
The Sit-in Simulation || Civil Rights Unit

Goals & Objectives

Students will understand what it feels like to stand-up in the face of segregation within the context of a simulated sit-in.

Students will summarize their own personal experience of being harassed during the sit-in simulation and will be able to expand on this experience in writing by comparing their to that of an African American protestor of the Civil Rights Era.

California State Content Standards

11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights.

4. Examine the roles of civil rights advocates (e.g., A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcom X, Thurgood Marshall, James Farmer, Rosa Parks), including the significance of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and "I Have a Dream" speech.

Common Core Literacy Standards

Reading Standard

3. Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

Writing Standard

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Driving Historical Question

What did tactics did individuals in the civil rights movement use? (boycotts, marches, meeting with government leaders, sit-ins)

What changes did the civil rights movement focus on? (desegregation of public places, equal employment opportunities, equal housing opportunities)

How did average African Americans get thrust into the forefront of the Civil Rights movement?

Lesson Introduction (Anticipatory Set/Hook/Accessing Prior Knowledge) || Time: 7 mins

This lesson takes place somewhere in the middle of a Civil Rights Era unit. Therefore, the teacher has already introduced some key vocabulary, specifically: sit-in and boycott. The teacher will quickly review these terms with students through questioning, then tell the students that they will be simulating a sit-in today in-class.

But first, the teacher will introduce the Greensboro Four sit-in through the following news CBS News clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Rmjt0kJFOA>

Before students watch the video, the teacher instructs the students to look for reasons why the Greensboro Four sit-in was effective. After watching the video, students will do a 60-second quick write (2 sentences) on why they think the sit-in was effective.

Vocabulary (Content Language Development) || Time:

The vocabulary content is review within this lesson. The teacher will define the key terms “sit-in” and “boycott” within the lesson introduction. The “Greensboro Four” is also a key term that students will note and gets covered thoroughly within the lesson introduction video.

Content Delivery (Method of Instruction) || Time: 25 mins

The teacher will elaborate on the video introduction to the Greensboro Four by noting the all day ordeal in which the protestors endured persistent and harsh harassment. The teacher asks the students whether they think they’d be able to withstand the prejudice, intimidation, and judgment. The teacher should note that this is not a rhetorical question and that all students need to indicate by raising their hands for “yes” they could endure a sit-in, “no” they couldn’t, or “maybe” if they’re unsure.

The teacher will then choose four students from the “yes” group to sit up front in the four desks that have been turned around to face the rest of class. The teacher then assumes the role of recruiter for a future sit-in. The teacher informs the four protestors that they have their work cut out for them.

NOTE: I realize that this a bit of a risky/edgy simulation that I would run by the administration first and in all likelihood, I would send home a letter to parents getting their approval for students to participate in the simulation.

The teacher then instructs the four volunteers to harass our protestors with acceptable movie quotes/insults provided by the teacher, like “You are nothing! If you were in my toilet I wouldn't bother flushing it. My bathmat means more to me than you,” from *Swimming With Sharks*.

The sit-in protestors used reading material to distract themselves from the hours of harassment. The teacher then notes that they’re under a time constraint and can’t test the all-day endurance of the protestors, so to test their focus, the teacher hands them a 10-question quiz that covers material from previous history units. Our student protestors are challenged to focus on their quiz for 2 minutes while being harassed. In order to incentivize the students to try hard, the teacher will offer some extra credit to the protestor who does the best on the test.

Before the teacher actually runs the simulation, s/he explains what's at stake for the protestors who are about to take the biggest test of not just their lives, but every generation to come. If they don't pass this test with flying colors their freedoms could be taken away forever. The teacher turns to the harassers and explains that everyone knows how much superior they are to the protestors... Then, the teacher says "Go!" And the protestors start the test and the harassers start their insults.

After two minutes, the teacher calls time. The teacher then collects the tests and has the students take a moment to silently reflect before swapping roles and replaying the simulation from the other side. The teacher runs the simulation again. At the end, the students are instructed to apologize and compliment each other before going back to their desks.

The teacher quickly grades the quizzes and announces the winner. The teacher asks the winner to reflect aloud about his/her mindset when taking the test. The teacher then asks one of the students who struggled on the test to reflect aloud about his/her mindset when taking the test.

The teacher then has the rest of the class pair-up, hands them all copies of the quiz, and they run the simulation at their desks giving both students the opportunity to take the test. At the end, the teacher has the students apologize and compliment their partner.

Student Engagement (Critical Thinking & Student Activities) || Time: 16 mins

The teacher debriefs the students following the simulation. The teacher is quick to call out the differences between the students' abbreviated simulation and the experience of a real sit-in. The teacher then calls their attention to the similarities.

The teacher then passes out the Reflection Questionnaire.

Students individually and silently answer their questionnaire.

Lesson Closure || Time: 4 mins

At the end of class, the teacher takes a minute to wrap-up the simulation by asking for students to volunteer their reflection responses.

Assessments (Formative & Summative)

Formative: I'm calling the student engagement activity a Reflection Questionnaire, but the questions are intended to have a metacognitive effect. The intent of this simulation is to tap into student empathy for the Civil Rights struggle the real protestors went through. Therefore, this assessment focuses more on the student's mindset than content standards.



Accommodations for English Learners, Striving Readers and Students with Special Needs

This simulation is a bit tricky for English Learners, Striving Readers, and Students with Special Needs because the goal is to make all students feel the pressure and anxiety that the real life protestors went through, which is in direct opposition to the goals of these accommodations. That said, students will not be chosen as one of the participants who perform the simulation in front of the whole class. The teacher will pay special attention to who these students are paired with assuring that they're matched with a student that they feel comfortable with. The teacher will not publicly display nor announce the scores of these students.

These students will be afforded extra time on the Reflection Questionnaire if needed.

Resources (Books, Websites, Handouts, Materials)

Greensboro Four CBS New Report:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Rmjt0kJFOA>

Student Engagement handout.

List of movie quote/insults.