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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2021 Volume I: U. S. Social Movements through Biography

From Handmaids to Riot Grrrls, using Fiction to Understand Social Movements

Guide for Curriculum Unit 21.01.10, published September 2021
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Punk is dead, but punk rock feminism is not. Focusing on social movements, my unit will ask students to read *The Handmaid's Tale* as a social movement theorist. First, we will study the structure and strategies of social movements that they are already familiar with. This unit will focus on the punk-inspired Riot Grrrl Movement from the 1990s using the biography of Kathleen Hanna, one of the movement's most influential leaders, and on the zines they created. This social movement deals with the same issues of *The Handmaid's Tale* like sexism, rape, and the silencing of women. After reading the novel, students often feel dissatisfied with the ending. For their final project, students will be asked to turn that dissatisfaction into meaningful action. They will create a Riot Grrrl zine from the characters' points of view and create a fictional social movement using the tactics and strategies of this unit's studied social movements. Having students understand how a social movement works and planning their own, even if it is fictional, will allow them to see how their voice and their participation in a social movement can fight against social injustices in our world.

(Developed for AP Language and Composition and IBHL I, grade 11; recommended for English III, grade 11, and AP Literature and Composition, grade 12)

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