

Tab 1

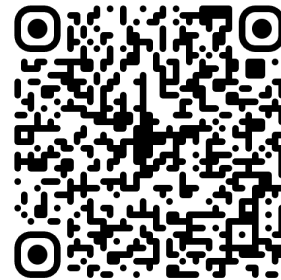
Action Activists #4 Resource Guide



Note: For an accessible version of this resource, visit the word file of this [ACTION ACTIVISTS #4 Resource Guide](#).

As part of its Civics for All Comics Group imprint, the Department of Social Studies and Civics collaborated with Fred Van Lente and Ryan Dunlavey, the authors of the well-regarded and highly popular *Action Presidents* and *Action Philosophers* series, to create *Action Activists #4*. *Action Activists #4* is intended for middle school students.

The Civics for All Comics Group develops social studies and civics comics as companions to several of our resources. In this comic, Pigeon and Squirrel travel through the Acti-Verse visiting different timelines that help us to think about two important concepts: contingency (the idea that future events are not fixed or predetermined), and agency (the idea that people are the driving cause of historical change).



Scan the QR code or click [here](#) to access *Action Activists #4*

As Pigeon and Squirrel travel through the Acti-Verse in *Action Activists #4*, they visit different timelines that help us to think about two important concepts: contingency and agency. Let's take a minute to discuss these two ideas.

Contingency is the idea that future events are not fixed or predetermined. Many different factors led to the present and choices we make affect the future in which we live. An essay by two historians Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "[What Does It Mean to Think Historically?](#)" (2007) notes, "To argue that history is contingent is to claim that every historical outcome depends upon a number of prior conditions; that each of these prior conditions depends, in turn, upon still other conditions; and so on. The core insight of contingency is that the world is a magnificently interconnected place. Change a single prior condition, and any historical outcome could have turned out differently." While reading and rereading this comic, think about how our future can be different based on the conditions surrounding us, the choices we make, and our actions—which brings us to agency.

Agency is the idea that people are the driving cause of historical change. In other words, the choices people make—even if the choice is not to do something—have an impact on future outcomes. Agency is central to the work of an activist. Being civically engaged means seeing oneself as someone with agency who can create change. This comic introduces the idea that people have agency to make change—for better and for worse. The political philosopher Danielle Allen discusses this idea more in her talk found at Facing History, "[Danielle Allen on Civic Agency](#)" (2017).

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Teaching With Comics

Resource	Summary
Civics for All Teacher Leaders, Activities for Action Activists #4	Student-facing google slides with activities to guide students through understanding the <i>Action Activists #4</i> comic. Guidance for teachers is also provided.
Civics for All, Why and How Comics Engage in Civics Action	A brief but powerful reading on the history of comics and the way they can empower civic actions and mindsets.
New York Times, From Superheroes to Syrian Refugees: Teaching Comics and Graphic Novels	Article that provides useful exercises for teaching comics in the classroom and provides several additional creative non-fiction comic examples for use in the classroom.
Edutopia, Creating Comics in Middle and High School Classrooms	Provides guidance and context for how creating comics in high school and middle school classrooms can benefit student's writing and reading development.
Edutopia, 5-Minute Film Festival: Comics in the Classroom	A video with a series of steps on how to introduce comics to classrooms, grades 5–12.
Smithsonian, Excelsior! Super Superheroes	A collection of items and memorabilia related to superheroes can be accessed on this site. Consider engaging students with the following questions: - How are earlier superheroes different from the most recent ones shown in this exhibition? - What are some things that stay the same with all superheroes? - What are some examples of people in your community who you would consider superheroes? What characteristics do they have? - What type of superhero would you want to be and why?

Dino-York (Pages 2–7)

The first part of *Action Activists #4* visits a timeline, Dino-York, where dinosaur people are facing a seemingly imminent disaster, an asteroid.

Resources and Lessons

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Resource	Summary
Civics for All: Grades 6–8 Part 2, Responsibility to the Community	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students develop an action plan to develop an understanding of how civic responsibilities and community are connected. This may be used as a supplement for students after reading <i>Action Activists #4</i> .
Civics for All: Grades 6–8 Part 1, Digital Citizens	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students identify the rights and responsibilities of digital citizens. This may be used as a supplement for students before or after reading <i>Action Activists #4</i> .
Civics for All: Grades 6–8 Part 2, Lobbying	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students examine how lobbying works in order to understand the mechanisms used to influence public policy.
Civics for All, Grades 6–8 Part 2, Take Action!	A comprehensive step-by-step guide to engaging students in community-based, real-life civic action projects. <i>Take Action!</i> is found in Section IV of the Civics for All curriculum guides. This may be used with students after reading <i>Action Activists #4</i> .
Civics for All: Grades 9–12 Part 1, Rights v. Responsibilities	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students analyze scenarios to better understand their rights and responsibilities and the relationship between them. This may be used as a supplement for students prior to reading <i>Action Activists #4</i> .
Civics for All: Grades 9–12 Part 1, Digital Citizenship and Fact Checking	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students use a fact checking protocol to determine whether online claims are credible, reliable, and factual. This may be used in conjunction with the resource <i>Action Activists #4</i> .
News Literacy Project, Resource Library	Resources that include lesson plans, classroom activities, posters and infographics, quizzes, training materials and videos for educators teaching news literacy.
Passport to Social Studies: Grade 12, Unit 1, Day 16: Lobbying	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students analyze the extent to which lobbying supports or violates democratic principles.
Passport to Social Studies: Grade 12, Unit 3, Day 7: Case Study: City Budget and SYEP	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students examine an example of taking social actions to lobby for a change in NYC budget priorities.
Common Sense Education, Digital Citizenship Curriculum	A compilation of digital citizenship lessons for grades K–12 focused on news and media literacy.
iCivics, Civics Digital Literacy	A collection of classroom-ready resources, best for grades 6–12, that will prepare students to skillfully verify the various pieces of information they encounter online. Resources include lesson plans and videos for both teachers and students.
iCivics, Getting Involved	A lesson plan in which students learn the basic steps of civic engagement. Students explore change-making examples of four key movements: Women’s rights, disability rights, Native American rights, and migrant farm worker rights.

Activities

Activity 1:

Students read page 3 of *Action Activists #4* and discuss the issue presented on that page of the comic. Then, in small groups, students brainstorm and create a list of ways to raise awareness about the potential danger of an asteroid collision with Earth. Each student group will vote on the most effective action to spread awareness to the widest audience in order to save

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the planet. Afterward, students use a blank comic template to illustrate their chosen action and its potential impact. Next, students will read pages 4–7 of the comic and compare their own comic to the one in *Action Activist #4*. In their groups, students discuss how the action they created might be more impactful than the one shown in the comic and explain why.

Activity 2:

Students read pages 3–8 of *Action Activists #4*. Afterward, ask the following questions: 1. Why are Pigeon and Squirrel panicking? 2. Why didn't anyone believe Pigeon and Squirrel? Discuss student responses and connect the topic to current media. Ask students if they've ever heard something in the news or on social media and wondered whether it was true. Provide students with three articles from different media outlets covering the same story. Have students discuss and record their observations on the following: 1. How did each news source's version of the event differ? 2. How factual, reliable, and credible was each news story? Allow groups time to share their sources, news stories, and findings to the two questions. Students then create a step by step guide for Pigeon and Squirrel to use to avoid spreading misinformation. (See full lesson in 12th grade Participation and Government, Unit 2, Lesson 25, [Media Bias and American Democracy](#))

Activity 3:

Students read pages 3–8 and zoom in on page 4 of *Action Activists #4*. Pigeon and Squirrel are trying to raise awareness about an issue that is important to them. Pigeon and Squirrel state the problem without gaining support. To encourage students, persuasion skills facilitate a discussion that parallels justification. Ask students to write down three issues that are important to them. Pair students and provide them with the prompt, Why is that issue important to you? Why should I care about that issue? Why should others care about the issue? Come back as a whole class and ask, How should Pigeon and Squirrel engage the inhabitants of Dino-York?

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Secession New York (Pages 8–13)

Pigeon and Squirrel visit a New York City that has seceded from the rest of New York State. As Pigeon informs us, this was considered in the past, most famously by Mayor Fernando Wood during the Civil War.

Resources and Lessons

Resource	Summary
Civics for All: Grades 6–8 Part 2, Civics Participation Strategies	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students identify effective ways to exercise civic responsibility. This may be used as a supplement for students before or after reading <i>Action Activists #4</i> .
Civics for All: Grades 6–8 Part 2, Public vs. Private	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students differentiate between the public and private spheres, and consider the influence of each sphere on American life.
Civics for All: Grades 6–8 Part 2, Project: Policy Proposal Presentation	A <i>Civics for All</i> project where students design a presentation that identifies an issue of public importance and proposes a policy solution to be ratified by classmates.
Passport to Social Studies: 7th grade, Unit 3, Lesson 6: Federalism	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students analyze modern-day scenarios to understand what federalism is and how they encounter it in their everyday lives. This may be used in conjunction with the resource <i>Action Activists #4</i> . NYCDOE login required to access. NYCDOE login required to access.
Passport to Social Studies: 7th grade, Unit 4, Lesson 9: Erie Canal	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students use primary sources to determine the impact of the Erie Canal on New York City and the United States. NYCDOE login required to access.
Passport to Social Studies: 7th grade, Unit 1, Lesson 15: Resistance: Slavery in New York	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students will deepen their understanding of the role of slavery in the New York colony and enhance their understanding of individuals and groups who demonstrated resistance. NYCDOE login required to access.
Passport to Social Studies: 11th grade, Unit 2: Day 6: The Expansion of Slavery	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students will determine causes of the internal expansion of slavery in the United States by corroborating evidence from primary and secondary sources. This may be used in conjunction with the resource <i>Action Activists #4</i> . NYCDOE login required to access.
Passport to Social Studies: 7th Grade, Unit 5, Lesson 4: King Cotton	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students examine maps and make inferences about how the cotton economy affected individuals, businesses, and society in the years leading up to the Civil War.
Passport to Social Studies: 8th Grade, Unit 1, Lesson 3: A Nation Divided: Causes of the Civil War	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students examine and analyze the major issues and events that led to the Civil War.
Passport to Social Studies: 11th Grade, Unit 2, Day 26: Causes of Southern Secession	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students identify reasons for secession cited by the seceding states that became the Confederacy.
National Archives DocsTeach, The Civil War	A collection of artifacts, primary sources and online activities for teachers about the Civil War including secession.
PBS LearningMedia, Building the Erie	In this interactive lesson supporting literacy skills in U.S. history, students learn

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Resource	Summary
Canal	how the Erie Canal changed the U.S. economy and influenced settlement patterns in the west and explore the effects of the Erie Canal on New York City, New York State, and the entire United States. For grades 3–5 and 6–8.
Teaching American History, Mayor Wood's Recommendation of the Secession of New York City	Primary Source document of Mayor Wood's recommendation for the secession of New York City which is referenced in <i>Action Activists 4</i> . wow
iCivics, Your Roadmap for Teaching Controversial issues	Teacher Guides and series of brief informational videos (3–4 minutes) to help with teaching controversial issues in the classroom.
Khan Academy, Sectional Conflict: Regional Differences	A short video explanation from Khan Academy of the differences between the Northern and Southern colonies and how they sparked tensions over federal policies and westward expansion, culminating in the Civil War. Best for students in grades 6–12.

Activities

Activity 1: Students work in small groups to write down their definition of secession. Students then compare their definitions. Students read *Action Activists #4* pages 10 and 11. Discuss the historical context of secession based on the two pages from the comic. Explain to students that South Carolina declared secession when Lincoln got elected in 1860. share that the state faced increased tariffs, push back from abolitionists and had passed the ordinance of nullification. South Carolina declared secession on December 20 1860 with ten states ultimately following their example. Students in small groups create a list of pros/cons for South Carolina's secession. Students share their list with the class. Discuss with students what would have happened if South Carolina did not choose to secede from the union. How would that choice have impacted our country? How do the choices we make each day impact ourselves and those around us? Students read *Action Activists #4* pages 12 and 13 and answer the question, "Why was there a push for NYC to secede from the state?" Students create a list of pros/cons for the secession of NYC from the state. Discuss with students the following questions: What role does secession play in the fictional NYC that seceded from NYS. What were the implications of NYC seceding from the state? What ended up happening to the city? How does this compare to what might have happened to South Carolina during the war? Why do you think the comic artists chose to focus on secession?

Activity 2: Students watch the video [Building the Erie Canal: Explained](#) and list all the ways New York benefited from the construction of the Erie Canal. Discuss with students how the Erie Canal was a technical innovation that successfully connected the East to West by water and brought a new era of trade, commerce and movement of people. Students complete the first page of the [worksheet](#) and make connections to the positive impact the Erie Canal had. Students read pages 10–12 of *Action Activists #4* and note the impact secession would have on New York City and New York State given everything they learned from the comic and the video. Read page 13 of the comic as a class and discuss the changes that took place as a result of the choices made in the comic. Ask the students, what can we learn from this part of the comic and our lives today?

Activity 3: Project page 5 of *Action Activists #1* for students to analyze. Ask students to explain the chart and identify the role of each branch. Explain the term federalism. Consider using the charts on pages 104 and 105 of *Grade 7 Passport to Social Studies* lesson 6, [Federalism](#), which illustrate the different roles of each of the branches in the comic page. Students read page 12 of *Action Activists #4* and identify how New York State and New York City differ in power and representation. Discuss why some people wanted secession. Read [Article 4 Section 3](#) of the Constitution of the United States with the students and discuss why secession is unconstitutional.

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Climate Change and New York (Pages 14–17)

In the third section of this comic, Pigeon and Squirrel visit the version of New York where the worst-case effects of climate change have occurred.

Resources and Lessons

Resource	Summary
Civics for All, Grades 3–5 Part 1 Protecting our Natural Resources	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students conduct research to compose a letter to the Commissioner of the NYC DEP addressing pollution concerns.
Civics for All, Grades 3–5 Part 2, Zines for Change	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students create zines in response to a social issue or problem to practice developing effective messages for particular audiences.
Civics for All, Grades 3–5 Part 2, Walk to School Campaign	A <i>Civics for All</i> project where students conduct research on air pollution to organize a Walk to School campaign to raise awareness about air pollution.
Civics for All, Grades 6–8 Part 2, Student Agency	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students compare student-led social justice movements.
Civics for All, Grades 6–8 Part 2, Evaluate Real Life Solutions to Environmental Problems	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students evaluate the efforts of various organizations that support the environment.
Civics for All, Part I, Grades 9–12, Project: Moving Issues onto the Local Agenda	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students create a communication plan to move an issue onto the public agenda.
Civics for All, Grades 9–12, Part 2, Lesson 2: Hashtag Activism	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students explore and understand how engaging in hashtag activism via social media influences social change.
Civics for All, Grades 9–12 Part 2, Social Documentary Photography & Activism	A <i>Civics for All</i> lesson where students analyze the photographs of Lewis Hine to understand how social documentary photography is used to raise awareness and make change.
Passport to Social Studies: 6th grade, Unit 1, Lesson 14, Human-Environmental Interaction: Cause and Effect	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> two- day lesson where students identify and evaluate causes and effects of various environmental issues.
Passport to Social Studies: 6th grade, Unit 1, Lesson 15, Environmental Problems and Solutions	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students evaluate causes and effects of various environmental issues in order to propose solutions to natural disasters, climate change, human impact, and resource extraction.
Passport to Social Studies: 6th grade, Unit 1, Lesson 16: Evaluating Real-Life Solutions to Environmental Problems	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> two- day lesson where students evaluate the efforts of various organizations that support the environment.
Environmental Protection Agency	The website provides federal and non-governmental resources for students and educators to learn about and teach climate change.
Climate Health Education Project	Offers online resources for educators who want to bring climate education into

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Resource	Summary
	their schools.

Activities

Activity 1: Support students' understanding of climate change by reviewing, [What's the Difference Between Weather and Climate?](#) Define *cause* and *effect* and discuss students' understanding of the concepts. Provide students with a cause and effect T-chart to encourage active reading. Ask students to identify examples of cause and effect in the comic. Discuss examples of causes and effects of climate change presented in the comic. Ask students to identify ways that they can potentially respond to causes of climate change (from the examples in the comic as well as other causes that students might be aware of). Discuss which responses students might be able to influence the most and why.

Activity 2: *Climate Change and New York* presents climate change as a worst case scenario in the future. Pair students and instruct them to read pages 14-17 with the purpose of identifying the problem and solutions presented in the comic. To encourage inferencing, have students review solutions for advantages and disadvantages. Ask students to justify a solution they listed that they believe would have the best results and one they believe would not work. Allow students to share. Take a straw poll to assess the solution students would want to learn more about.

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Robo-York (Pages 18-23)

In the last section of *Action Activists #4*, Pigeon and Squirrel travel to a New York that has been taken over by Robots and Artificial Intelligence. Students are introduced to a discussion of the ethical decisions involved with technology and the potential outcomes that are possible when ethical decisions have not been made.

Resources and Lessons

Resource	Summary
Civics for All, Grades 6–8 Part 2, A Just Society	A Civics for All lesson where students analyze quotations to understand the meaning of justice and determine the responsibilities of individuals and the government in creating a more just society. This may be used as a supplement for students before or after reading <i>Action Activist #4</i> .
Civics for All, Grades 6–8 Part 2, Responsibility to the Community	A Civics for All lesson where students research non-profit and community-based organizations that could help solve a problem in their local community. This may be used as a supplement for students before or after reading <i>Action Activist #4</i> .
Civics for All, Grades 6–8 Part 2, Take Action!	A comprehensive step-by-step guide to engaging students in community-based, real-life civic action projects. <i>Take Action!</i> is found in Section IV of the Civics for All curriculum guides. The pre-work step in this section called “Setting the Stage” has some suggestions for activities that will help students work to build community, establish norms, self-evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and become familiar with action civics. Consider using some of the activities prior to reading <i>Action Activist #4</i> .
Civics for All, Grades 9–12 Part 1, Citizen Agency	A two-day Civics for All lesson where students first explore how individuals in the United States advocate for their rights and the rights of others. Then Students examine the First Amendment to the Constitution to understand the responsibility of citizens in accessing their rights and the rights of others.
Passport to Social Studies: Grade 8, Unit 6, Lesson 3: Key Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students compare and evaluate the different methods used by civil rights leaders to bring about change.
Passport to Social Studies: 11th grade Unit 4 Day 18 -19: The Short Term Legacy of the 19th Amendment	A <i>Passport to Social Studies</i> lesson where students examine the extent to which the 19th Amendment and the agency of women transformed American society and politics in the 1920s
Mikva Challenge, Project Soapbox	A series of lessons to help students identify an issue they care about and develop and deliver a persuasive speech on why others should care about that issue as well.
Facing History & Ourselves, The Ethics of Generative AI in the classroom	This is the first mini-lesson in a two-part series on the impact of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Dall-E have on education. These lessons target grades 6–12.
Facing History & Ourselves, Learning to Navigate Generative AI Content: Media Literacy Strategies	This is the second mini-lesson in a two-part series on the impact of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Dall-E have on education. These lessons target grades 6–12.
Common Sense Education, AI Literacy Lessons from Grades 6-12	A collection of quick lessons providing an introduction to AI and help to address its social and ethical impacts. Creating an account is free.

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Resource	Summary
PBS LearningMedia, Training Artificial Intelligence	A video explaining recent advances in artificial intelligence and how artificial neural networks function. Use this resource to provide students with opportunities to recognize how A.I. models learn from data and to communicate the importance of training data. Best for grades 6–12.
PBS NewsHour, One Teacher's Take on Harnessing AI in Schools	A video on a high school teacher's work to develop an AI tool to support his students' writing. Provides focus questions for the video as well as other activities and videos to bring to students highlighting the positive potential of AI in the classroom as well as some of the fears teachers and students have about AI and education. Best for grades 6–12.
Edutopia, Empathy in the Classroom: Why Should I Care?	An article that shares the benefits of empathy in education including building positive classroom culture, strengthening community, and preparing students to be leaders in their own communities. In addition to resources to incorporate and increase empathy in the classroom.

Activities

Activity 1: Provide [context about AI \(Artificial Intelligence\)](#) to the class. Engage students in a turn and talk of areas where they have used AI in their lives. Discuss the debate around AI. Have students research the positive and negative arguments for using AI. Ask students to create a guide outlining the best ways AI can be used. Afterward, have them read pages 18–23 of the comic *Action Activist #4*. Discuss the following questions: 1. How does AI learn information? 2. Why did the robots take over Robo-York? 3. According to the comic, how could AI have been used for good? 4. What would you add to your guide after reading this comic to ensure AI is developed to be used wisely today? 5. Why should you include empathy in your outline? 6. Do you agree or disagree with Pidgeon's belief that the future would have been different if people had included empathy? Explain why or why not.

Activity 2: Robo-York raises the issue of agency within a system. Provide the definitions of *agency* and *system*. Inform students that they will examine a system and its effects presented on pages 20–23. Ask students to define each concept in their own words. As students read the comic, ask them to identify examples of *agency* and *systems* in the story. Provide guiding questions: What are the parts of the system? Who are the people connected to the system? How do the people in the system interact with each other and with the parts of the system? How does a change in one element of the system affect the various parts and people connected to the system? Ask students to suggest systems that exist in their daily lives and the ways that these systems influence their lives. Discuss ways that their agency can affect some of these systems and create change in the communities in which they live.