

Maggie's Civics Corner

Special Lesson – Freedom of Speech (The Art of the Protest)



Maggie says ...

In these difficult times, as our nation and the world pull together, it is more important than ever to understand our role as a citizen.

Today's lesson is about FREEDOM OF SPEECH & THE ART OF THE PROTEST. *The world witnessed the death of George Floyd. Protests erupted throughout our nation and well beyond about his death and the cause for it. Protests are actions that call attention to an event or a cause with the goal of encouraging*

change to it. The following is a Read Aloud Lesson designed to help our youngest citizens (and future change agents) understand the art of peaceful and meaningful protest. As leaders throughout our country gather to develop an action plan for change, we hope they remember to include the voices of our citizens, too.

First, have students listen to a read-aloud of the book [Peaceful Fights for Equal Rights](#) by Rob Sanders (with illustrations by Jared Andrew Schorr). This book is skillfully designed to give meaning to complex social issues through an accessible picture book. When you are finished, use the following questions to have a thoughtful discussion.

1. Lots of people who marched through the streets in 2020, peacefully protesting the death of George Floyd embraced the quote that begins the book ***Peaceful Fights for Equal Rights*** – *Every voice matters, no matter how small. It's time to make a difference!* What do you think this quote means? How do you think protestors can make a difference? Is there anything that you would want to protest? What is it? Why do you think a protest is the best way to convince leaders that this change should be made?
2. Two different groups protested during the George Floyd protests – 1) those who marched peacefully, making the point that our country needs to change, and 2) those who attended the protests just to cause trouble by destroying property and looting stores. Which group do you think was the most effective at encouraging change? Be prepared to support your answer.
3. In the book, there are many action verbs to describe some of the things we can do to promote *peaceful fights for equal rights*. One of these words is “**question.**” Do you think there are times when active citizens should question authority about issues they think aren't right or fair to all? Be prepared to explain your answer.

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4. Now, let's look at some of the action words in the book. After you look at the list, put them in order of importance (what you believe). Then share your order with the class.
- a. **Assemble** (gather together)
 - b. **Make buttons, banners, and bumper stickers**
 - c. **Educate** (tell others about your cause)
 - d. **Volunteer** (give your time willingly to perform a service without pay)
 - e. **Join others**
 - f. **Take a knee**
 - g. **March**
 - h. **Speak out**
 - i. **Vote**
 - j. **Be nonviolent**
 - k. **Develop an Action Plan**
5. Do you think our youngest citizens (those not of voting age) should be allowed to sit at the table with our elected officials and community leaders when they talk about plans to address the current protestors' concerns about social justice? Be prepared to support your answer.
6. A protest can start a conversation that could lead to change. What ideas for change would you suggest to our elected and community leaders whose job it is to address the social injustices that sparked the George Floyd protests and others like it?