \(BDS\)](#)
- [March for Israel](#)
- [Stanford Sit-In for Ceasefire and Pro-Israel Tent](#)

Ask each group to fill out the Protest Analysis Worksheet (Appendix A), and then share their answers with the class.

Appendix A: Protest Analysis Worksheet

Describe the type of protest that your group read about.

What were the protestors' reasons for participating?

What were the critiques of this protest?

Did any historical examples you learned about use similar protest techniques?

Do you think that this represents nonviolent protest using King's framework? Why or why not?
