

Protest Art and the Movement for Black Lives

Grade: 6

Lesson Duration: 3 days (each day a 50 minute lesson)

Minnesota K-12 Social Studies Standards			
Strand	Code	Standard	Benchmark
Ethnic Studies	6.5.24.3	Resistance: Describe how individuals and communities have fought for freedom and liberation against systemic and coordinated exercises of power locally and globally. Identify strategies or times that have resulted in lasting change. Organize with others to engage in activities that could further the rights and dignity of all.	Identify how the arts have been a part of strategies, activities and/or engagement for social and political change.
Ethnic Studies	6.5.24.1	Resistance: Describe how individuals and communities have fought for freedom and liberation against systemic and coordinated exercises of power locally and globally. Identify strategies or times that have resulted in lasting change. Organize with others to engage in activities that could further the rights and dignity of all.	Examine how and why the Minnesota landscape has been shaped by people.

Lesson Focus

This lesson focuses on the Movement for Black Lives and the role of protest art in mediating power in the city. Students will learn more about the 13 guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter Movement, and how local artists responded to the murder of George Floyd during the 2020 Uprising through mural art. Students will create their own protest art for a cause of their choice, or one related to lesson content.

Learning Goals

1. Students will identify how art has been used as a strategy for social and political change.
2. Students will describe how mural artists transformed the landscape of Minneapolis during the 2020 Uprising.

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3. Students will learn about the guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter movement.
4. Students will exhibit critical thinking skills in creating a protest art for a cause of their choosing and describing a space/place well suited for their art (for example, a side of a specific building, a specific street, a store, etc).

Assessments

Day 1 Assessments

- Students will write 2 sentences about their prior knowledge of the Black Lives Matter Movement.
- Students will gather the following information from an educational video:
 - Provide 1 example of how protest brought about change in the past
 - The meaning of the phrase “Black Lives Matter”
 - Write 3 sentences in your own words how and why the Black Lives Matter Movement came about.
- Students will collaboratively work through the Black Lives Matter 13 Guiding Principles Coloring and Activity Book, answering at least 5 the following prompts for each guiding principle:
 - Empathy: Think of a time you had to work to understand someone who was different from you. How could you have learned more about them and how they felt?
 - Diversity: Think of spaces in your life that are not diverse or are segregated, and spaces that are more diverse or integrated (i.e. neighborhood, school, friend group, religious spaces). Do you spend more time in diverse or segregated spaces and why? What kinds of diversity or differences exist within the spaces that seem to be homogenous/less diverse?
 - Black Women: Name and describe one or more Black women you are connected to or admire. If you have limited relationship with actual Black woman, share why you think that is the case.
 - Black Villages: Who are the people who feel like family to you, even if you’re not related? Do you feel responsible for caring for people in your community, beyond your nuclear family?
 - Unapologetically Black: Think of a time when you had to hide a part of yourself. What could you have done or said to be more apologetic - meaning, how could you proudly share and be who you are without shame?
 - Restorative Justice: Have you ever been punished without a chance to talk through what happened and work out a solution with the people impacted? How did it feel? If not, how do you think conflicts can best be resolved to serve the growth and healing of everyone involved?

- Queer Affirming: In your school or community, do people ASSUME other people's sexuality or do they help create a space where people feel comfortable and AFFIRMED no matter how they identify?
- Trans Affirming: Black trans women are more vulnerable and mistreated in our society. Share why you think that is. Include any other questions you have about transgender identity.
- Loving Engagement: Think about the neighborhoods you move through, your school community, your family, your social life and social media life. What situations are you most LOVING in, and in which spaces could you do more to defend and affirm people's dignity?
- Black Families: How do you define family? In your family, who does the work of taking care of everyone?
- Intergenerational: Find an elder from your neighborhood or community and ask them to share a memory, story or life lesson that they've never shared with you before and record it on your phone if you can.
- Globalism: What parts of the world/countries do you know the most about and how did you learn about them? Which parts of the world do you wish you felt more connected to and why?
- Collective Value: In our society some people have more power than others, and are valued more. Do you think that you value some people/identities more or less than other (i.e. Based on immigration status, disability, ability, appearance, religion, economic status, gender, etc.)?
- Students will write one sentence detailing one thing that surprised them or that they learned while working through the 13 guiding principles activity book.

Day 2 Assessments

- Students will write 2 sentences about how art can be used as a tool for social change.
- Students will watch an educational video on protest art and from the video, list 4 reasons why someone might make protest art.
- Students will watch a short educational video and from the video, list 3 motivations for artists and community members creating and preserving protest art in response to the murder of George Floyd.
- Students will examine some of the murals created by Creatives After Curfew and answer the following questions:
 - How do the images and words in these murals create or inspire social change?
 - What do you notice about where these murals are located?
 - Select a mural to analyze more closely.
 - Describe the mural in 3 sentences.
 - What is the message of this mural?
 - What is your response to this mural?

- Students will provide 3 examples of how protest art, like the art we learned about today, changes the landscape of the city.

Day 3 Assessments

- Students will identify an issue/concern, injustice, cause, or movement that they wish to bring attention to.
 - Name the cause
 - Identify/list/imagine three guiding principles to that cause. Guiding principles should be thought of as central components to making your cause successful, inclusive, or liberatory.
- Students will create a visual representation (protest art) that brings attention to their cause and incorporates guiding principles
- Students will identify/imagine a place well suited to display their protest art to get their message across.
- Students will write 2-3 sentences detailing: why you have chosen the location you have chosen for your work and the impact it would have on the landscape of the city.

Pause and Prepare

Lesson / Discussion Preparation

- Are you familiar with the Black Lives Matter Movement and the impact that police violence has on communities of color, especially Black and Indigenous communities in Minnesota? If not, we suggest the following materials to read through closely before implementing this lesson in your classroom.
 - D.C. has a great [online database resource](#) for educators wanting to learn more about teaching racial justice pedagogy in their classrooms, and teaching Black Lives Matter in schools.
 - [Learning For Justice](#) has an excellent teacher resource page for teaching about race, racism, and police violence. On this page you will find articles such as:
 - [Black Minds Matter](#), an article about the importance of prioritizing the mental health of Black students in your classroom and using critical humility to better serve Black students in your classroom
 - PDF Download of [Lets Talk! Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students](#), designed to help educators learn how to communicate about topics such as white privilege, police violence, economic inequality and mass incarceration requires practice, and facilitating critical conversations with students demands courage and skill. This guide offers classroom-ready strategies educators can use to plan discussions and to facilitate these conversations with students.

- [Chauvin was found guilty, now what?](#) Article written to educators as a reminder that accountability isn't justice, and that justice demands an ongoing commitment to anti-racist praxis.
- [Don't Say Nothing](#) is an important article for teachers to read that discusses the harm created when educators stay silent on matters of racial justice or when racial injustice is present.
- Teaching Hard History's [Criminalizing Blackness](#) podcast traces the history of criminalizing Blackness post-emancipation, and discusses ways to approach discussions about the history of criminalization of Blackness in the classroom. You can check with your administrators to see if listening to and answering questions about this podcast qualify for professional development credit (questions available on podcast page and can be submitted for certificate).
- James Baldwin's [A Talk to Teachers](#) - a must read.
- The Schomburg Center hosted the editors of [Teaching for Black Lives](#) to discuss their book in this in-depth [two hour video](#). We recommend this book for teachers, and suggest taking a look at the [Teaching for Black Lives Website](#) that has a variety of teacher resources.
- NPR has a [Q&A with Jesse Hagopian](#) (co-editor of Teaching for Black Lives) about how to talk to kids about Black lives and police violence, along with strategies for gauging your students feelings in the classroom when talking about subjects that talk about difficult topics such as murder or racial injustice
- Are you familiar with [George Floyd Square](#) and the community efforts to create a safe and community-affirming space that does not rely on policing? If not, we suggest the Rise and Remember youtube video (hyperlinked above and [here](#)) and [Unicorn Riot's short documentary on GFS](#) and the [24 point justice resolution](#) to the city.
- We recommend the following teacher resources to help prepare you for classroom discussions on race and racism. These resources are meant to provide additional preparatory support to educators facilitating discussions on race and racism.
 - Learning for Justice's Teaching Tolerance Guide, [Let's Talk!: Discussing Race, Racism, and Other Difficult Topics With Students](#). In this guide, there are suggestions for preparation, in-class pedagogical strategies, teacher resources, and student-facing resources for discussing race, racism, and other difficult topics in your classroom.
 - Nation Education Association (NEA) has resource guides for educators on [Supporting Racial Justice for All Students](#) which include curricular resources aligned with The 1619 Project, Tips for talking about race in schools, Black Lives Matter at School, resources for identifying and addressing implicit bias, ethnic studies research, and much more. NEA also has a page on the [Freedom to Learn: Protecting the right to an honest and culturally inclusive education](#). This page

provides helpful framing for educators to use in classroom discussions, as well as with administrators or districts.

- Are you seeking more information on how teaching social justice, ethnic studies, and honest education in MN classrooms is understood by leading advocates for public education in Minnesota and MDE? We recommend the following resources for teachers wanting to learn more about MN specific teacher contexts, advocacy documents, and other important MN specific resources for educators teaching to these new standards and benchmarks.
 - Education Minnesota's page on [Freedom to Learn](#)
 - Education Minnesota's article, [Educators, local unions push back against attacks on honesty in education](#)
 - [MDE Frequently Asked Questions - Ethnic Studies January 2025](#)

Preparing Students / Providing Important Context

- It is very likely that students will already have some context for the 2020 Uprising, the murder of George Floyd, and the Black Lives Matter Movement, but it is important to gauge what your students know and to meet them where they are at, being mindful to center resistance, liberation efforts, and community networks of support. Please make sure that you have a set of community guidelines in place to ensure students are accountable to the classroom community and speak respectfully when students express their feelings towards subjects that affect everyone differently.
- Are you and your students already familiar with positionality practices such as the social identity wheel? If not, we suggest exploring the social identity wheel prior to this lesson so that you and your students can ground yourselves in your own positionalities when discussing topics that affect everyone differently.
 - [U Michigan's Social Identity Wheel Activity](#)
 - [Facing History's adaptation of U Michigan's Social Identity Wheel Activity](#)
- Are you looking to further historicize the history of the movement for Black lives in Minnesota for your students prior to this lesson? We suggest the following PBS Learning Media Lesson Plans:
 - [The Effect of the Duluth Lynchings in Minnesota](#)
 - [Civil Rights and Minnesota](#)

Materials/Resources Needed

Day 1 Materials:

- ☐ Printed out copies of the [Protest Art and the Black Lives Matter Movement Worksheet](#) for students
- ☐ Printed out copies of the Black Lives Matter 13 Guiding Principles Activity and Coloring Book for students

- ☐ Computer with internet connection and means of displaying [slides](#) and video with audio

Day 2 Materials:

- ☐ Already printed out copies of the [Protest Art and the Black Lives Matter Movement Worksheet](#) for students
- ☐ Computer with internet connection and means of displaying [slides](#) and video with audio
- ☐ Tablets for students to navigate through the Creatives After Curfew 2020 online archive of murals, OR reserve school computer lab

Day 3 Materials:

- ☐ Already printed out copies of the Protest Art and the Black Lives Matter Movement Worksheet for students
- ☐ Computer with internet connection and means of displaying slides and video with audio
- ☐ Coloring utensils and paper for students to create their own protest art

Opportunities for Further Lesson Enrichment:

The following modifications are provided if students are seeking further connection between lesson content and the final assignment, and if this modification is accessible to you and your classrooms, depending on the nature of support present with administrators, students, and parents. This modification allows students to engage more directly with lesson content in the final project assignment, but this modification is not directly related to the lesson's benchmarks, and does not carry the same benchmark-based protections as the original lesson assignment.

Day 3 Chew / Actively Processing Information

During this time, students will work individually to complete their protest art assignment. If students are interested in creating protest art directly related to the protest art created during the MN Uprising and the Movement for Black Lives, you may suggest the following prompts for them to work from, and create their own guiding principles around:

- Black Lives Matter
- People Over Property
- We Keep Us Safe
- Defund the Police
- All Power to the People
- Other

Lesson Sequence

Day 1 Ignite / Do Now Prompt (5 minutes)

Do Now Prompt: What do you know about the Black Lives Matter Movement? For example, how did it come about? What are the goals of the movement? How do people take part in this movement? Write 2 sentences about what you know about the BLM Movement.

Once students have had the opportunity to write a few sentences, ask students to volunteer to share their answers with the class.

Chunk / Feeding the Brain Information (15 minutes)

As a class, watch [BrainPOP's education video on the Black Lives Matter Protests](#) for kids. Prior to watching, make sure to preview the questions pertaining to the video on the follow-along worksheet for students. Following the video, students should answer the three questions from their worksheet and leave time to discuss any additional questions that students might have.

Chew / Actively Processing Information (25 minutes)

In groups of 4 or at their tables, students will work collaboratively to answer questions in the [Black Lives Matter 13 Guiding Principles Activity and Coloring Book](#). This activity book is geared towards teaching young students about the guiding principles of the movement, and asking students to think about those principles in relation to their own lives and contexts. Students should aim to complete at least 5 of the 13 prompts, and can decide their prompts on their own.

Review / Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

For the exit ticket, have students share one thing that they learned or surprised them when they were reading more about the 13 guiding principles of the Activity and Coloring Book.

Day 2 Ignite / Do Now Prompt (5 minutes)

Do Now Prompt: How can art be used as a tool for social change? Write 2 sentences.

Once students have had a chance to answer, allow them to share their answers with the class and provide a few examples for the class. For example, art can be used as a tool for social change by making the viewer aware of something they weren't previously exposed to / bringing attention to a cause. Art can help shift or create liberatory narratives. Art can disrupt power dynamics by

presenting an alternative narrative / perspective to the world. Art can bring about dialogue, or inspire action to be taken.

Chunk / Feeding the Brain Information (15 minutes)

Let students know that today we will be learning more about how art has been used to create, inspire, or bring forth social change. As a class, watch the [Tate Kids Video on Protest Art](#) (6 minutes). Prior to watching the video, preview the follow-along questions on the worksheet and allow students to record their answers during the video.

Following the video, give students the context that after the murder of George Floyd, many people around the country took to the streets and created protest art around the city on plyboards, murals, signs, buttons, stickers, posters, murals, zines, sculptures, and more. As a class, watch a news video on some of the murals, protest art, and offerings that community members created in the wake of George Floyd's murder by [PBS News Media](#). **NOTE: Please use the slides to display the video.** You will notice in the slides that the video is cut into two separate slides (the second slide will play automatically when clicked on for the video to continue). This was done to cut out 5 seconds of video that show a still image of the murder of George Floyd that is not appropriate for classroom use.

Chew / Actively Processing Information (25 minutes)

Following the video, give students the opportunity to browse the [Creatives After Curfew 2020 Mural Highlights](#), and work collaboratively in pairs to answer the questions on their worksheets.

Review / Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

How does protest art, like the art we learned about today at George Floyd Square and around the city of Minneapolis, change the landscape of the city? Provide 3 examples.

Day 3 Ignite (5 minutes)

Think of an issue/concern, injustice, cause, or movement that you wish to bring attention to.

1. Name the cause
2. Identify/list/imagine three guiding principles to that cause. Guiding principles should be thought of as central components to making your cause successful, inclusive, or liberatory.

Chunk / Feed the Brain Information (10 minutes)

Today we will be creating our own protest art about a cause of your choosing that you care about. You will be tasked with:

1. Identifying or imagining a cause
2. Identify/list/Imagine three guiding principles to that cause. Guiding principles should be thought of as central components to making your cause successful, inclusive, or liberatory.
3. Creating a visual representation (protest art) that brings attention to your cause and incorporates your guiding principles.
4. Identify/Imagine a place well suited to display your protest art to get your message across. For example, if you are creating protest art to deter littering, it is good to display it in a place where people might litter. If you are creating liberatory art meant to make people feel safe in spaces that they do not already feel safe or welcome in, you might want to make your art have a message of inclusion, and display it somewhere that could benefit from being more welcoming and inclusive.
5. Write 2-3 sentences detailing: why you have chosen the location you have chosen for your work (we will not actually display them there, so you can be aspirational about location), and the impact it would have on the landscape of the city.

To get students to think big and creatively about where they might choose for location, as a class, watch this brief video from Unicorn Riot about the [Black Lives Matter Street Mural](#) on Plymouth Ave.

Chew / Actively Processing Information (30 minutes)

During this time, students will work individually to complete their protest art assignment.

Review (5 minutes)

In the last five minutes of class, offer students the opportunity to share their art and locations they would want to display their work to have the greatest impact. Students will hand in their worksheet packets as their exit tickets.

Additional Resources

AP Press Short Video: [Finding meaning in George Floyd's death through protest art left at his murder site](#).

CBS Short Video: [Caretaker of George Floyd Square reflects on Floyd's legacy ahead of verdict](#).

Fox 9 Short Video: [Walls Speak](#).

GFS Rise and Remember Webpage: <https://riseandremember.org/>

[Art and Artifact: Murals from the Minneapolis Uprising](#) is a book available for purchase that has an extensive collection of protest murals and art from the uprising.

[The Art of #BlackLivesMatter](#) is an article detailing the role of art in the BLM protests after the murder of Michael Brown

[Remembering George Floyd through Minneapolis Public Art](#) is an article that discusses the role of public protest art in Minneapolis created to remember and honor George Floyd

[On Murals and Meaning: Q&A with Lissa Karpeh](#) is a Q&A article that discusses the motivations behind Lissa Karpeh's mural work during the Uprising, including her work on the letter "E" for the Plymouth Ave Black Lives Matter street mural featured in this lesson.

[Memorialize the Movement](#) webpage with information about Memorialize the Movement, including upcoming events, and an [ArcGIS Justice for George: Messages from the People story map](#) of murals

[Urban Art Mapping ArcGIS Map of George Floyd Street Art](#) that arose across the country and world during the 2020 Uprising.

[Black Visions Collective](#) webpage with information about ongoing environmental justice work, leadership development opportunities, and approach to community safety.

The [Movement for Black Lives](#) webpage with information on ongoing efforts towards collective liberation.

[Behind the Artist Cooperative Black Table Arts](#) is an article that features Black Table Arts, an artist cooperative that arose in response to the murder of George Floyd in order to educate, organize, and create community healing.

[Blackbird Revolt](#) design studio webpage. Blackbird Revolt is an abolitionist design studio that funds community work, centering values of abolition, liberation, and justice. Blackbird revolt created and distributed protest art during the Minneapolis Uprising, and continues to serve as a platform for conscious creatives looking to transform our communities.

[Save the Boards](#) webpage. Save the Boards has been crucial to preserving protest art created during the Minneapolis Uprising and re-homing protest art within the community for education and healing. Save the Boards continues to do important community work, and resources to learn more can be found on their website.