

For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights

Pre-Visit Lesson #2: Approaches to Social Change

For standards in your state see:

<http://www.educationworld.com/standards/state/toc/index.shtml#math>

Grade level: 9-12

Time Required: 1-2 class periods

National Curriculum Standards (McREL):

- **Life Skills, Standard 1:** Contributes to the overall effort of a group
- **Life Skills, Standard 4:** Displays effective interpersonal communication skills
- **Arts & Communication, Standards 4 & 5:** Understands ways in which the human experience is transmitted and reflected in the arts and communication AND Knows a range of arts and communication works from various historical and cultural periods
- **Technology, Standard 6:** Understands the nature and uses of different forms of technology
- **Civics, Standard 28:** Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals
- **History, Standard 29:** Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties

Objectives:

- Students will gain an understanding of how visual culture and social movements intersect.
- Students will gain an understanding of three approaches to social change
- Students will utilize technology and information sharing systems to express views and accumulate sources

Materials:

- Internet access
- Library access (optional)

Student Instruction:

1. Inform your students that your class will be visiting an exhibit at your local museum called *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. Ask your students if they can predict the subject matter of the exhibit.

2. After approximately 5 minutes of discussion about the exhibit's potential subject matter, create a Venn diagram. The two intersecting circles presented are as follows: **Visual Culture** and **Civil Rights**. Examples for Visual Culture might include: *photography, art, TV, film/movies, visual, surroundings, media, press, documentation, symbolism, etc.* Examples for Civil Rights might include: *race, prejudice, race relations, equality, equal rights, segregation, lynching, prejudice, hate, tolerance, non-violence, sit-ins, movement, 1960s, boycott, violence, integration, power, Black Panther, etc.*
3. Begin a discussion with the following question: "How are the Civil Rights movement and visual culture related?" Eventually, you should arrive at a deeper level of discussion with questions like, "How does visual culture and media advance or impede social change?"
4. Inform students that in order to mobilize the Civil Rights movement, leaders strategically utilized the media, from pictorial magazines to the network news. They were keenly aware of the power of a picture to represent the truth, to persuade the public, and call people to action. They knew that some of the most powerful and convincing images of all were also at times the most graphic. While visiting *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, you will view several graphic and emotional images and artifacts.
5. Announce that in preparation for their visit to *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, students will complete an assignment wherein they collectively examine three historical approaches to social change: **conventional politics, violence, and non-violence**. For additional teacher background information, you can read Brian Martin's article "Paths to social change: conventional politics, violence and nonviolence" here: <http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/06eolss.html> or refer to Charles Harper's book *Exploring Social Change: America and the World (5th Edition.)*
6. This assignment will be achieved in group format, through the creation of a classroom wiki. You can create a free wiki (with password protection) especially designed for K-12 teachers here: <http://www.wikispaces.com/content/for/teachers>
7. Divide you students into 4 groups, assigning each group a separate responsibility in the building of a wiki.
 - **Group one:** *Summary for Conventional Politics.* This group will create a summary, along with sources, related to using conventional politics as a means of social change. It should include both advantages and disadvantages as well as previous use in United States history.
 - **Group two:** *Summary for Violence.* This group will create a summary, along with sources, related to using violence as a means of social change. It should include both advantages and disadvantages as well as previous use in United States history.
 - **Group three:** *Summary for Non-Violence.* This group will create a summary, along with sources, related to using non-violence as a means of social change. It should include both advantages and disadvantages as well as previous use in United States history.
 - **Group four:** *Discussion leaders.* These students will create a separate tab on the wiki and facilitate discussion around each approach to social

change. Specific, directed questions should be asked as opposed to an open-ended call for commentary. Discussion leaders should be ready to include visual culture and the media as questions for discussion.

- As the teacher, you will serve as the **site monitor** for content. It is advisable to state expectations and consequences for wiki content upfront.

Post-Visit Lesson #2: Approaches to Social Change

For standards in your state see:

<http://www.educationworld.com/standards/state/toc/index.shtml#math>

Grade Level: 9-12

Time Required: 1 class period

National Curriculum Standards (McREL):

- **Civics, Standard 28:** Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals
- **History, Standard 29:** Understands the struggle for racial and gender equality and for the extension of civil liberties
- **Technology, Standard 3:** Understands the relationships among science, technology, society, and the individual.
- **Visual Arts, Standards 1 & 4:** Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts AND Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

Objectives:

- Students will gain an understanding of the connection between visual media and social change
- Students will gain an understanding of the ways in which technology impacts society
- Students will gain an understanding of a contemporary political and/or social conflict and how visual media and technology influenced their outcome

Materials:

- **Internet access**
- **Poster board, glue, markers, scissors (option 1)**
- **Multi-media software (option 2)**

Teacher Background (Taken from PBS Newshour “Social Media and Non-Violent Protest”):

The events in Cairo, Egypt and other Middle East cities in early 2011 have reset the political paradigm for the region and created new challenges for the United States. It’s no secret that most countries in the Middle East are run by autocratic dictators that allow free expression only when it praises them, free assembly only when it supports them, and free elections only when they pick the candidates. But young, tech-savvy activist, employing nonviolent tactics are beginning to change that.

Dissent and protest are not new to the region. For decades the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has kept the pot of discontent boiling in the Middle East, often times targeting the United

States as the villain. But protests in Egypt and Tunisia have citizens demanding an end to the dictatorial regimes and instituting democratic governments. Opposition groups forming at a grass-roots level are employing resistance methods that go back decades to the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s. They are forming coalitions with like-minded groups at all levels of society—professional, labor, and government workers. They counsel nonviolence to their members and temper the anger with reminders to keep their “eye on the prize” and not let the brutal methods of the pro-government forces divert or discourage their cause. And they have employed the “new media” – Facebook, Twitter, and blogging—to present their case, communicate with like-minded groups, and encourage questioning and discussion that has not been seen in this region for decades.

Political analysts debate the extent to which the new media played a role in the toppling of the regimes of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. The massive public protests that ended these regimes were not just spontaneous reactions to recent oppression, but rather the release of long standing grievances with the government over poor economic conditions, corruption, and the suppression of freedoms. Each of these revolutions was ignited by the deaths of young men facing oppression and the brutality of the state when they dared complain of the abuse.

What seems to make these revolutions different from ones the past is how social media has accelerated the organizational capabilities and operations of the opposition movements. By using social media, opposition groups are better than the government at forming and carrying out strategy, instilling discipline within their ranks, and adapting to quickly changing events. It seems that it wasn't social media that toppled the regimes but that social media served as a tool in that process; a process that also employed traditional methods of dissent served up on mass media (primarily television) to citizens of Egypt and Tunisia as well as the world.

Student Instruction:

1. Remind your students of their recent visit to the local museum to see the exhibit *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. Begin a discussion about how the visual images of the Civil Rights Movement helped propel the movement forward. Ask for examples from the exhibit that specifically documented the movement (*March on Washington* video, *Breakthrough in Birmingham* video, Emmett Till photographs, *LIFE* magazine cover of Joe Bass, JR., etc.).
2. Next, inquire with your students whether or not an image's ability to persuade and galvanize a public response is due to the image alone. Ask what other factors may be involved. Explain that in order for an image to make a difference, it had to be published. (In today's terms, this is equivalent to uploaded, posted, and/or shared.) And the timing had to be right – the public had to be ready and eager to see the world around them in new ways. Just as important are the words, circumstances, distribution, and beliefs that endow a picture “with greater levels of meaning and influence.”

3. Now imagine what would have happened if the young activists fighting for equal rights in the 1950s and 1960s would have had access to today's technology. Ask students how the movement may have differed.
4. Explain that the success of the Civil Rights movement was dependent on getting the right images to the right people at the right time, all of which merged with the development and use of the right technology (in this case, the camera). Inquire about recent social movements in other countries that have been fought by communicating messages with visual imagery, just like the Civil Rights movement. Technology has also been a major factor in recent movements' successes and/or failures.
5. Inform your students that you will be applying some of the lessons learned from their *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights* exhibit experience to recent social and political movements. They are to choose one recent social and/or political revolution to research, paying specific attention to how visual communication intersected with technology.
6. Since the focus of this exhibit is on the power of the visual image, students will create either a 1.) poster project or 2) multi-media presentation relying predominantly (but not entirely) on images to communicate the following components related to modern day revolutions:
 - **Title:** choose a contemporary revolution to research and give it a title.
 - **Map:** include a map of the region and specific locations involved in the revolution. Identify the area's natural resources, population statistics, neighboring countries, and past political government system.
 - **Timeline:** include a timeline of events leading up to the revolution.
 - **Turning Point:** identify the turning point of the revolution. This could be represented by a particular person, group, event or form of media.
 - **U.S. parallels:** Compare and contrast global events that led to social revolution to the Civil Rights movement in United States history.
 - **Summation:** In your opinion, did this revolution lead to positive change for the people of the country?
7. Students will present their projects to the rest of the class.
8. For more background information on recent social revolutions, you can refer your students to:
 - "Egyptian Revolution 2011: A Complete Guide to the Unrest" (*Huffington Post*): http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/30/egypt-revolution-2011_n_816026.html
 - "Egypt's Revolution by Social Media" (*Wall Street Journal*): <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703786804576137980252177072.html>
 - "The Cyberactivists who Helped Topple a Dictator" (*Newsweek*, 2011 Tunisian Revolution): <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/01/15/tunisia-protests-the-facebook-revolution.html>
 - "The Middle East in Revolt" (*TIME magazine*): <http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,2045328,00.html>

- “Social Media Alone Do Not Instigate Revolutions” (PBS):
<http://www.pbs.org/mediashift/2011/02/social-media-alone-do-not-instigate-revolutions034.html>
- “Spreading Revolution” (*The New York Times*):
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/world/middleeast/2011-spreading-revolutions.html#intro>