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Subject: English/History
Grades: 10-12

Lesson Plan Title:

Lift Every Voice and Sing: Understanding the Power of Images from the Birmingham Campaign of 1963



On 8 May 1963, Ann Stewart, 16, and Rosemary Johnson, 17, tell a news conference about the mistreatment they received following their arrests during a demonstration in Birmingham, Alabama. The spring of 1963 saw a series of sit-ins, boycotts, and marches against segregation laws. These protests were part of a movement called the Birmingham Campaign.

Photo Credit: Colin Jones, *The Observer*

Brief Narrative:

John Delicath and Kevin Deluca define image events as “staged acts of protest designed for media dissemination.” By its nature, then, an image event is a type of rhetoric that is visual, rather than verbal. The idea behind an image event is to attract the attention of the mass media in order to spread persuasive images to a wider audience and effect change.

In this lesson, students will consider how the photographs taken during the Children’s Marches were used as catalysts in the image event that was the Birmingham Campaign of 1963. In this consideration, students will learn why Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth fought to have Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. come to Birmingham in the spring of ’63 and how the local media coverage differed from national and international media coverage. Students will analyze how the ‘D-Day’ and ‘Double D-Day’ demonstrations were extensions of ideas put forth in King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Students will also analyze how images from these demonstrations helped create change.

Guiding Questions:

To what extent was Birmingham, Alabama the best place to stage an image event in the spring of 1963?

How did coverage of the Campaign differ in the local and national or international presses?

To what extent was the Birmingham Campaign a direct extension of King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”?

In visuals, how do choices in point of view, composition, and subject matter create particular persuasive effects?

How is an author or artist informed by his or her audience?

To what extent is an image event helpful in achieving a particular purpose? How were these particular images helpful in securing additional rights and opportunities for African Americans?

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- define the term “image event” and explain how image events can help effect change.
- analyze the ways in which a rhetor is informed by his or her audience.
- understand why Birmingham was chosen as the site of this particular image Event.
- compare and contrast the various ways in which local, national, and international media covered the Campaign.
- analyze the effects of different types of media coverage.
- analyze the rhetoric of specific photos from the Birmingham Campaign.
- understand how these images impacted particular audiences.
- analyze how the Birmingham Campaign (specifically ‘D-Day’ and ‘Double D-Day’) were extensions of ideas in King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”
- explain the impact of the Birmingham Campaign as an image event.

Class Periods:

7 55-minutes classes

College and Career Readiness Standards:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1](#)

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6](#)

Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.5](#)

Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6](#)

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7](#)

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Preparation:

This lesson is meant to be taught after students have a solid understanding of segregation laws, court cases ordering desegregation (prior to 1963), and white

supremacist terrorism and resistance. Students should also have read and analyzed Dr. King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (in whole or in part) before engaging in this lesson.

Lesson Activities:

Day One:

Before students arrive, create six groups and place one large piece of butcher or poster paper at the center of each group. Place ONE of the attached photos FACE DOWN on the butcher paper, and make sure there is a different colored marker for each student in a group. (Having students write in assigned colors helps you track students' contributions in the silent discussion.)

At the start of class, have students sit in groups. Instruct them to leave the image in the center of their group face down. Share the following silent discussion protocol with your students. Explain that silence is a required element of this activity. Have them create a key somewhere on the paper to show which color is associated with each student. Answer any questions before beginning the protocol.

Round 1: Have students turn over the image and silently "read" the image. They should write down any observations they make, any patterns they notice, and any conclusions they draw. Note: Tell them to focus just on what they see; they should not move to reacting at this point in the protocol. (4-5 minutes)

Round 2: Students should now extend their initial notes by writing a couple paragraphs that capture their thinking and feeling when they view this photograph. (6-7 minutes)

Round 3: Now have students silently move in a clockwise manner so that they are in front of a peer's observations and reactions. (Conversely, they can move the butcher paper and remain seated.) In this round, students should read everything written by one of their peers and then respond to at least one or two ideas. These responses can be questions, extensions, respectful challenges, etc. Encourage them to underline, circle, and use arrows as needed. They should write for the entire time. (5 minutes)

Round 4: Have students move again in a clockwise manner and repeat the process, making sure each student reads and responds to the entire "thread" in front of them. (6 minutes)

Repeat as many times as needed in order to return each original response to its owner.

Final Round: Have students remain silent as they read the entire “thread” spawned from their original response (make sure they read their own writing as well).

Debrief:

First, allow them to debrief as a group. Where did they see similarities in responses and thinking? Where did they see diverse perspectives? What is beneficial about using this type of protocol? What are the limitations?

Finally, debrief as a class.

At the end of class, tell students they will continue working with these images over the next few days.

Have them return all materials to you and turn in their silent discussion papers.

Day Two:

Activity 1

Have students return to the same groups.

Hand back each group’s photograph for today’s work. Explain that they will work as a group to complete a rhetorical analysis of this photo; they will then share both the photo and their analysis with the class.

Hand out the attached image analysis protocol.

Tell students to capture their shared thinking for each step of the protocol on a single sheet of paper. Step 5 on the protocol is especially important to the study of rhetoric, so make sure they spend a good amount of time analyzing speaker (rhetor/photographer), audience, claim(s), and purpose.

After approximately 15 minutes, give students a two-minute warning. They will be showing both the image and their analysis under a document camera, so they should spend these two minutes making the analysis complete and presentable.

Have groups take turns sharing their images and their analyses. To share, all group members should gather around the document camera. They should then take turns showing and describing the image and working their way through their analysis. At the end of each group’s turn, have them answer any questions from the class.

The ultimate goals for this activity are for students to practice image analysis and become familiar with each of the six photographs.

Activity 2

(This is less an 'activity' and more a quick lecture.)

Define "image event" as it relates to rhetoric. Have students write down the definition in their vocabulary notebooks and think of contemporary examples of image events.

Image Event: A staged act of protest designed to attract the attention of the mass media in order to spread persuasive images to a wider audience and effect change.

An image event is a type of rhetoric that is visual, rather than verbal.

Tell them they will spend the rest of this mini-unit examining how the Birmingham Campaign qualifies as an image event.

Day Three:

Remind students that they are tasked with examining how the Birmingham Campaign qualifies as an image event. Explain that they will watch a documentary about the part of the Campaign known as the Children's March. As they watch the documentary, they should take notes on the following topics:

1. Why was Birmingham, Alabama chosen as the site of this particular image event?
2. What did organizers hope to accomplish?
3. How did local, national, and international audiences react to images of the Children's March participants and the violent response of Birmingham officials?
4. Why were the images so powerful?
5. What was the impact of the Birmingham Campaign?
6. How does the Birmingham Campaign qualify as an image event?

Show *Mighty Times: The Children's March*.

After the documentary, have students do a pair-and-share to debrief their viewing.

Day Four:

Before students arrive, attach the newspaper excerpts on large pieces of butcher or poster paper and hang them around the room.

When students arrive, have them listen to NPR's "Code Switch" segment on media coverage of the Civil Rights Movement (see link in 'References' below).

Elicit initial reactions from students.

Next, share that the rest of the period will be spent examining pages from the *Birmingham News*, the *Chicago Defender*, and *Life* magazine using a "gallery walk." (All excerpts are from early May, 1963.) As they examine these artifacts, they should discuss and take notes on the amount of coverage the demonstrations received, any positive or negative bias they notice in the reporting, what subjects and people are highlighted or diminished, and any coverage of other protests.

For the "gallery walk," have students return to their groups and take out paper for note-taking. Allow sufficient time at each station for students to read the excerpt, take notes, discuss what they notice, and capture their thinking on the poster paper.

In the last 10 minutes of class, facilitate a discussion on how anticipating the audience for each periodical impacted what was reported on and how the demonstration was portrayed.

Day Five:

Note: Students should have thoroughly analyzed Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" *before* beginning this mini-unit.

Today, students will use what they've studied (through background information, the Children's March documentary, and the periodical study) to examine how specific parts of the Birmingham Campaign can be seen as direct extensions of the points King makes in his "Letter."

Specifically, they should concentrate on the following points:

1. How do the demonstrations show that these concerns are local, not part of an "outside agitator" movement?
2. How are the demonstrators causing "tension" through non-violence?
3. How do the demonstrations show the perils of waiting? How does segregation impact people?
4. How do the demonstrations highlight the idea of "just" versus "unjust" laws? Whose actions or reactions seem just and whose seem unjust? (Consider various audiences.)

5. King claims he is an extremist for love, in the tradition of Jesus. How do these demonstrations show this to be true?
6. How do the demonstrations show “white moderates” that justice does not come automatically over time?
7. How are the demonstrations persuasive to heretofore unsupportive churches and religious officials in the South?
8. How do the demonstrations show that the protestors come from a tradition of strength and resistance?
9. How do the demonstrations show that the “law and order” approach is not productive? How are the police, firefighters, and other officials behaving?

It may be wise to break students into triads and assign one of the above focuses to each small group.

After students have finished their analyses, facilitate a class discussion on how the Birmingham Campaign serves to extend the ideas in “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

Remind students that they will participate in a Socratic seminar during the next class period. They should be ready to discuss today’s topic, as well as how the Birmingham Campaign worked as an image event.

Day Six:

Socratic Seminar

Use the attached protocol to facilitate a Socratic seminar on two main topics: a) how the Birmingham Campaign extended the ideas in “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and b) the extent to which the Birmingham Campaign worked as an image event.

You may find it helpful to break the class in half and run two Socratic seminars (either two in one day or on separate days).

It is important that the discussion be allowed to build without too much direction from the teacher, so be prepared for the discussion to broaden to related issues and texts. If the conversation strays too far from the topic, feel free to step in and ask a focusing question.

The goal of the Socratic seminar is to give students a chance to synthesize their thinking before completing their timed-write essays.

Use the attached rubric to assess the Socratic seminar.

Day Seven:

Students will spend the class period completing a timed-write using the following prompt:

In a multiple-paragraph essay, analyze to what extent an image event is helpful in achieving a particular purpose. Make sure to consider how images from the Birmingham Campaign were helpful in securing additional rights and opportunities for African Americans in the South.

Select textual evidence from the images and newspapers we studied, from the notes you took as you watched *Mighty Times: The Children’s March*, and from King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Feel free to also include evidence from earlier texts if they support your claims.

Remember to use in-text citations for any direct or indirect references to source material.

Assessment:

Silent Discussion:

Use the silent discussion as a formative assessment to see if you need to clarify any facts or issues.

Socratic Seminar:

Use the following rubric:

	Exemplary	Proficient	Developing	Emerging
Questioning	Student asks sophisticated, analytical questions	Student asks multiple thoughtful, on-topic questions	Student asks one or two on-topic questions	Student does not ask questions OR asks off-topic questions

Responding	Student responds to others in an especially sophisticated manner	Student responds to others knowledgeably	Student provides basic responses	Student does not respond to others OR is off-topic in his/her response
Attending	Student is focused and helps facilitate the seminar	Student is focused and does not engage in any side conversations	Student is focused for most of the seminar, but engages in brief side conversations	Student is rarely attentive
Using Textual Evidence	Student consistently refers to the texts to support his/her ideas	Student refers to the texts to support his/her ideas most of the time	Student occasionally refers to the texts	Student does not offer textual evidence

Timed-Write:

Use the ARGUMENT rubric at the following site:

<https://1.cdn.edl.io/8cnBg9a2Un5u7nibMAnVQteUpTTNiEJp3DOANb0NEqernZGq.pdf>

Lesson Extensions:

Students can choose to research a person who engaged in (or is currently engaged in) a local, regional, national, or international human rights struggle. (Some examples: Billy Frank, Jr. and Nisqually fishing rights, Loujain al-Hathloul and women’s rights in Saudi Arabia, Emmeline Pankhurst and the British suffragette movement, etc.) As they research, students should look to see whether their subject engaged in any image events. As a culminating activity, students could produce an art piece (visual or performance) or poem, song, etc. to share at a larger event.

Alternatively, students can brainstorm current issues that need to be addressed (climate change, school shootings, police brutality, etc.) and develop an image event in response to their chosen issues.

Example:



Franziska Schardt

On July 6, 2019, a group of students in Cologne drew attention to the climate change crisis as part of a school project, by standing on blocks of ice under makeshift gallows.

Reference Websites and Citations:

Background on the Birmingham Campaign

<http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/explore/civil-rights-movement-birmingham-campaign/>

Background on the Children's March

<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/film-kits/mighty-times-the-childrens-march>

Statement by Alabama Clergymen

https://swap.stanford.edu/20141218230016/http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular_requests/frequentdocs/clergy.pdf

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

https://swap.stanford.edu/20141218222928/http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf

NPR "Code Switch" Segment on Media Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement

<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/06/18/193128475/how-the-civil-rights-movement-was-covered-in-birmingham>

Image Analysis Protocol

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/analyzing-images>

To request a copy of the Teaching Tolerance documentary *Mighty Times: The Children's March*, visit this link and fill out a request form:

<https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/film-kits>

Gallery Walk Protocol

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/gallery-walk>

Socratic Seminar Protocol

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/socratic-seminar>

Delicath, John W. and Kevin Michael Deluca. "Image Events, The Public Sphere, and Argumentative Practice: The Case of Radical Environmental Groups." *Argumentation* 17 (2003): 315-333.

Johnson, Davi. "Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 Birmingham Campaign as Image Event." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1–25. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41940115.

Materials and Media:

You will need:

Day One:

- Six large sheets of butcher or poster paper
- Different colored markers (one color per student in each group)
- Copies of the six images below

Day Two:

- The same six images from Day One
- Image analysis protocol (above)
- Document camera or other projection device

Day Three:

- A copy of the Teaching Tolerance documentary *Mighty Times: The Children's March*

Day Four:

- Butcher or poster paper
- NPR's "Code Switch" segment on media coverage of the Civil Rights Movement (above)
- Copies of local and national news stories about the Birmingham Campaign (for national media, search for *New York Times*, *Life Magazine*, and *Chicago Defender*)
- Markers

Day Five:

- Copies of King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail"

Day Six:

- Socratic seminar rubric (above)

Day Seven:

- Timed-write prompt and rubric

Image #1:



Associated Press photographer Bill Hudson captured this lasting image of firefighters turning their hoses on civil rights demonstrators in Birmingham in 1963. (Birmingham News archives)

Image #2:



Charles Moore, on assignment for Life magazine, shot this picture of police dogs attacking a demonstrator on the streets of Birmingham in 1963. (Birmingham News archives)

Image
#3:



Charles Moore, on assignment from *Life* magazine, captured this image of protestors seeking shelter in a doorway as authorities attempt to disperse them with water hoses in Birmingham in 1963.

Image #4:



Police dog lunging at Birmingham protestor. Charles Moore, 1963.

Image #5:



Birmingham firefighters focus their water hose at a protestor in Kelly Ingram Park. Bruce Davidson, 1963.

Image #6:



Police send a group of school children to jail, following their arrest for protesting against racial discrimination near the Birmingham City Hall. Bill Hudson/AP, 1963.