

# American Experiments

## Where Do You Stand? Protest

Since the founding of the American republic, when the power of the nation was entrusted not in a monarchy but in its citizens, each generation has questioned and considered how to form “a more perfect union.”

The American Experiments suite of educational games builds off of this question by challenging students to think about their roles and responsibilities within their democracy. *Where Do You Stand?* asks students to formulate opinions on fundamental American rights while listening to and learning from the ideas and experiences of their peers.

The learning begins with the guiding question: *What would you do to support what you believe in?*

Through an interactive and movement-based activity, students investigate this question and examine how in many instances there are no black-or-white answers. *Where Do You Stand?* challenges students to critically think about the nuances and complexities of issues and learn from the experiences and reasoning of their peers as they form their own opinions in response to a series of prompts about protest. Students will:

- Practice skills for engaging in civil discourse and active deliberation of challenging topics with peers.
- Form and voice their own opinions and, by listening to different viewpoints, modify their stances to reflect new understandings.
- Analyze how complex issues and topics can elicit a range of non-binary responses and evaluate why this matters.

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## Aligned Standards

### College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- D2.Civ.7.9-12. Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others.
- D2.Civ.9.9-12. Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.
- D2.Civ.14.9-12. Analyze historical, contemporary, and emerging means of changing societies, promoting the common good, and protecting rights.

### Common Core Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## Assessments

This lesson builds discussion-based skills and knowledge of how Americans can participate in their democracy to affect change. Throughout the lesson, students' learning can be formatively assessed through their participation in the spectrum and discussions. This can be recorded using a simple table like the one below. This formative assessment table could be completed by teachers or individual students to record their own progress.

Student Name	Participating in the learning task	Practicing skills of civil dialogue	Analyzing multiple perspectives	Identifying and evaluating nuances and complexities	Assessing protest as a way to effect change
Student A	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Student B	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓

A summative assessment can be done using the *Reflection* portion of the lesson. Students can create reflective pieces that are verbal, written, artistically rendered, or some other type of portfolio creation. See page 8 for a sample set of reflection questions.



## Pacing Guide

*Where Do You Stand?* is a flexible lesson that can be conducted over the course of one or several class periods. The pacing guide below shows an example of how to run the activity during a 45- or 90-minute block of time.

Learning Task	45-Minute Lesson	90-Minute Lesson
Warm-Up Task	5 minutes	10 minutes
Review Game Procedures	5 minutes	5 minutes
Facilitating the Game	30 minutes	65 minutes
Reflection	5 minutes	10 minutes
<b>Total</b>	<b>45 minutes</b>	<b>90 minutes</b>

## Glossary of Terms

**Citizen:** An inhabitant of a particular place (for the purposes of this activity, legal status of an individual does not need to be considered).

**Counter-Protest:** A protest that occurs in the same place as or nearby another protest that it is ideologically opposed to.

**Discussion:** The action or process of talking about something with the purpose of exchanging ideas.

**Engaged Citizen:** A person who feels responsibility for a community and takes informed action to promote positive social change.

**Issue:** A problem that is in dispute between two or more parties.

**Private Issue:** A problem affecting only an individual.

**Protest:** A statement or action expressing disapproval or objection to something, often an organized public demonstration expressing strong objection to an official policy or course of action.

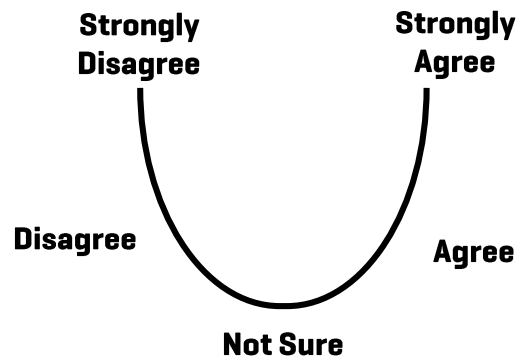
**Public Issue:** A problem affecting a group, the community, or society at large.



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## Room Arrangement

Create a space in the classroom where the students can stand along a U-shaped line. Place signs along the line as shown in the diagram below.



## Warm-Up Task: Mini-Exhibit Investigation

Ask students: What words come to mind when you hear the term “protest?” Record their answers on the board.

Introduce the concept of protest through a gallery walk with images showing examples of protests that have occurred in American history. A collection of these images and a note-taking sheet can be found at the end of this guide and in a Smithsonian Learning Lab collection for this activity (<https://s.si.edu/2ILAwkM>).

As students examine the pictures, encourage them to record their answers to the following questions. Afterwards, have students share their answers to the questions in small groups or with the class.

- Who can participate in a protest?
- What do these images of protests look like? How would you describe the setting, format and mood of the protests?
- How would you describe the emotions exhibited by the demonstrators?
- What might be a reason that someone would join a protest?
- Are there other forms of protest that are not shown in these images? What are they?
- Why do you think people choose to protest?
- What is the purpose of a protest?

Explain that protests form around public issues that people want to address or see changed. Discuss the difference between a private issue (something that affects only an individual or those around them) and a public issue (something affecting the community or society at large). Record these definitions and examples of each kind on an anchor chart for students to refer back to during the activity.



## Game Procedures

Prepare students for the activity by reviewing the following. These procedures will help build community and ready students for a discussion that is productive, civil and open-minded.

**Student Role** Students will step into the role of engaged community members or citizens. They will have to think carefully about the actions they would, or already do, take as active participants in civic life. To help them do this, have students think of a public issue they feel strongly about. It could be about their school, the environment, the local community, etc. Instruct them to write their selection on a slip of paper and turn it in.

**Facilitation Tip:** Decide whether or not to share the issues students have selected. If the class has demonstrated a high level of maturity, posting the issues they are thinking of can help enrich their discussions. However, if doing so may create significant friction among students, possibly wait until the end of the activity to reveal which issues students selected.

**Teacher Role** The teacher will move the game forward, make observations, and challenge students to analyze responses through discussion and critical-thinking questions.

**Facilitation Tip:** This game provides a platform for meaningful conversations about diverse viewpoints on complex topics. Moving the game forward at a fast pace and encouraging students to move at the same time across the center of the spectrum will help to create a fun learning atmosphere that can spark ah-ha! moments, energetic discussion, and new insights.

**Process** Throughout the activity, students will be asked to form an opinion on a series of prompts, then evaluate those choices and ultimately decide if they will stay in the same place or move to a new position to reflect how their stance has or has not changed.

**Goal** The goal of this game is to engage in active deliberation, to learn about the thinking of others, and to consider the nuances and complexities of challenging questions and topics.

**Norms** To help foster a thoughtful, reflective, and responsive discussion, have students create a class set of behavioral norms. (They can also be used in future lessons!)

Some suggestions include:

- Be respectful and open to new ideas.
- Share the floor.
- Stay on topic.
- Everyone participates.
- Seek first to understand, then to speak.



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## Facilitating the Game

Begin the game by stating the following: **Imagine a new law is proposed that will affect the issue you have chosen to focus on. You completely disagree with this law.** Then follow the steps below to get students moving, thinking, and discussing.

**Prompt** Display and read aloud a series of prompts related to protest, which can be found on the following page. Slides with these prompts can be found at <https://s.si.edu/2Hd6ngZ> and at the Learning Lab collection for this activity: <https://s.si.edu/2ILAwkM>.

**Move** Have students immediately and independently move to the space along the spectrum that they feel best represents their opinion. Once students have moved, make observations about where they are standing. For example, note if there is a large group of students in one area or if there is an empty space along the line and ask why that might be.

**Facilitation Tip:** Explain that “not sure” is not the same as not having an answer. “Not sure” is a good place to stand if a student has evaluated several perspectives, but has strong reasons why they cannot pick one. If students choose to stand on “not sure,” have them explain their choice and the different options that they weighed.

**Reflect and Respond** Invite students to share why they have chosen to stand where they are. Be sure to include students from all parts of the spectrum. Encourage students to be persuasive and respectfully respond to each other’s explanations.

**Facilitation Tip:** Provide gambits to help students effectively engage in the discussion. Post these somewhere in the classroom to help students start their discussions and have more thoughtful responses. Gambits can include prompts like “Can you tell me more about...?” or “I agree with you, because...”

**Move Again** After listening to the experiences and reasoning of their peers, provide an opportunity for students to move if their opinions have changed. If students move, make observations about what transpired and ask: Did stances change at all? Why or why not? What new information or arguments swayed the most people? Were you surprised by how people did or did not move?

**Discuss** Periodically, engage students in small- or large-group discussions using the critical-thinking questions listed below each prompt. Small groups can be composed of students who hold like-minded or opposing viewpoints and should challenge students to identify areas where they disagree or agree with each other, respectively.



## Game Prompts

### 1. I would join a protest if a law that I disagreed with were passed about this issue.

*Critical Thinking Questions:* What does it mean to join a protest? Why might someone take this action? Are there alternative ways, other than protest, to communicate your disagreement with a law?

### 2. I would join a protest even if most people I know disagreed with my viewpoint.

*Critical Thinking Questions:* Why might it matter if people you know disagreed with your viewpoint? What could be a risk of publicly sharing your opinion if others in your family or friends do not agree with it?

### 3. I would join a protest even if it could cause a family argument.

*Critical Thinking Questions:* Why might a family member become upset about someone joining a protest? What reasons might a person have to join a protest even if it would lead to a family argument?

### 4. I would join a protest even if there were a chance that I might be injured.

*Critical Thinking Questions:* How might someone be injured at a protest? Protests often generate large crowds—would this possibly help or hinder your ability to get medical care? If people are hurt during a protest, how could that affect the strength of the group's message?

### 5. I would join a protest even if I saw police there.

*Critical Thinking Questions:* Why might police officers be present at a protest? What are the different roles that police could play during a protest?

### 6. I would join a protest even if I had to take a day off of work or school.

*Critical Thinking Questions:* What negative consequences could someone face for going to a protest instead of school or work? Could there be positive outcomes from choosing to attend a protest rather than going to school or work?

### 7. I would join a protest even if nearby property were being damaged.

*Critical Thinking Questions:* What types of property could be damaged during a protest? Could this include items on the street, buildings, or even personal property that people bring with them?

### 8. I would join a protest even if there were a large counter-protest in the same area.

*Critical Thinking Questions:* What does counter-protest mean? What added risks would you have as a protester, if a counter-protest were also taking place in the same area? What could be a benefit to having a counter-protest nearby?



## Reflection

After the last prompt, guide students to reflect on this experience and how they might apply what they have learned to their own lives in and outside of school. The following prompts can be used to have students think individually or in small groups, and through writing, artistic or verbal reflections.

### Game Review (the what)

- What did it feel like to share your opinion with others?
- How was your opinion affected during the game? Did it change or was it reinforced?
- Did everyone generally agree or were there a variety of opinions? What prompted people to change their stances?

### Connections to Democracy (the so what)

- Why is it important to remember that perspectives can change depending on new information or looking at a topic in a new light?
- How can listening to and understanding the reasoning behind the opinions of others help strengthen our democracy?
- How has participating in this game changed the way you think about complex and nuanced topics?

### Next Steps (the now what)

- How can you apply what you learned in this game, about the opinions you hold and those held by others, to future conversations about public issues?
- What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about joining a protest or taking other forms of civic action?

**We'd love to know how you are using this lesson!  
Email us at [HistoryTeachers@si.edu](mailto:HistoryTeachers@si.edu) with questions,  
feedback, and suggestions.**

**The American Experiments lesson plans are made possible  
by a gift from the Julie and Greg Flynn Family Fund.**





## Suggested Modifications

<b>Small Groups</b>	Facilitate this activity in small groups. For each group, use a string with labels that represent the spectrum from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Students can move game pieces along the line to indicate their opinion. This strategy can work well for classes of students that are not as comfortable with large-group discussion or need more small-group instruction.
<b>Whiteboard Spectrum</b>	Put a spectrum line on the board or along a wall. Have students contribute their answers by placing a sticky note to mark their answer to the prompt. This shows more of an overall picture of the class’s opinions, rather than showing the perspectives of individual students.
<b>Create Additional Prompts</b>	Develop new prompts or topics. All prompts should be framed to be unbiased and lead to a respectful discussion that includes multiple perspectives. An unbiased prompt is something like “I would join a protest,” as opposed to a statement of opinion like “Protest is bad.” A good way to check the quality of a prompt is to reflect on if it would spark a discussion or a debate. If it would lead to a thoughtful discussion, you’re on the right track. If it would likely draw the students into an oppositional debate, reframe the prompt or create a new one.

## Extended Learning Opportunities

<b>Voting in American History Investigation</b>	Dig deeper into historical protests using the National Museum of American History’s <i>American Democracy: A Great Leap of Faith</i> online exhibition section on “Petitioning with Your Feet” ( <a href="https://s.si.edu/2Hs4wmm">https://s.si.edu/2Hs4wmm</a> ). Selecting a protest poster to investigate, have students analyze what issue was at stake; what groups of people were involved, both for and against; what led to the protest; and when, where, and how the protest occurred. Students could record their findings through a short documentary film, website, or other type of portfolio assessment.
<b>Your Voice Matters</b>	Organized demonstrations are not the only way that the First Amendment creates space within the U.S. Constitution for citizens to effect change. Engage students in an inquiry project to examine what other fundamental freedoms are contained within the First Amendment, how they have been used in the past to address public issues, and what young people should know about these rights. Students can compile and share their conclusions through a meme, a how-to guide, or other media.
<b>Keep the Discussion Going</b>	Reflect on the guiding question for this lesson: What would you do to support what you believe in? Have students think about whether or not this was a good question to ask, and evaluate if there are other questions that might be better for helping students think about protest and civic activism. Have students develop their own “big questions” and examine them through facilitated discussions.



# Facilitation Strategies for Teachers

The American Experiments interactives provide students with the opportunity to lead and engage in their own conversation in which they can examine concepts and issues, learn through discussion, encounter new perspectives, and find common ground with others. As the facilitator, your role is to guide this discussion.

## What does it mean to be a facilitator?

Your job is to support the students as they think critically and engage in thoughtful discussions about complex concepts of democracy. Being a facilitator can be a challenging position to be in during a lively and engaging discussion because it requires you to be a neutral guide rather than a participant with an opinion.

But being neutral does not mean that the facilitator is passive! You are impartial about the topic, but not about the process. The facilitator must pay close attention to both the spoken and unspoken dynamics of the conversation to ensure that students feel welcomed and engaged, that the discussion remains civil and thoughtful, and that the activity achieves its intended goals.

This **to-do list** can help you get started:

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Be Prepared</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the activity thoroughly. Brainstorm what ideas and views might be brought up and what might not be said. Be prepared to carefully present unvoiced perspectives to help the class dig deeper in to a question or prompt.</li><li>• Prepare prompting questions in advance, like “What do you think?” “Can you explain your thoughts?” “What example or evidence could you share to help us better understand what you are describing?”</li></ul>                             |
| <b>Set the Scene</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Go over the objectives so students understand their expectations and the goals of the activity.</li><li>• Review any procedures or rules.</li></ul>   |
| <b>Manage the Discussion</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep track of who is talking.</li><li>• Take notes to capture points, thoughts, and tensions. Use your notes to develop questions and illuminate connections.</li><li>• Interject only as needed to clarify statements, move the conversation forward or deeper, defuse tension, and ensure all voices are heard.</li><li>• Keep an eye on time and know when to start winding down the conversation so that there is sufficient time to reflect individually and as a group.</li></ul> |
| <b>Coach your Students</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This can require the most energy during the discussion. See the next page for tips on managing a few specific instances that might come up in your classroom.</li></ul>   |



## Facilitation Strategies for Teachers, continued

Below are tips you can use when students:

### **Don't stick to the class norms**

- Keep the class norms posted where all participants can see them! Students will often moderate each other by reminding everyone of the rules.
- Take a five-minute break. During this time, invite a rule-breaking student to be a co-facilitator and talk with them about what it means to moderate the conversation. Putting a student in a new role may help them see the conversation differently.

### **Dominate the conversation**

- Ask the student to pause and invite others to react to what has been said.
- Give a general reminder that the goal is to hear all voices and a range of discussion, meaning the floor must be shared.

### **Choose to not participate**

- Start by going around the room or table and having each student say something. Simply saying a few words out loud in front of a group can release a bit of the pressure a student might be feeling and make it easier for them to speak later on.
- During the discussion, let the student know that you are going to ask for their thoughts after the next few people talk. This gives them time to either check back into the conversation or prepare what they want to say.
- Explain that part of this learning experience is to understand that even if someone opts out, they are still making a conscious choice to participate or not—which is a key concept of democracy. If a student chooses to not participate, ask them to explain their choice to “sit this one out,” or invite them to be a co-facilitator.

### **Struggle to explain their thoughts**

- Encourage students to think of an example that could illustrate what they are thinking. For example, a student might not be able to say which amendment gave women the right to vote, but they may be able to describe the woman suffrage movement.
- Pause the activity for a ten-minute research break. During this time, students can grab a textbook or access the internet to pull together evidence that might help them make their case.

### **Are ready to find common ground or reflect**

- As the conversation or available time winds down, encourage students to reflect on what they learned about themselves as a member of a democracy and about the role of discussion in making wise decisions about public issues.
- Ask students to share their thoughts on why discussion is an important part of a thriving democracy. Identify where students' ideas overlap—in other words, where do they share common ground?



## Historical Background: Examples of Protests in American History

From local protests to massive marches in Washington, demonstrators have forced officials to confront issues that they have often wished to avoid. By any imaginable means, people have come before the government and demanded to be heard. Carrying signs, singing songs, and shouting from a podium, whether beautiful and moving or disrespectful and offensive, these demonstrations are an exercise in the American democratic process.

While it is considered a fundamental right of citizenship, protest has long been a contentious topic in terms of what is acceptable, when it is appropriate, and whether or not it is an effective way to make a difference. Throughout American history, protest has been used to advocate for a range of ideas and effect changes that continue to shape our democracy and conversations today.

The following images of protests show a few examples of the many demonstrations that have taken place throughout U.S. history. These images can also be found at the Smithsonian Learning Lab collection for this activity (<https://s.si.edu/2ILAwkM>).

Additional information can be found at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/democracy-exhibition>.

### Greensboro Lunch Counter



Lunch counter section from Greensboro, North Carolina, sit-ins, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

## March on Washington [1963]



Photograph by Robert S. Scurlock, Scurlock Studio Records, around 1905–1994, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

## Anti-War Demonstration [around 1965]



Photograph by Ken Regan, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution



## Woman Suffrage Parade [1913]



Gift of Edna L.  
Stantial, National  
Museum of  
American History,  
Smithsonian  
Institution

## Pin-Back Button Advocating for Disability Rights [1983]



National Museum of American History,  
Smithsonian Institution



## Protest held by John Reed Club and Artists' Union [1934]



Louis Lozowick papers,  
1898–1974, Archives of  
American Art, Smithsonian  
Institution

## Steelworkers protesting in downtown Pittsburgh [1966]



Collection of the Smithsonian  
National Museum of African  
American History and Culture, Gift  
from Charles A. Harris and Beatrice  
Harris in memory of Charles  
"Teenie" Harris



## Latino Healthcare Rally [1995]



Black Mosaic Research  
Project, Anacostia  
Community Museum  
Archives, Smithsonian  
Institution

## Protest held by Coxey's Army [1894]



Retrieved from Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002718487/>



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# Gallery Walk Note-Taking Sheet

Closely look at the pictures showing examples of protest. Think about the following questions and record your thoughts below.

1. What words come to mind when you hear the term “protest?”
2. What is the purpose of a protest?
3. Who can participate in a protest?
4. What do these images of protests look like? Describe the setting, format, and mood of the protest.
5. How would you describe the emotions exhibited by the demonstrators?
6. What might be a reason that someone would join a protest?
7. Can you think of other forms of protest that are not shown in these images? What are they?
8. What is the purpose of a protest? Why do you think people choose to protest?

