

TITLE Civil Disobedience Action Plan

GRADES 9 through 12

SUBJECT AREAS

- History
- English

OVERVIEW

Even though they had proven to be a hardworking and productive part of American society, Japanese Americans on the West Coast were forced to live in internment camps during World War II. Almost immediately their society split into two factions. One, consisting primarily of members of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), supported the efforts of the American government. The JACL urged Japanese Americans to go along with Executive Order 9066, the law that established the internment camps. Other individuals and groups of Japanese Americans chose to resist these violations of their civil rights. In acts of civil disobedience, they wrote letters and marched in protests. Some even signed away their American citizenship. And when the U.S. government attempted to draft consignees into military service, many resisted. Resisters were labeled "disloyal" and moved to an even more restrictive internment camp. In fact, some were put in the stockades. Many even served time in federal prison as a result of their acts of civil disobedience.

What is civil disobedience? Is it an effective tool for social change? The purposes of this lesson are for students to:

- Become acquainted with the concept of civil disobedience.
- Discuss historic examples of civil disobedience.
- Find out what current political, social and humanitarian issues they consider worth fighting for.
- Come up with an action plan that could affect a change in this area.

MATERIALS

- The film **Rabbit in the Moon**
- Article: "Exiled American Refused Pardon"
http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/ap/20010314/wl/unpardoned_american_1.html
- Various newspapers and current events magazines
- Various television news programs

MEDIA COMPONENTS

Web sites about Japanese-American civil disobedience:

www.lib.washington.edu/exhibits/harmony/exhibit

Examples of letters of protest

www.sfmuseum.org/war/evactxt.html

Newspaper articles: "FBI Raids Jap Terrorists," and "California Japanese Send Funds to Aid Nippon War Chest" and a letter to the editor, "Japanese Have Faith"

www.javoice.com

Testimony before Congress

www.pbs.org/conscience/resistance/index.html

"Conscience and the Constitution" section on resistance

www.jacl.org

Legislative action center

www.geocities.com/Athens/8420/shootings.html#manzanar

Manzanar uprisings

Web sites about civil disobedience (other groups):

www.actupny.org

ACT UP direction action guidelines, history of mass nonviolent action, six elements of philosophy and practice of nonviolence by Martin Luther King, Jr.

www.earthfirst.org

Earth First's Web site – lots of examples about protesting

www.splcenter.org

Southern Poverty Law Center's Web site

www.doctorswithoutborders.org

Doctors without Borders Web site

www.mahatma.org.in

The Mahatma Gandhi Foundation's official site devoted to the work of Mahatma Gandhi

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze different forms of civil disobedience and the context in which each was carried out.
- Students will examine current examples of civil disobedience in American society.
- Students will analyze current events to find issues that they feel need social or political change.
- Students will devise a plan of action to try to have an impact on social or political change in this area.
- Students will make a judgment as to whether civil disobedience is an effective force for social and political change.

TIME Two class periods (60 minutes each)

PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS

If computers are not readily available in your classroom, you may want to download sections of the Web pages listed above that deal with civil disobedience or protest strategies. During the postviewing activity, your class will be working in groups of three or four. You will want to have enough newspapers, current events magazines and/or videos for these groups.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Read:

" Exiled American Refused Pardon"

Discuss:

How did Michael Bransome protest the Vietnam War? What laws did he break? In your opinion, is breaking the law to support a cause excusable? According to this article, what is civil disobedience? Why did the Justice Department refuse to review Bransome's pardon application? If you were president, would you pardon Bransome? Do you think Bransome's protest of the Vietnam War was effective? Can you think of any other examples of civil disobedience in U.S. history? Would you consider the recent protests at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle an effective use of civil disobedience? Was it "civil" ?

FOCUS FOR VIEWING

Before the students watch the video, write the following question on the board: Suppose you were a Japanese American forced to relocate to an internment camp. How would you react in this situation?

POSTVIEWING ACTIVITY

1. Discuss current examples of civil disobedience in America (this information can be obtained from Web sites or newspapers). What are some ways in which groups are protesting laws they see as unfair? Do you think that these types of protests work? Why or why not?
2. Divide students into groups of three or four.
3. Give each group a current newspaper, news magazine or video news clip.
4. Have each group brainstorm to find a cause, problem or situation in today's society that they feel needs to be changed.
5. Each group should then brainstorm things they can do to bring about a change in the current situation. Questions to consider are: Why do we want to change the current situation? How do we go about doing this? Will these actions encourage other people to believe in our cause? Will these actions encourage lawmakers to consider a change? How might these actions cause people to want to disassociate themselves from our cause?
6. After brainstorming, have each group devise a detailed action plan. The plan should outline what actions the group will take to accomplish political or social change.
7. Groups should then present their action plan to the class. As part of their presentation, groups should explain how their plan of action is going to convince the rest of society to support their cause. Students outside the group can suggest additional actions and also play devil's advocate, suggesting how the action plan might turn people off.

WRAP-UP DISCUSSION

- At what point do you cross the line from civil disobedience to breaking the law?
- When is this justified?
- At what point do protests actually do more harm than good?
- How does the rest of society view what you are doing?
- Do you think there might be any personal consequences from your actions?
- What are you willing to give up in order to support your cause?
- Is it easier to protest through civil disobedience when you are part of a larger group than when you are alone or part of a smaller group? If so, why?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

History: Have groups of students research acts of civil disobedience in history. Students can summarize events for the rest of the class, emphasizing how society changed because of these efforts.

Community: Have students contact local political or social action groups. Students can invite representatives to speak to the class about how the group is working for change.

Media: Along the lines of current anti-smoking television advertisements, have students create a television advertisement addressing a particular social or political cause.

STANDARDS

Language Arts: Grades 9 and 10

WRITING

- Students report information and convey ideas logically and correctly.

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

- Students formulate judgments about the ideas under discussion and support those judgments with convincing evidence.
- Students choose logical patterns of organization to inform and to persuade, by soliciting agreement or action or to unite audiences behind a common belief or cause.

Language Arts: Grades 11 and 12

SPEAKING APPLICATIONS

- Students explore the significance of personal experiences, events, conditions or concerns.
- Students draw comparisons between the specific incident and broader themes that illustrate the speaker's beliefs or generalizations about life.

History Grades: 9 through 12

CHRONOLOGICAL AND SPATIAL THINKING

- Students compare the present with the past, evaluating the consequences of past events and decisions and determining the lessons that were learned.
- Students understand that change is complicated and affects not only technology and politics but also values and beliefs.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION

- Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

U.S. History: Grade 11

- Students discuss the constitutional issues and impact of events on the US home front, including the internment of Japanese Americans.
- Students examine the roles of civil rights advocates.
- Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in contemporary American society.

Principles of American Democracy: Grade 12

- Students evaluate and take and defend positions on the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens.
- Students discuss the individual's legal obligations to obey the law.
- Students evaluate and take and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of civil society are.
- Students explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections.