

Taking Action to Change the World

Overview: In this lesson students will explore varied aspects of activism. They will view three films that share common themes: fear, security, and making an impact on the world. As students watch *History Lessons*, *Ji-hee's Candlelight*, and *Lift the Silence*, they will learn about how student filmmakers become empowered change agents. Students will participate in the creation of a mock television show as they learn about environmental activism, legal activism, and human rights activism and make connections between the issues raised in the films and their own lives.

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Areas: Language Arts, English, History, Geography

Objectives:

Students will do the following:

- View, analyze and evaluate media
- Participate in class and small-group discussion
- Conduct Internet research
- Evaluate differing concepts and opinions on a range of topics
- Synthesize information from multiple sources
- Work collaboratively to create a presentation
- Compare and contrast information from multiple perspectives

Media

Lift the Silence Bogdana Aksyonov Children's Voice (Kiev, Ukraine)

On April 26th, 1986, in the year I was born, the core reactor of the Chernobyl Nuclear Plant exploded and released thirty to forty times the radioactivity of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many of the families living in the "Chernobyl Zone" during the explosion were moved to the district where I live. While I spoke every day with these families, we never discussed Chernobyl. I didn't want to face what had happened and the fact that it could happen again. Now that I'm a first year Journalism student at Kyiv National University, I've realized that keeping the silence doesn't help my neighbors and

that it puts all of us in danger. I want to help my fellow Ukrainians confront this tragedy and find ways to create a safer future.

Ji-hee's Candlelight Ji-hee Huh

Daejeon Independent Media Center (Daejeon, South Korea)

(in collaboration with the MNN Youth Channel – NYC)

Ji-Hee, a 16 year-old high school student in South Korea, let very little come between herself and her studies. But in June 2002 her world changed forever when two 13-year-old schoolgirls were run over by a U.S. Military armed vehicle. The deaths shook Ji-Hee, and like many students across the Korean Peninsula, she wanted answers to why the U.S. Military is stationed in South Korea. She also started worrying about the real possibility of war with North Korea. As Hyang-Soon's future became less certain, she began to play an active role in the anti-war movement. She uses her knowledge to help end the threat of violence, and create a secure future for people across Korea.

History Lessons Daniela Glusberg

Youth for Social Action: Evanston Township High School (Evanston, IL)

When the bell rings at 3:35pm each weekday, over 3,000 American teenagers stream out of the classrooms and into the hallways of Evanston Township High School. As this multicultural mass of mostly Latino, African-American, and White students slowly disperses, there's a group of students who choose to stay behind. Seeking refuge and community, the student-run group, "Youth for Social Action" joins together to share fears that have built-up since 9/11. They discuss their worries that Bush's war on terrorism has quickly become a war on immigrants, a war on many of their families. They fear that if their families speak up, they may be deported. This is a story about a group of youth who have joined together to help each other fight for and preserve the American dream of peace, prosperity, and freedom in a time of fear.

Lesson Sequence

Building Background

Activity One: Defining Activism

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with background information that will help them better understand the issues discussed in the film and the lesson activities.

1. Share the following definition of activism with your students:

ac·tiv·ism: a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue

Source: www.m-w.com

2. Ask the class to brainstorm examples of activism in the world. Use students' examples to discuss the wide range of activism that exists in the world.

3. As a class, visit the following websites that provide examples of activism:

- MTV: Rock the Vote <http://www.rockthevote.com/home.php>
- Project Think Different <http://projectthinkdifferent.org/>
- Habitat for Humanity <http://www.networkforgood.org/offsiteframe/?siteURL=http://www.habitat.org>
- What Kids Can Do <http://www.WhatKidsCanDo.org/Index.asp>
- Youthlink.org www.youthlink.org

Activity Two: Places & Spaces

The purpose of this activity is to provide students with background information on the countries that will be featured in the lesson films.

1. As a class, visit the *Beyond Borders Countries* section of the website. This section contains information about the culture,

geography, politics, economics and people of the varied countries that are featured in the *Beyond Borders* films. In this lesson, have your students investigate the following countries:

- Ukraine
- United States
- Iraq
- North Korea
- South Korea

Media Component

1. View the film *Lift the Silence* with your students. Give the students the following questions to answer after they have finished.

- Why do you think the Chernobyl disaster was never discussed with Bogdana's neighbors?
- What emotion do you think Bogdana felt most strongly?
- What emotion do you think motivated Bogdana to make this film?
- What is Bogdana's greatest fear?
- How do you think her life choices helped her confront her fears?
- How did this film make you feel?
- What message do you think the filmmaker was trying to convey?

2. View the film *Ji-hee's Candlelight* with your students. Give the students the following questions to answer after they have finished.

- What was Ji-hee afraid of?
- What sparked her decision to protest?
- How did Ji-hee's family react to her actions?
- How did the support of others affect Ji-hee?

- Describe Ji-hee's emotions.
- How did this film make you feel?
- How did Ji-hee's actions help her confront her fears?
- What message do you think the filmmaker was trying to convey?

3. View the film *History Lessons* with your students. Give the students the following questions to answer after they have finished.

- How did the events in her parents' lives influence Daniela's view of the world?
- How do you think Daniela might define the American dream?
- What purpose do you think groups like Youth for Social Action serve in a high school? Do you see any value in them?
- How do you think the support of a group may help Daniela deal with her fears and emotions?
- How did this film make you feel?
- What message do you think the filmmaker was trying to convey?

3. After the students have finished responding to the prompts, lead a class discussion based on their reactions to the films.

Lesson Activities

Activity One:

Talking it Out- Multiple Perspectives on Activism

In this activity students will enact a talk show to explore multiple perspectives on the issues of activism and creating change in the world. Students will research various perspectives on the subject, assume an imaginary role based on this information and participate in a mock talk show.

1. Divide the class into small groups to conduct Internet research on varied examples of activism. Tell the students that they will be creating characters for an imaginary talk show on the topic of activism. Tell them that the show will be based on what they learn in their research, and that they should use the resources to spark ideas, make connections, learn new information, and think about activism from multiple perspectives.

2. Tell your class that the talk show panel will consist of the following seven people:

- An environmental activist
- A legal activist
- A human rights activist
- Filmmaker Daniela Glusberg
- Filmmaker Ji-hee Huh
- Filmmaker Bogdana Aksyonov
- A talk show host

3. Divide the class into the following five groups:

- Environmental Activism
- Legal Activism
- Human Rights Activism
- The Filmmakers
- The Talk Show Planners

Explain to students that some of the people in the talk show, such as the filmmakers, are based on real people, and other people, such as the environmental activist or legal activist, will be fictitious. Tell students that their job is to examine the definition of activism from the perspective of their chosen character and portray this person in the talk show.

Group One should select one student to take on the role of an environmental activist; Group Two should select one student to take on the role of a legal activist; and Group Three should select one student to take on the role of a human rights activist. Group Four, the Filmmaker group, should choose three students to represent the three filmmakers. Group Five should select one student to act as the talk show host.

Group One: Environmental Activism

- YES: Youth for Environmental Sanity
<http://www.yesworld.org/aboutyes.html>
- Kids Saving the Rainforest
<http://www.kidssavingtherainforest.org/>
- Children for a Safe Environment
<http://myhero.com/myhero/hero.asp?hero=koryJohnson>
- Greenpeace
www.greenpeace.org
- Global Witness
<http://www.globalwitness.org/>

Group Two: Legal Activism

- Tolerance.org
www.tolerance.org
- National Women's Law Center
<http://www.nwlc.org/display.cfm?section=education>
- Title IX Women & Sports
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1009872>
"Click on Listen."
- US Law & Security: Human Rights First
<http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/issues.htm>
- American Civil Liberties Union
www.aclu.org

Group Three: Human Rights Activism

- Nelson Mandela
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/mandela/> a/
<http://www.wagingpeace.org/menu/programs/youth-outreach/peace-heroes/mandela-nelson.htm>
- Mahatma Gandhi

<http://www.bangalorennet.com/system1/pooch/index.htm> |

- Amnesty International
<http://www.amnesty.org/>
- UNICEF Voices of Youth
<http://www.unicef.org/voy/>
- Oneworld.net
www.oneworld.net

Group Four: The Filmmakers

The following websites contain background information about the issues described in the three films.

- Iraq & the US
<http://news.yahoo.com/fc3/yahooligans/middleeast/>
http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/iraq_new/grolier/index.asp?article=map
- The First Amendment & Peace Rally in Northern California
<http://www.aclu.org/FreeSpeech/FreeSpeech.cfm?ID=1%098772&c=86>
- North Korea
http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/north_korea/north-south/index.asp?article=north_korea
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kn.html>
- South Korea
http://teacher.scholastic.com/scholasticnews/indepth/north_korea/north-south/index.asp?article=south_korea
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html>
- Chernobyl
http://www-cgi.cnn.com/WORLD/9604/04/cnnp_chernobyl/index.html
<http://www.bellona.no/imaker?id=12663&sub=1>
<http://www.chernobyl.co.uk/>

- Freedom of the Press
I Am An Iraqi Journalist
<http://www.alternet.org/mediaculture/23325/>

www.freedomforum.org

Group Five: The Talk Show Planners

Tell the students in this group that they are responsible for the following tasks:

- Generate a list of questions for the show that highlight diverse perspectives on activism.
- Provide each group with a list of possible discussion questions so they can prepare their answers.
- Decide on a format for the show.
- Decide how to ensure that all participants will have an opportunity to speak and be heard without interruption.
- Decide how to include the audience in the discussion.

6. Stage the talk show.

7. Critique and discuss the talk show.

8. Have your students choose an area of activism that appeals to them, and ask them to research and become involved in local efforts, if possible. Encourage students to share their experiences with their classmates. You may wish to host this information on a class website.

Extension Activities

Activity One: Activists in Your Local Community

1. Ask your students to research local activist groups and speakers. Invite local activists to speak to the class and/or school community. The following website contains useful links:
http://www.tolerance.org/maps/social_justice/index.html.

Activity Two: The Ruckus Society

1. Have your students research the Ruckus Society at <http://www.ruckus.org/index.php>. This organization provides environmental, human rights, and social justice organizers with the tools to support their goals. Ask the students to share what they have learned with their classmates.

Activity Three: Peace Activists

1. Ask your students to choose one of the peace heroes listed at Waging Peace.org., the website of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation at <http://www.wagingpeace.org/menu/programs/youth-outreach/peace-heroes/index.htm>

Standards
Mid-continent Research for Education & Learning

www.mcrel.org

Language Arts

Writing

Standard 4. [Gathers and uses information for research purposes](#)

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

2. Uses a variety of print and electronic sources to gather information for research topics (e.g., news sources such as magazines, radio, television, newspapers; government publications; microfiche; telephone information services; databases; field studies; speeches; technical documents; periodicals; Internet)

6. Uses strategies to adapt writing for different purposes (e.g., to explain, inform, analyze, entertain, reflect, persuade)

Reading

Standard 7. [Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts](#)

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

1. Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of informational texts (e.g., textbooks, biographical sketches, letters, diaries, directions, procedures, magazines, essays, primary source historical documents, editorials, news stories, periodicals, catalogs, job-related materials, schedules, speeches, memoranda, public documents, maps)

Visual Arts

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

Benchmark 1. Identifies intentions of those creating artworks
<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/reference.asp?item=benchmark&BenchmarkID=2375&subjectID=13>

Geography

Standard 4. Understands the physical and human characteristics of place

Level IV (Grades 9-12)

Standard 4. [Understands the physical and human characteristics of place](#)

1. Knows how social, cultural, and economic processes shape the features of places (e.g., resource use, belief systems, modes of transportation and communication; major technological changes such as the agricultural and industrial revolutions; population growth and urbanization)

Working With Others

Standard 1. [Contributes to the overall effort of a group](#)

Level IV (Grades K-12)

2. Works cooperatively within a group to complete tasks, achieve goals, and solve problems