

Exercising Our First Amendment Rights

Primary and elementary classrooms are ideal environments in which to learn about our rights and how we can exercise our rights in an accountable and civil way. The First Amendment to the Constitution protects our freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press/media, right to assemble, and right to question authority without fear of punishment. If a teacher asks students in grades K to 8 if an active citizen questions authority, most students say no. Of course, we all have the right to question authority in a way that is both **responsible** and **respectful**. To that end, the Rendell Center for Civics and Civic Engagement offers the following list of books with lessons to help define and provide practice in the variety of ways one can identify the need for change and act to achieve that change.

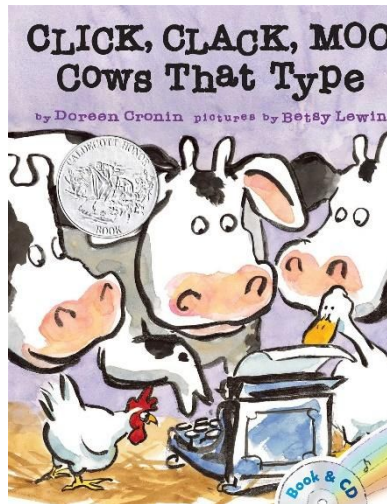
The list below is of the first four read-alouds and lessons. Throughout the school year, we will add additional titles every three months. The titles and lessons will be found on our website at www.rendellcenter.org. The books are appropriate for all primary, elementary, and middle school students as read-alouds. The lessons encourage discussions that build basic civic knowledge, promote civic engagement, and provide practice in democratic deliberation.

Since we learn from each other, the Rendell Center Team is eager to hear from classroom teachers after they use the materials. To encourage feedback and share additional ideas for how to build understanding of our First Amendment Rights, the first 10 teachers to send feedback (bspecker@rendellcenter.org) will receive a copy of ***Peaceful Fights for Equal Right*** by Rob Sanders. This is a powerful read-aloud through which our youngest citizens can understand that, ***“Every voice matters, no matter how small. It’s time to make a difference.”***

<u>Titles</u>	<u>Theme</u>
Click Clack Moo by Doreen Cronin	Going on Strike
<i>Freedom on the Menu</i> by Carole Weatherford	Organizing a Peaceful Sit-In
<i>The Pink Hat</i> by Andrew Joyner	Using Symbolic Speech
<i>Carl the Complainer</i> by Michelle Knudsen	Writing a Petition

Exercising Our First Amendment Rights

Theme: Going on Strike



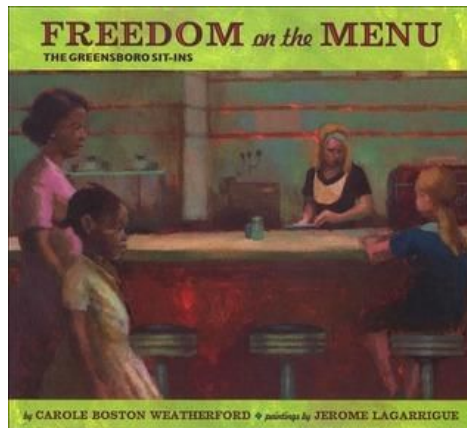
Click, Clack, Moo...Cows That Type by Doreen Cronin: Read Aloud and Lesson

Directions: Read **Click, Clack, Moo** to the class. After you have read the book, choose one, some, or all of the questions to help students learn about and understand the art of a responsible and respectful protest. This read aloud highlights the following action steps the characters took when protesting: they wrote out their demands; assembled all of the barnyard animals; and went on strike.

1. What were the cows and hens protesting?
2. How did the cows and hens get Farmer to pay attention to their request?
3. Duck took Farmer's **ultimatum, Farmer's final demands**, to the cows and hens. Why do you think it is important that Duck was described as a **neutral party**?
4. The Constitution gives all citizens the right to assemble, **to gather together**, without being afraid of being punished. The cows **assembled** all the animals on the Farm. Why do you think they did that?
5. What does Farmer **want**? What do the cows and hens **want**? What was the cows' and hens' **compromise** that led to their getting what they want?
6. Sometimes when one group gets what it wants, another group asks for something they want. Once the Ducks saw that Farmer gave the cows and hens electric blankets, what did they ask for? Do you think that was a legitimate request? Why or why not?
8. Sometimes people go on strike and do not get what they are asking for. That could be the case for the Ducks. What advice would you give the Ducks and why? Should the Ducks let Farmer know what they want even if they don't have something that Farmer wants...like milk and eggs? Be prepared to support your answer. How might the ducks' **protest** be different from the cows' and hens'?
9. Would you agree that both groups should act in a respectful, responsible way even if they do not get what they want? Be prepared to support your answers.

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Theme: Organizing a Peaceful Sit-In



Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins by Carole Weatherford: Read Aloud and Lesson

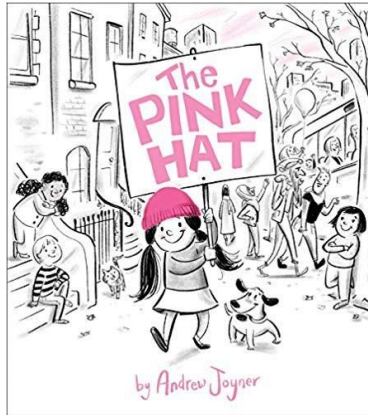
Directions: Read *Freedom on the Menu* to the class. After you have read the book, choose one, some, or all of the questions below to help students learn about and understand the concept of a **sit-in**, the history of **sit-ins**, and the art of this type of peaceful and respectful protest. Give the students the following historic perspective to help them better understand the culture of the 1960's in the South.

In 1960, four young men from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College sat down at a Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and asked to be served. When they were refused service, the four stayed at the Woolworth lunch counter until the store closed for the day. After the first day, many other young people joined sit-ins at Woolworth and at any Greensboro eating establishment in which Blacks were not allowed to sit down and eat. Eventually, sit-ins spread throughout the South.

1. Eight-year-old Connie asked her Dad if he thought that the **sit-in** were going to work. Connie's Dad answered, "**Sometimes it's important just to try**". Do you agree with Dad's point of view that whether you get what you want or not, it is sometimes important just to try? Be prepared to support your answer.
2. Throughout the South there were signs posted that read, "Whites Only". Connie asked her Mama why the four students felt they could break the rules that were clearly stated all over town. Mama told Connie, "**Some rules have to be broken**". Do you think there are times when a rule should be broken? Can you think of an example when it would be appropriate to break a rule? Discuss with a partner and be prepared to share your example.
3. After the first day of the **Greensboro Sit-In**, many people joined the four young men and held sit-ins at lunch counters throughout Greensboro. Connie's sister was among those who joined the original four. The sister was arrested and held in jail. Why do you think Connie's sister did not want her Dad to pay the bail to get her out of jail? Do you think she did the right thing? Why or why not?
4. Sit-ins have continued to be used as a peaceful way to call attention to an issue of importance to the protestors. For example, in April 2018, students at Howard University held a nine-day sit-in to give them a greater voice in university decisions. Take some time to research recent sit-ins and discuss.

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Theme: Using Symbolic Speech



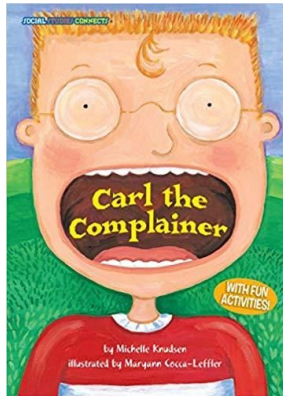
The Pink Hat by Andrew Joyner: Read Aloud and Lesson

Directions: Read *The Pink Hat* to the class. After you have read the story, discuss the concept of **symbolic speech** with the students. Symbolic speech is non-verbal communication that clearly conveys a message to all of those who view it. *It is the expression of an idea, opinion, or emotion through non-verbal and non-written means.* A good example of the use of symbolic speech as a tool for protesting is that of the case of ***Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District***. This is a case in which the school district tried to prohibit students from wearing arm bands to protest the War in Vietnam. The Supreme Court decided that the ban was a violation of the First Amendment. In making their decision, the Court felt that it was critical that the students were peaceful and non-disruptive. Respectful, responsible protests are the appropriate way to have your opinion heard.

1. The pink hats in the story were worn by millions of women, men and children who were part of a peaceful protest behind the message, ***“Women’s rights are human rights”***. What do you think are some of the factors that were behind this Women’s March?
2. Do you think the story would have a different impact if the main character was a boy? If so, how would it have been different? If not, why do you think it would be the same?
3. Imagine that your school has adopted the theme of keeping the school and community environment clean and healthy. Using symbolic speech, how would you let other people know that you are on the team that cares about the environment?
4. In addition to calling attention to the need to take care of our environment, what action steps would you share with people who recognize your symbol of environmental awareness and want to know how they could help?
5. Think of symbols in today’s world that clearly convey a message. **Example:** Why do people wear red ribbons? (To call attention to the need to prevent drug abuse and drunk driving.) What are other symbols can you think of?

Exercising Our First Amendment Rights

Theme: Writing a Petition



Carl the Complainer by Michelle Knudsen: Read Aloud and Lesson

Directions: Start to read *Carl the Complainer* to the class. Stop at the end of page 5 and ask the students what they think Carl could do instead of just complaining all the time. Make sure to record their ideas before continuing to read the book. Highlight the fact that many of the students in the class have been in Carl’s position; that is, many students want something to change but are not sure how to do anything about it except complain. After reading the book, have the class brainstorm some of their concerns for which they would like to see a change.

1. Dale and Carl decide that Carl should write a **petition** to keep the park open later. A **petition** is a written request that asks for something and is signed by many people. If your best friend asked you to sign his/her petition for something you do not agree about, would you sign the petition anyway? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think it is important to gather as many signatures on a petition as possible? (The more names the better when it comes to petitions because it shows the person/organization how many people are interested in the topic.)
3. Below is a table that shows the pros and cons of using a petition as a method for protesting. Study and discuss each pro and con. Then decide if and when you think a petition would be a good tool for protesting an issue. Do you think Carl the Complainer used his petition appropriately? Be prepared to support your answer.

Pros	Cons
Petitions give many people one collective voice.	People often use petitions to inflate an issue.
Petitions are quick and easy to make.	Other tools are effective and have more meaning.
Petitions help you spread the word on the issue and help you to educate while getting signatures.	Petitions do not ask signers to think critically because you only show one side of the issue.
Petitions show how many people are affected by the issue.	Often people will sign even if they do not care about the issue.
Petitions give the people who sign a feeling of accomplishment	Petitioning is mostly about talking and not taking action.