Constitution Day 2025 Lesson Plan: Power to the People — Student Coverage of Protests

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Overview and Rationale

The 2024-2025 school year was filled with people taking advantage of their First Amendment right to assemble, and this new year is sure to be no different. This lesson plan encourages students to consider the First Amendment's connection to the theme of "Power to the People." It also encourages them to read great student journalism from other schools — a bonus! Students will select 1-2 articles from a list of options published on Best of SNO, a site that "showcases the best student journalism from members of the SNO Network," to explore the complexities of protest — and the complexities of reporting on it.

Learning Objectives: The students will be able to…

- Explain how student journalists used their freedom of press to tell stories of people using their rights to protest.
- Learn about protests in other communities
- Identify community tensions within articles and how reporters sought balance in their coverage of those tensions
- Apply this lesson to future reporting on community tensions

Resources/Materials

- Board space to write or project the First Amendment
- Access to computers with an internet connection to read articles published on Best of SNO
- A digital copy of the **"Power to the People: Links and Questions"** handout so students can easily click on them to access the stories.
- Pen/paper for students to take notes while reading the articles
- Index cards or similar for use as tickets to leave

Activity, Step-by Step

1. Project the First Amendment on the board: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." Remind students of the five freedoms and ask them how this connects to the idea of "power to the people." Make sure they understand the connection between the word "assemble" and the right to peacefully protest.

2. Tell them they will be reading 1-2 examples of strong student journalism to explore how people use their power to protest and how journalists report on it. Students will choose articles to read individually and then discuss them in small groups or as a class.

3. Make a copy of the "Power to the People: Links and Questions" doc (next page). Give students 15 minutes (time may vary depending on students' reading speed and length of articles) to read 1-2 articles from the list, adding notes for the following questions:

    a. How does this article connect to the idea of "Power to the People"?

    b. What tensions, if any, exist in this story? How did the reporter(s) seek balance when reporting on these tensions?

    c. Why do you think these student journalists chose to use their freedom of press to tell this story?

    d. What stories do these articles inspire you to seek out in our community? How will you ensure you provide balance when covering these stories?

4. Students share out, either in small groups or with the class, using the discussion prompts above. If you do this activity in groups, I suggest having each group share out with the class at the end of the activity.

5. As closure, students can write one takeaway they have from the activity on an index card and hand it to the teacher as a ticket to leave.

Power to the People: Links and Questions

Directions: Pick 1-2 of the articles from the list below to read. These articles are all student-written coverage of events from the 2024-2025 school year. As you read, jot down a few notes on the questions below (you do not need to use complete sentences since we will be discussing them). Once you have finished reading and taking notes, we will discuss the following questions:

1. How does this article connect to the idea of "Power to the People"?
2. What tensions, if any, exist in this story? How did the reporter(s) seek balance when reporting on these tensions?
3. Why do you think these student journalists chose to use their freedom of press to tell this story?
4. What stories do these articles inspire you to seek out in our community? How will you ensure you provide balance when covering these stories?

Article Options

1. Kaiser Permanente workers strike amidst nationwide mental health crisis by May Lin, originally published on Scot Scoop News on October 29, 2024.
2. Deportation and defunding threats silence student activists' voices by Meghna Dixit and Stella Petzova, originally published on El Estoque on April 10, 2025.
3. Wayland teachers demonstrate to bring awareness to public education by Reva Datar, Ainsley Jay, and Kyle Zhang, originally published on Wayland Student Press on March 20, 2025.
4. Kyle Rittenhouse speech at Kent State sparks student protest by Israel Gole, originally published on The Exponent on April 20, 2024.
5. High Voltage, Higher Stakes: Residents Protest Dominion Energy's Power Expansion by Sanvi Challa, Kristian Bryant, and Lia Davis, originally published on The Blaze on April 29, 2025.
6. From Student Protest to Activism: Eleftheria Lialios' History With the Black Panthers by Ben Gibson, originally published on The Forum on November 25, 2024.
7. Student expression silenced by administration by Kassandra Aguirre, originally published on WCHS Insight on October 7, 2024.
8. 'Hands Off' protest shows unprecedented national organization against Trump administration, from Atlanta to New York City by Fairlie Mercer and Audrey Lyons, originally published on The Southerner on April 8, 2025