

The Greensboro Sit-Ins



Research Project

OBJECTIVE: *To become familiar with significant events in the Civil Rights Movement in North Carolina:*

1. Students will be able to make correlations between the struggle for civil rights nationally and in North Carolina;
 2. Students will be able to analyze the causes and predict solutions for problems directly related to discriminatory practices.
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Social Studies Objectives: 3.04, 4.01, 4.03, 4.04, 4.05, 5.03, 6.04, 7.02, 8.01, 8.03, 9.01, 9.02, 9.03

Skill Goals I, II, III

Language Arts Goals: 1.03, 1.04, 2.01, 5.01, 6.01, 6.02

Resources / Materials / Preparations

- Social studies textbook discussion of the Greensboro sit-ins.
- Media Center and/or Internet access for student research.
- This research project will take one or two class periods for the discussion of the sit-ins. The research project can be assigned over a two-week period.

Procedures

- Students will read the information in their textbook about the sit-ins independently, as a small group or as a whole class.
- Students will complete the research project independently, as a small group or as a whole class.
- Discussion and extensions follow as directed by the teacher.

Evaluation

- Student participation in reading and discussion of the sit-ins.
- Student performance on the research project.

Discussion

Lead a class discussion on non-violent protest and civil disobedience. To augment this discussion, you may want to:

- Read selections from Thoreau's *Walden*, where he discusses civil disobedience; remind students about Gandhi, whom they should have studied in seventh grade when they learned about South Asia (India); the Christian principle of "turning the other cheek;" and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy of protests and how it was influenced by all of these elements.
- Show a video with footage of the often violent responses to the protesters, such as the fire hoses, use of dogs, and other acts.
- Have students find photos of the sit-ins, describe how the students looked, and consider how they might have felt during the protests.
- Take a field trip to the International Civil Rights Center and Museum and the Greensboro Historical Museum (both in Greensboro) to learn about the protests and to consider how the Sit-Ins are memorialized in Greensboro, both by the museums and the statues of the four students who performed the Sit-Ins which are now located on the campus of NC A&T.

Research

Students will be required to write a two-to-three page report that explains what the Greensboro Sit-ins were, who was involved, what they were protesting, why they decided to do it, why the sit-ins were important in North Carolina and in the United States, and what the results of the protests were. They should also assess whether the sit-ins effects

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were more important in the long term or short term to the Civil Rights Movement.

For extra credit, students may also wish to include information in their reports about the history of the Civil Rights Center and Museum and the student statues on the NC A&T campus – what led to these being established, how long ago, and any controversies surrounding these commemorations as a part of Greensboro’s civic history. See <http://www.sitinmovement.org>

Closure

Students will have a debate in class on one of the resolutions listed below:

■ *Resolved: That the Greensboro Sit-ins marked the greatest turning point in the Civil Rights Movement.*

The students who affirm the resolution will argue the significance of the Sit-ins, the impact they had on other sit-ins and forms of nonviolent protest, and describe why they were important at that moment in history.

The students who will argue against the affirmative proposition may make the argument that the another event marked a more important turning point, or that it was the collective acts of all of the public accommodations protests that were significant.

■ *Resolved: That students today do not have enough courage to challenge the system in the way that the students did during the Greensboro Sit-ins.*

The students who affirm the resolution will argue the significance of the Sit-ins, the uncertainties the protesters faced, and the personal sacrifices involved in these protests. They may also argue that the circumstances of the time created a situation wherein the students had nothing to lose—they were already oppressed and had little freedom, in contrast to today’s students, who have much more freedom and a lot more to lose.

The students who will argue against the affirmative proposition may make the argument that today’s students have not yet been faced with the same circumstances, and so we are unable to make such a comparison. Students may also make arguments that the soldiers and other young people on the front lines of the battle against terrorism (at home and abroad)

have shown courage (for example, the firefighters on September 11th), as have protesters against the War in Iraq. These arguments should be supported with specific examples.

Assessment

- Student participation in the class discussion.
- Student performance in the class debate(s).
- Student report on the Sit-in. Assessment criteria:
 1. Explanation of what the Greensboro Sit-ins were, who was involved, and what they were protesting;
 2. Discussion of why the students decided to do it.
 3. Description of what the results of the protests were.
 4. Evaluation of why the sit-ins were important in North Carolina and in the United States and whether the effects of the sit-ins were more important in the long term or short term to the Civil Rights Movement.
 5. Students should display proper use of language and grammar.

Bibliography

Greensboro Sit-ins: Launch of a Civil Rights Movement. Sponsored by the News and Record and the Greensboro Public Library.
<http://www.greensboro.com/sitins>

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<http://www.sitinmovement.org>

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<http://www.ibiblio.org/sncc/index.html>

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<http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civil-rights-55-65/sit-ins.html> (25 May 1998).

“Civil Rights Law and History.” Justice for Kids and Youth. U.S. Department of Justice.
<http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/crt/crtmenu.htm>