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

For more History Lab activities, visit the educators section of the Chicago Historical Society’s website at www.chicagohistory.org.
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.

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PROTEST VOCABULARY LIST

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