



Art and Activism

Grades: 5-6

Objective: Jackie Robinson was an activist for racial equality and a civil rights leader. But not all changemakers are famous athletes. There are people fighting for our communities every day. Activists are ordinary people and they are all around us. They might even be us! In this lesson, students will learn about the basics of activism, leadership, and community and explore the connection between activism and art. At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- write words related to the terms community, activism and activist.
- identify how activism and change are important to communities.
- begin thinking about the role art can play in activism

Source: Learning for Justice





LESSON

Art and Community Activism

Talking about activism, activists and leaders, helps children understand how change can happen in a community. This lesson will give students a chance to think about what these concepts mean and to consider the relationship between community activism and the visual arts.

Grade Level K-2, 3-5

Topic: Rights & Activism

Subject: Reading & Language Arts, Arts

Social Justice Domain: Action

OBJECTIVES

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- write words related to the terms community, activism and activist.
- identify how activism and change are important to communities.
- begin thinking about the role art can play in activism

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What is an activist? What does an activist do?
- What is community activism and what is its purpose?

Enduring Understandings:

- An activist is a person who works to solve a problem or improve a community.
- Community activism provides a way for people work together to solve a problem in their neighborhood, town or city.

MATERIALS

Listed below are children's books that may be helpful in discussing the themes of the lesson. You may want to have these available to read aloud and discuss with students before, during, or after the lesson.

- *A is for Activist* by Innosanto Nagara
- *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type* by Doreen Cronin
- *That's Not Fair!/No Es Justo* by Carmen Tafolla
- *Freedom Summer* by Deborah Wiles

Distribute copies of a graphic organizer to aide students while they discuss the attributes of a leader.

- <http://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/conceptmap2.pdf>

Overview

Art and Activism is a series of 12 mini-lessons in which students look at, think about and make art together. Each lesson prompts children to examine how art relates to community, leadership, and activism. Note: These mini-lessons can be used individually or together, and are not dependent on sequence. In this lesson, students are introduced to the concepts of art and community activism and have a chance to discuss their understanding of these terms.

Most children have some experience with being part of a community through connections with their family, their school, and their neighborhood. They need opportunities to think about what community means before they are able to think about the leadership roles in a community. Talking about activism, activists and leaders, helps children understand how change can happen in a community. This lesson will give students a chance to think about what these concepts mean and to consider the relationship between community activism and the visual arts.

Vocabulary

activism [ak-tuh-viz-uh m] (noun) vigorous action or involvement as a way to achieve political or other goals, sometimes by demonstrations or protests

activist [ak-tuh-vist] (noun) a person who is very involved in supporting a cause, especially a political cause

community [kuh-myoo-ni-tee] (noun) a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and may have a common cultural and historical heritage

Suggested Procedure

1. Assign students to work in three small groups. Give each group a piece of poster board with one word written in the middle of each: community, activism, art. Instruct students to work cooperatively and write as many words as they can think of that connect to, define, or question the word on their chart. (Note: Students may also draw pictures or you may choose to lead this lesson as a whole group shared writing activity.)

2. Allow each group to share the poster they have created with their classmates. Then help students come up with definitions of the three terms. Guide them by explaining that these words are not easy to define. Offer some variation of the following explanations: “We often think of community as a group of people living or working together and sharing some common ideas. Activism is a way of working for change or for what you believe in. And we can say that art is a creative way of showing people, feelings, stories and ideas.” Continue the discussion until your students are comfortable using these terms.

3. Optional: Assign students to work in pairs, matching each student with someone who had a different term. (For instance, if a student was part of the “activism” group, pair him with a student from “art.”) Note: If you did the first step as a shared writing activity, you can pair up any students. Ask each pair to collaborate on sketching a picture that shows how the two terms relate to each other. Ask: “How does activism relate to community? How does art relate to community? How does activism relate to art?” Encourage students to be creative and take risks with their picture. Emphasize that the questions do not have right or wrong answers. Challenge your students to think of examples from their lives to illustrate relationships or connections. After students have had ample time to create their illustrations, ask them as a whole group to discuss the illustrations each pair created.

Common Core State Standards: ELA-Literacy. CCRA. W.2; W.4; SL.1; SL.2; SL.3; SL.4; L.1; L.2; L.4

Extension Activity

Encourage students to be more aware of the art that they see in their everyday lives and think about the role it might play in the different communities they are part of. Ask students to think about the way community, art, and activism relate to each other. Ask them to return to school ready to share examples of the way the three different ideas can be connected.