



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Young People As Activists

Nonviolent Protest Always Prevails



Claim and Focus

A clear, arguable, and specific claim is presented (“peaceful and nonviolent protest is the most effective method for young people to advocate for change”). The claim is developed throughout the whole essay, demonstrating a strong focus and thoroughly fulfilling the demands of the task.



Support and Evidence

The most relevant and appropriate evidence is cited to support the claim, and the essay fully explains the relationship between claim and support. Counterclaims are thoroughly acknowledged and refuted (“While social media is helpful to connect people, it should be the first step, and not the only action people take.”)



Organization

A clear organizational structure is supported by precise transitions that clarify the relationships between ideas (“More importantly,” “Due to,” “Furthermore,” “To be fair,”). A logical progression of ideas is enhanced with clear topic sentences for each paragraph.



Language

A definitive voice and perspective is established through language that attends to the reader’s interests with a formal style, vivid/domain-specific word choice (“discriminated,” “nonviolence,” “brutality,” “democracy”) and consistently varied sentence structure.



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait ‘looks like’ in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see “25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays” by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

Young People As Activists



Nonviolent Protest Always Prevails

The current state of the world is far from ideal. Throughout history, people have been speaking up and taking a stand against injustice. In America, the civil rights movement of the 1960s showed ordinary people, young and old, demanding changes in laws that discriminated against African Americans. The young people of today are looking to those brave activists of the past and are realizing the importance of fighting for social justice by protesting together. Though there are many ways for a movement to gain attention, protesting has always been the most successful. Specifically, peaceful and nonviolent protest is the most effective method for young people to advocate for change.

Nonviolent protest is not a new idea. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. are both known for using nonviolence to protest for change. This same idea is being used again by the young people of today. The March For Our Lives was one example of this. Due to the numerous school shootings that happen every year in America, The March For Our Lives was a peaceful protest organized by the students who survived a deadly school shooting in Parkland, Florida. They used social media to gain awareness across the country and organize the demonstration for gun control restrictions. As a result, young people in large cities like Los Angeles, Houston, Chicago, and all across the United States organized nonviolent protests in their towns as well. Their nonviolent strategies included marching in the streets, carrying signs with their demands (“Keep NRA Money Out of Politics”), and having students who lived through shootings speak to the crowd about their experiences. In the article, “Parkland: How Protests Engage People

and Create Change,” it states that “The March for Our Lives movement was a turning point. Adults and young people themselves realized the power of young voices and the importance of protest.” More importantly, the nonviolent protest had “direct effects on lawmakers’ votes” and increased youth voter turnout by 10 percentage points in the next election (Source 1). The protests not only gave students a voice on this issue, but it inspired many more to continue to advocate for change when voting in future elections.

Young activists played an important role in many protests in recent years. In 2020, several nonviolent protests focused on bringing awareness to police brutality. Following the murder of George Floyd and Brionna Taylor, protests were organized in every major city to support that “Black Lives Matter.” Like the Parkland protests, people made signs, sat peacefully in the streets, and sang songs to spread their message. Young people were a large part of the participants of these demonstrations, and many young people were in charge of organizing them. “Teens for Equality” organized the Nashville BLM protest which consisted of over 10,000 people and “there were no problems with police” (Source 1). Furthermore, in 2019, a teenager named Greta Thunberg gained attention on social media for her sit-in for climate justice. She inspired students all over the world to walk out of school on September 20th to “demand that world leaders take action on climate change.” She traveled from Sweden to New York City to help lead the nonviolent protest there which was one of the largest in the world (Source 2). It is young people like Greta, the Teens For Equality, and the Parkland survivors that are spreading awareness and inspiring young people to take action in advocating for change.

To be fair, social media was crucial to organizing the protests for climate change, black lives, and gun control. According to Source 3, “social media has given young people a new space to share information and raise money. The effect is that young people are organizing and mobilizing like never before.” However, it’s important to



remember that the civil rights activists of the past didn't need social media to be successful. It's an effective tool to share information, but liking and sharing posts isn't enough to fight for change. The article "Social Media: A False Sense of Change" supports this idea when it says that social media can "give people a false sense of doing good. It can make them feel like they have done enough." Additionally in Source 4, Antonia Malchik states that "People presenting their demands in person works better than a single online petition." While social media is helpful to connect people, it should be the first step, and not the only action people take.

Peaceful assembly is a basic right of citizens living in a democracy. Throughout history, in countries all over the world, nonviolent protest has proven to be the most effective method for people of all ages to advocate for change. In today's world, young people are taking advantage of the technology available to organize peaceful demonstrations and demand justice. Youth activism is not a thing of the past; it is the fight for our future.