



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1987 Volume III: Writing About American Culture

Non-Violent Protest Through the Ages

Guide for Curriculum Unit 87.03.02
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The major concepts of this unit will include Dr. Martin Luther King's views on non-violence that were influenced by examples set by Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Henry David Thoreau. This unit will emphasize how civil disobedience has long been exercised in protest of unjust laws.

This unit will focus on the beliefs of Henry David Thoreau, Mohandas K. Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King. Henry David Thoreau was an American writer who is remembered for his attacks on the social institutions he considered immoral and for his faith in the religious significance of nature. His essay "Civil Disobedience" is his most famous social protest. In "Civil Disobedience" he stated that people should refuse to obey any government rules they believe are unjust. He practiced the doctrine of passive resistance.

Mohandas K. Gandhi helped free India from British control by a unique method of non-violent resistance. His life was guided by a search for truth. Gandhi developed a method of direct social action based upon principles of courage, non-violence, and truth, which he called satyagraha.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a Black American Baptist minister who was the main leader of the civil rights movement in the United States during the 1950s and the 1960s. He won the Nobel Peace Prize for leading non-violent civil rights demonstrations. In spite of King's stress on non-violence, he often became the target of violence.

This unit will emphasize how non-violent methods proved to be a strong factor in obtaining favorable settlements. Non-violent methods also taught people the importance of working together for a common cause.

(Recommended for Social Studies, Reading, and Drama classes, grades 6-8)

Key Words

Ghandi Mohandas K. and Civil Disobedience History Civil Disobedience and Passive Resistance King Martin Luther Jr Political Philosophy Thoreau Henry D

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