

A REFUSAL TO STAND BY

A lesson in participating in social change for grades 9-12

Jaysa is a young girl from Bridgeport, Connecticut who speaks out at public hearings and helps catalyze the opposition to the coal-fired power plant that is causing her asthma. She addresses the environmental injustices in her community and reflects on the power a single voice can have on creating positive change. In this lesson, educators have the opportunity to draw connections between Jaysa's story and the famous Children's March in 1963 while inspiring students to become "upstanders" in social justice causes that are close to their hearts.



When I saw how it affected people, I thought "...I actually have to do something about this."

Activist and folk singer Pete Seeger once remarked, *"We know we need some big changes, but how are we going to get them? I think it's going to take the courage of people who refuse to stand silently by."* This lesson reveals two examples of young people responding to Pete's call to action: Jaysa's story alongside the famous Children's March in 1963 allows students to examine historical and contemporary examples of civic engagement. Through the "TQE" format, students will record their ideas and insights in order to compare and contrast the two topics. Then, students will brainstorm how they too can "refuse to stand silently" using YVFP's "A.C.T.I.O.N" plan. On the following pages, educators will find a detailed lesson plan which includes standards, learning objectives, essential questions, and step-by-step instructions needed to bring this activity to life.

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Lesson Plan Instructions



ESSENTIAL QUESTION:

How do we become upstanders- not bystanders- in issues that affect us?

OBJECTIVES:

Students will analyze the actions of youth who have participated in social action.
Students will compare and contrast two narratives of social action.
Students will reflect on how to participate in social action in their own lives.

DIRECTIONS (suggested lesson time of two class periods)

(Note: This lesson is taught within the context of the Civil Rights movement in American History - for additional background information, the following links are helpful: www.youtube.com/watch?v=S64zRnnn4Po and www.teachingforchange.org/lessons-on-the-civil-rights-movement)

1. Introduction: Begin the lesson by having students use mini-whiteboards or scratch paper to make a 3-column chart. In the first column, students should brainstorm a list of 5-10 global issues that are happening in the world today. (examples can be large scale such as poverty, hunger, racism, gender equality, etc.) In the second column, students should rank from 0-5 how much they are *informed* about this topic, and in the third column they should rank 0-5 how much they are *involved* in this topic. After allowing a few minutes to brainstorm, have students share out what they found and keep a running list on the board. Lead a conversation with students about *why* there is (most likely) a discrepancy between the *involved* and *informed* numbers, and how we can participate in issues that matter to us.

2. Show "Mighty Times": Somewhere visible to students, write or display the famous quote by activist Pete Seeger, "*We know we need some big changes, but how are we going to get them? I think it's going to take the courage of people who refuse to stand silently by.*" Share with students that throughout history (and especially today), young people have refused to stand silently by as issues that matter to them remain unresolved. One significant example is the Children's March - on May 2, 1963, over 4,000 black schoolchildren left their classrooms in the south to challenge segregation. Despite blatant aggression and intimidation from authorities, the students prevailed and made their voices known to the world. Distribute the handout and have students jot down their TQE's - thoughts, questions, and epiphanies - before, during and after the video clip (www.youtube.com/watch?v=5c113fq3vhQ)

3. Show "Words Have Power": Lead a discussion on what students took away from the first film. Ask them to think about what, if any, examples they can think of

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Lesson Plan Instructions (Continued)

where young people today are voicing out their passions and taking a stand. Introduce the story of Jaysa Mellers and have students continue writing TQE's during her video.

4. Building connections: have students gather into partners or small groups to move on to part 2 - building connections. Complete the Venn Diagram and find similarities and differences between the stories and actions of the children in "Mighty Times" vs. Jaysa Mellers. Wrap up the activity by having a large-scale Venn Diagram for students to fill in as a class.

5. Reflection Exit Ticket: Wrap the lesson up by displaying the Pete Seeger quote again and asking students to revisit its meaning after viewing the two films. Then, students will share their reflection through a prompt at the bottom of the handout: *Using the "A.C.T.I.O.N" plan as your starting point, how would you respond to Pete Seeger's quote, "We know we need some big changes, but how are we going to get them?"*

6. Extension opportunities: a) Read "Let the Children March" as a class (children's book) and analyze themes: https://www.amazon.com/Let-Children-March-Monica-Clark-Robinson/dp/0544704525/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1520463497&sr=1-1&keywords=Let+the+Children+March b) Examine footage from the "#Enough" school walkout in 2018 and draw connections <https://abc7news.com/videos-from-the-enough-walkout-around-the-country/3214954/> c) Create posters/bulletins of "words of hope" (Teaching Tolerance, p.10) www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/kits/Childrens_March_Teachers_Guide_web_0.pdf

MATERIALS:

- Computer with internet connection, projector with A/V
- Student handouts
- Large poster paper
- Writing utensils
- Scratch paper
- 1:1 tablets or laptops, if accessible

SUGGESTED MODIFICATIONS:

- For ELD students and Differentiated Instruction (DI): provide sentence stems for TQE's (I think, I wonder, I realize...), written transcripts or closed captioning of each film, complete Venn Diagram with a native english speaker, complete reflection prompt as bullet points to each A.C.T.I.O.N. question rather than synthesized essay.