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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2014 Volume I: Understanding History and Society through Images, 1776-1914

Civil Disobedience in Words and Images

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The unit is designed to be utilized in a high school English Language Arts classroom to promote empathy, political engagement and art appreciation in students. The practice of civil disobedience, non-violent resistance to an unjust law or practice with the goal of drawing public awareness to the issue and effecting change, is evident in a number of texts. The terminology for discussing literature and art can be similar and appropriate academic language skills will be developed. Progressing along the course of a semester, students will explore the theme of civil disobedience with a focus on moments such as the American Revolution, Slavery, Suffrage, the Vietnam War, Segregation, Civil Rights, Integration and the Occupy Wall Street Protests. Readings on each topic will be paired with at least one piece of artwork (sculpture, photograph or painting) and an activity designed to create a deep understanding of the art and the narrative it depicts. The goal of this unit is to promote visual literacy in conjunction with verbal and written literacy utilizing close analysis and critical thinking skills. Students are encouraged to look at works of art with a careful eye and develop an ability to use language to engage critically with the art.

(Developed for English II, grade 10; recommended for English and History/Social Studies/Civics, grades 8-10)

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