

March: Book One

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Lesson Plan and Activities



In **March: Book One**, and his follow-up graphic novels, **March: Book Two** and **March: Book Three**, Congressman John Lewis shares his first-hand account of the Civil Rights Movement in a way that makes these critical events in our nation's history both meaningful and accessible to our next generation of citizens. The questions below support the classroom teacher as he/she reads these three novels with students. The questions are designed to build basic civic knowledge; promote active engagement; and provide on-going practice in developing the art of democratic deliberation. The goal is twofold: to strengthen each student's background of information about the Civil Rights Movement, and to encourage each student to find his/her voice and become actively engaged in their home, school and community.

Materials:

Creating a Common Language Activity

Meet the Author: John Lewis

Practicing Conflict Resolution Activity

Follow-up Questions:

1. John Lewis has been described as a "genuine American hero and moral leader." After reading **March: Book One** and *Meet the Author: John Lewis*, think about what characteristics Congressman Lewis has that make him a leader. What characteristics do you think make him a hero? Do you think all leaders are heroes or that all heroes are leaders? Be prepared to support your answer.
2. John Lewis grew up poor. He lived with his family on a farm in Alabama. His father was a sharecropper, a farmer who rented a portion of land from a landowner in return for a share of the crops produced on that land. Think about the lessons learned living on the farm that might have contributed to John Lewis becoming a leader in the Civil Rights Movement. Now think about your own childhood and how your *lessons learned* might contribute to helping you become a leader.



3. In ***March: Book One***, John Lewis says that he was an okay student, but one for whom school was very important because in school his “eyes began opening to the world around him.” School was so important that, when his family could not afford for him to go to school because they needed him in the fields, he would sneak out of his house and go to school anyway. Do you think he did the right thing? Why or why not? Why is school important to you?
4. Dr. Martin Luther King’s sermons were what inspired John Lewis to both talk about the injustices as well as act upon them. He did so in a nonviolent way. The group he became a part of, the Freedom Riders, had to continually practice how to maintain their nonviolent ways. They developed a list of ***Do Nots*** and ***Do’s*** which is found on page 97. How hard do you think it was...and would continue to be...to follow these rules of behavior? Are there any rules from this list that would help you if you were confronted by someone, for example, who was bullying you? Be prepared to discuss your answer.
5. John Lewis has devoted his life to justice and nonviolence. In ***March: Book One***, the reader learns that he and the other Freedom Riders had to practice their nonviolent approach. The ***Conflict Resolution Activity Sheet*** gives students the opportunity to practice resolving conflicts with a win/win resolution; or, in other words, with a resolution that allows both individuals to use compromise in order to arrive at a resolution in which each gets something he/she wants. Learning to resolve conflicts with a win/win resolution is an important step to avoiding fight or flight.



Creating a Common Language

Directions: Whether your class is reading *March: Book One*, *March: Book Two*, or *March: Book Three*, take a few minutes to make sure that students have background knowledge of key concepts mentioned in the novels and the activities are designed to support an understanding of the information in the novels. Below is a list of concepts that students should understand as they work on the follow-up activities. Feel free to add any concepts you feel need some further explanation.

Segregation (during the Civil Rights Movement) - The practice of keeping different races separate from each other.

Civil Disobedience - Disobeying a law or policy as a way of showing that the law/policy is unfair.

Affiliation - Belonging to...as in John Lewis and many, many others had an affiliation with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

Discrimination - Racial discrimination deprived southern blacks of decent jobs and schools and of the right to vote during the time of the Civil Rights Movement.

Multi-racial - There were those who were active in the Civil Rights Movement who felt that other races besides African Americans should not be allowed to affiliate with the activities of the Movement. Everyone did not agree with the idea that groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference should be made up of many races, in other words, should be multi-racial.

Resolution - Nonviolence was the philosophy of Civil Rights Movement leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He and many others felt that words were more powerful than *fight* or *flight*. Resolution is the way you can solve a problem. The following are the three types of resolutions:

A. The two parties or groups who are in disagreement can arrive at a resolution in which neither of them get what they want. This is called a **Lose/Lose Resolution**.

B. The two parties who are in disagreement arrive at a resolution in which only one of the parties gets what he/she wants. In other words, one person wins and gets what he/she wants, and one person loses and does not get what he/she wants. This is called a **Win/Lose Resolution**.

C. The two parties who are in disagreement each get some of what they want and compromise on the resolution. This is called a **Win/Win Resolution**.



Meet the Author: Congressman John Lewis

John Lewis was born on February 21, 1940 outside of Troy, Alabama. His father was a sharecropper, a tenant on a farm owned by a landowner who then took a large portion of the farmer's crops for rent. John spent his youth trying to get the most out of school and practicing his love for preaching. An interesting fact from his book ***March: Book One*** actually has young John preaching to the chickens on his family's farm. John valued school so much that he would sneak out of his house when his father asked him to stay home to help harvest crops. As a high school student, he was inspired by the words of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. It was Dr. King's words that led John to become active in the Civil Rights Movement. Since that early time in his life, Congressman Lewis has remained active and engaged in the human rights struggle in the United States.

John Lewis was a student at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. There he organized sit-in demonstrations at whites only lunch counters. In 1961, he volunteered to participate in the Freedom Rides. The Freedom Rides challenged segregation at bus terminals across the South. John Lewis risked his life on the Freedom Rides by sitting in seats identified for whites only.

During the height of the Civil Rights Movement, John Lewis became Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Committee (SNCC). This committee organized student activism in the Civil Rights Movement such as sit-ins, voter registration, marches and much more. Although he was still a very young man, barely 23 years old, John Lewis became a nationally recognized figure of the Civil Rights Movement.

John Lewis was arrested 40 times and endured many serious injuries. In spite of this record of ongoing abuse, he remained a devoted advocate of nonviolence. The books ***March: Book One***; ***March: Book Two***; and ***March: Book Three*** describe for readers young and old the history of our country's Civil Rights Movement, encouraging all of us to become nonviolent participants in the quest for civil rights for all Americans.



Practicing Conflict Resolution

Directions: John Lewis and his fellow Freedom Riders had to practice nonviolence in order to apply this approach to their everyday lives. John and the others knew how tempting it could be to fight violence with violence. They never lost sight, however, of their belief that words were more powerful than fight or flight. The activity below is designed to give today's students some practice in using words to resolve conflict.

Read the scenario below and write a scene - individually, in small groups, or as a whole class - in which the words the characters use for resolution help to solve a problem before it leads to fight or flight.

Scenario 1

A new student has joined your class three weeks after school started. You know that he/she is not yet comfortable in your classroom. Some of the kids are teasing him/her because he/she has a foreign accent. Other students are not allowing him/her to join them at play in the schoolyard. To try to get students to like him/her, he/she decides to pick on you and push in front of you when the class is in line. He/she thinks this will make the other students think he/she is one of them.

In this scene, he/she has just pushed you while others in the class watch and laugh. You can decide where this scene should take place – the setting; who should speak first; and what the names of the two characters are. Your goal is to come up with a scene in which both characters use their words to achieve a resolution in which both characters feel like they won something.



Scene to Build Student Voice

Pick a Setting: _____

Name 2 Characters:

A: _____

B: _____

Define a Conflict: _____

Decide who should speak first:

Curtain Up...

In the first two lines the characters introduce themselves to the audience.

A: (3 words) _____

B: (3 words) _____

In the next two lines, the characters introduce their conflict.

A: (6 words) _____

B: (6 words) _____

The next two lines, the conflict rises.

A: (7 words)

B: (7 words)

The following two lines, the conflict reaches a climax.

A: (2 words)

B: (2 words)



The final two lines, the characters reach a resolution.

A: (10 words)

B: (10 words)

End of Scene