

Speak Up for What You Believe In

Purpose:

By researching and reporting on the lives of famous and ordinary people who stood up for what they believed was right or pursued a seemingly impossible goal, the students gain insight into the courage required to make a public stand.

Materials:

the names of famous and ordinary people, and groups written on self-stick labels and placed in a container (suggestions below); writing materials; costumes and props (optional)

Procedure:

Prior to leading this activity, prepare a collection of identification labels and place them in a container. Choose from the following suggestions and/or select the names of individuals and groups relevant to a current (or recent) unit of study.

Based on the number of students group, prepare the labels so that when they are all drawn the students will be divided into teams of three or four. Each team will be working on one individual, group, or issue.

Famous Individuals:

George Washington
Thomas Jefferson
Abraham Lincoln
Harriet Tubman
Carrie Nation
Susan B. Anthony
Franklin D. Roosevelt
Eleanor Roosevelt
Mahatma Gandhi
Martin Luther King Jr.
Cesar Chavez
Jesse Jackson
Bella Abzug
Mikhail Gorbachev
Nelson Mandela

Issues Debated by Ordinary Citizens and Groups:

- English rule prior to the American Revolution
- Treatment of Indians and slaves
- Women not being allowed to vote
- Annihilation of the buffalo
- Child labor
- Railroads built across the lands of Indians and farmers
- Factory owners recruiting immigrants with false promises
- The fairness of the idea, “separate, but equal”
- Treatment of laborers prior to the formation of unions
- The injustice of Japanese internment camps during W.W.II

Groups Acting for a Cause

(3 or 4 labels for each):

- Participants in the “Boston Tea Party”
- Soldiers in America’s wars
- Freedom Riders
- Modern environmentalists

Show the students the container of labels and explain the assignment:

You will have a chance to draw a label from this container. Some of the people whose names are on the labels are famous and some are not. Some labels list issues that ordinary citizens debated openly and courageously, sometimes for many years. Other labels list groups that came together to act for a specific cause.. If you draw this last type of label, take a few moments to locate the other members of your group before beginning work.

Your task is to give a presentation on the individual whose name (group, or issue description) you draw. Do research and gather as much information as you need to represent your character, group, or issue well. Be creative in your presentation. You can create a dance, or song, or artwork, or anything that you think will inform the rest of the class.

When you make your presentation, tell the class who you are and when you lived (if you are no longer living), and give us enough background information to understand your presentation.

Have the students draw labels and form teams with the other students who drew the same labels. Provide time for research as well as group planning sessions. Assist, as necessary. Let the students know when their presentations will be made in class.

Facilitate the presentations, ensuring audience understanding by asking questions about context, date, history, etc. Applaud each presentation and urge the class to ask questions of the presenters. Conclude the activity with a summary discussion.

Discussion Questions:

1. *How are our lives today affected by what these people said and did ?*
2. *Many of these individuals were shunned and degraded, even badly hurt, for taking a stand in public. Why do people risk their safety to speak out?*
3. *How can we show that we appreciate the good things that have come from what some of these people did?*
4. *What are some current issues that are causing people to speak out?*