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## ***Making Meaning of May 4*** **K-12 Teaching Plan**

**Name of Educator:** Heather Cole

**Educator's Teaching Plan Number & Title:** Project 66, "Youth Activism in American History: A Homeschool Unit Study for Middle School Students"

**Level of Students for Educator's Teaching Plan:** Middle school

**Subject Area for Educator's Teaching Plan:** History, Literature, Writing, maybe some Math and Science

**Educator's State:** Virginia

**Description of Educator's Teaching Plan:** Through a breadth of multimedia sources this homeschool unit contextualizes May 4 within youth activism throughout American history to find meaning of use for movements today. Range of activities includes adopting perspective of person on site during May 4. Inquiry questions include *What happens when needed sources don't exist?* And *Why did guardsmen fire?*

This educational teaching plan was developed during Kent State University's Summer 2021 workshop titled Making Meaning of May 4: The 1970 Kent State Shootings in US History. The workshop was supported by Kent State and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant program titled *Landmarks of American History and Culture: Workshops for School Teachers*.

This teaching plan is shared to promote understanding of the Kent State shootings on May 4, 1970; enhance humanities education across the disciplines; and illustrate the meaning of May 4 for today.

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# Youth Activism in American History: A Homeschool Unit Study for Middle School Students

**Unit Question:** Is protest an effective tool to bring about changes in American society?

**Unit Goal:** Examine youth protest movements throughout American history and see what lessons we can take from them that may be useful in the protest movements today.

**Subject Areas:** History, Literature, Writing, maybe some Math and Science

**Approach:** Begin with an overview of protest movements in American history, then do 5-6 mini units on specific movements. Have students dig down and study specific people who were involved in those protests. End with the students organizing some sort of activity to protest something they feel strongly about.

## Mini Units:

- \*\* Need something earlier... maybe Sybil Luddington (1777)?? Or Harriet Tubman's story of running away as a child (within the context of slave resistance)???
- Labor: Newsies Strike (1899) OR Mill Girls Strike (1934)
- Civil Rights: The Little Rock Nine (1957)
- Vietnam: Kent State (1970)
- Gun Control: March for Our Lives (2018)

## Relevant Readings:

Astor, M. (2018, March 5). *7 Times in History When Students Turned to Activism*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/05/us/student-protest-movements.html>.

Green, M. (2018, March 14). *Too Young to Vote, Old Enough to Act: A Brief History of Major Youth-Led Movements*. KQED. <https://www.kqed.org/lowdown/30275/the-kids-are-all-right-a-timeline-of-youth-led-movements-that-changed-the-nation>.

Teaching for Change. (2020, April 9). *And the Youth Shall Lead Us*. Medium. <https://medium.com/@teachingforchange/and-the-youth-shall-lead-us-83f30428f5df>.

## Teacher Resources:

Schulten, K. (2018, March 7). *The Power to Change the World: A Teaching Unit on Student Activism in History and Today*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/learning/lesson-plans/the-power-to-change-the-world-a-teaching-unit-on-student-activism-in-history-and-today.html>.

Facing History and Ourselves. (n.d.). *Reflection and Action for Civic Participation*. Facing History and Ourselves. <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/democracy-and-us/reflection-and-action-civic-participation>.

## KENT STATE Mini Unit

### Teacher Background Reading:

Barbato, Carole A., Laura L. Davis, and Mark F. Seeman. *This We Know: A Chronology of the Shootings at Kent State, May 1970*. Kent, OH: Kent State Univ. Press, 2012.

Davis, Laura L., Mark F. Seeman, Bradley S. Keefer, Mindy J. Farmer, and Lori A. Boes. May 4, 1970, Kent State Shootings Site. National Historic Landmark Nomination. 2016.

Grace, Thomas M. *Kent State: Death and Dissent in the Long Sixties*. Amherst, MA: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2016.

### Student Readings:

Backderf, Derf. *Kent State: Four Dead in Ohio*. Abrams Comicart, 2020.

Hakim, Joy. *A History of US: All the People, Since 1945, 4th Edition*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Partridge, Elizabeth. *Boots on the Ground: America's War in Vietnam*. Viking Books for Young Readers, 2018.

Wiles, Deborah. *Anthem*. Scholastic Press, 2019.

Wiles, Deborah. *Kent State*. Scholastic Press, 2020.

### Films:

*Eyes On The Prize*. PBS. 1987. <https://worldchannel.org/show/eyes-on-the-prize/>.

*Forrest Gump*. Paramount Pictures. 1994.

*How it Was: Death at Kent State*. Creative Differences. 2008.

*The Day the War Came Home: How the Shooting of Students on a US Campus Impacted The Course of the Vietnam War*. AlJazeera News. May 5, 2010. <https://www.aljazeera.com/videos/2010/5/5/the-day-the-war-came-home>.

*The Vietnam War*. Florentine Films. 2017. <https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/the-vietnam-war/>.

*The Year That Trembled*. Novel City Pictures. 2002.

### Additional Resources:

Lottery Numbers for the 1969 Draft. 1969.

Kent State Guardsmen Oral History Project. Ohio Northern University. <https://www.kentguardvoices1970.com/>

Kent State University May 4 Visitors Center (museum). Kent, OH, 2012.

Kent State University May 4 Walking Tour. Kent, OH, 2010.

May 4 Collection. Kent State University Libraries, Special Collections and Archives. <https://www.library.kent.edu/special-collections-and-archives/kent-state-shootings-may-4-collection-contents>.

*Making Meaning of May 4th: The 1970 Shootings in U.S. History*. Kent State University.

National Archives and Records Administration. *Document Analysis Worksheets*. National Archives and Records Administration. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets>.

## PART 1

**Question:** What was the historical context of the Kent State shootings?

**Goal:** Understand how three specific historical movements contributed to the events that led up to the shootings at Kent State:

1. The Civil Rights Movement (\*\*we'll cover the early Civil Rights Movement in the mini-unit immediately prior to this, so we won't spend much time on this\*\*)
2. The Vietnam War (and specifically the escalation of the war and student fears relating to being drafted)
3. The Generation Gap

**Readings:**

- Read relevant chapters in Hakim's *History of US*
- Read relevant sections of Partridge's *Boots on the Ground*
- Listen to Wiles' *Anthem* as a bedtime audiobook

**Films:**

- Watch "The History of the World (April 1969-May 1970) episode from *The Vietnam War*
- Watch clips from *Eyes on the Prize*

**Misc.:**

- Songs of the Summer of Love & Songs of the Vietnam Era

**Activities:**

- Plot relevant events from the 1960s on a timeline
- Have students find their number in the draft lottery
- Play a bunch of 60s-era music all week
- Watch *Forrest Gump* and discuss the 60s portion of the film

**Project:**

- Have students select a 60s-era song and write one page about how it reflects/contradicts the historical movements of the 1960s.

**PART 2**

**Question:** What happened at Kent State?

**Goal:** Understand the chronology of events at Kent State from May 1-4, 1970.

**Readings:**

- Read Backderf's graphic novel *Kent State*
- Listen to Wiles' *Kent State* as a bedtime read-aloud

**Film:**

- Watch *The Day the War Came Home*

**Misc.:**

- Maps of Kent/Kent State

**Activities:**

- Visit the Kent May 4th Visitor Center
- Take May 4th Walking Tour: <https://www.kent.edu/may4visitorscenter/may-4-walking-tour>
- Walk around Kent and try to find relevant sites from 1970

**Project:**

- Have students choose a person who was at Kent State (student, guardsman, reporter) that weekend. Examine pre-selected primary sources from the Kent State Archives on that person and take notes on their experiences that weekend. (\*\*Need to create form for this.) Plot their movements from May 1-4 on a 1970 map of Kent/Kent State. Then write a one-page letter from that person to an imaginary friend or family member telling them what happened at Kent that weekend (from their perspective).

**PART 3**

**Question:** What do the primary sources tell us about why the National Guardsmen fired their weapons?

**Goals:**

- Recognize the bias within primary sources.
- Compare and interpret conflicting primary sources in order to build a thesis about an event.
- Use primary sources to create a historical narrative.

**Film:**

- Watch *How it Was: Death at Kent State*

**Activities:**

- Have students examine preselected primary sources from the Kent State Archives and Kent State Guardsmen Oral History Project (oral histories, photographs, sound recording) from the moments immediately prior to the shootings and analyze them using the NARA worksheets.
- Discuss why the primary sources may conflict with each other; which sources are more reliable; what happens when there are “missing” sources.
- Discuss how historians use primary sources differently than reporters, lawyers or storytellers.

**Project:**

- Have students select and use at least 5 primary sources to create a short video about the shootings that answers the question “Why did the National Guardsmen fire their weapons on May 4, 1970?”

**PART 4**

**Question:** (How) was the protest at Kent State effective in bringing about changes in American society?

**Goal:** Understand the significance of the Kent State shootings in American history, specifically:

1. It increased public opposition to the war in Vietnam
2. It caused the largest student protest and only national student strike in American history
3. It prompted change in how military police responded to civil disturbances

**Activities:**

- Discuss any questions the students still have about the shootings.

- Watch *The Year that Trembled* and discuss how accurate it is.

**Project:**

- Have students do a final unit project of their choice. Possibilities include:
  - Make a poster or handout with guidelines on how to be safer during a protest;
  - Live tweet the events of May 1-4 from the perspective of a student or newspaper reporter;
  - Conduct an oral history interview with someone who lived through the 1960s about a topic related to the era;
  - Make a video about a particular aspect of the Kent State shootings;
  - Design a memorial to the students who were killed and injured at Kent State;
  - Research and write a paper about the shootings at Jackson State University;
  - Write your own protest song about a current or historical issue.