

# Believe in Something: Nike, Kaepernick and Social Change

*Compelling Question: What message does the recent Nike ad convey about believing in something?*

Grade Level		Time	Common Core Standards
K-2	3-5	45 Minutes	Reading: R1, R2 Writing: W3 Speaking & Listening: SL1, SL5 Language: L4, L6
MS	HS		



## Web Related Connections

### Lessons

- [Athletes and Activism](#)
- [Privilege, Discrimination and Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System](#)
- [Should Washington's NFL Team Change Their Name?](#)
- [The First Amendment and Our Freedoms](#)
- [The First Amendment in Public Schools](#)

### Blog

- [Students' Right to Protest the Pledge and National Anthem: Advice for Supporting Young People](#)

### Other Resources

- [10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism](#)
- [Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism](#)

## LESSON OVERVIEW

In early September 2018, it was announced that Colin Kaepernick, the former N.F.L. quarterback with the San Francisco 49ers, is prominently featured as part of Nike's 30th anniversary "Just Do It" campaign. The campaign's slogan "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything" is featured in the ad. Kaepernick previously had a deal with Nike that was set to expire, but it was renegotiated into a multi-year deal in conjunction with this campaign.

In August 2016, Kaepernick decided to take a stand about racial injustice by refusing to stand for the National Anthem at football games. He spent much of the season either sitting or kneeling during the anthem. It was the subject of a lot of public discussion and controversy. After the 2016 season, Kaepernick opted out of his contract with the 49ers, which made him a free agent at the beginning of the 2017 season, but he has not been hired by another team. Since the Nike ad came out featuring Kaepernick, there have been a variety of responses including praise for Nike and the ad, as well as people being angry at Nike and vowing to boycott their products.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about Nike's decision to feature Colin Kaepernick in their 30th anniversary campaign, explore what they strongly believe in and create their own ad about something that is important to them.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will understand more about the controversy around Colin Kaepernick's protest and the recent Nike ad.
- Students will explore the question about what it means to believe in something so strongly you would sacrifice everything.
- Students will create their own ad that expresses something they believe in.

## MATERIALS & PREPARATION

- Index cards (one for each student)
- [Nike Ad](#) (project in classroom or print one copy for each student)
- "Colin Kaepernick's Nike Campaign Keeps N.F.L. Anthem Kneeling in Spotlight" article (*The New York Times*, September 3, 2018, [www.nytimes.com/2018/09/03/sports/kaepernick-nike.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/03/sports/kaepernick-nike.html)), one copy for each student)

## Key Words

(See ADL's [Education Glossary Terms](#).)

Activism  
Advertisement  
Arbitrator  
Belief  
Boycott  
Conspiring  
Free agent  
Grievance  
Icon  
Inspire  
Principle  
Protest  
Stock value  
Value

- *KAEPERNICK NIKE AD: New ad featuring former San Francisco 49ers QB Colin Kaepernick video* (2018, 2 min., KPIX CBS SF Bay Area, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBnseji3tBk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBnseji3tBk))
- Board/Smart board or chart paper and markers

## PROCEDURES



### Information Sharing

1. Begin the lesson by asking students: *Does anyone know why Nike and Colin Kaepernick have been in the news lately? What happened?*
2. Project the [Nike Ad](#) on the board/smart board or distribute the handout to all students.
3. Ask students the following questions:
  - Who and what do you see?
  - What does the ad say?
  - How does the ad make you feel?
  - What message is the ad trying to convey?
4. Explain that in early September 2018, it was announced that Colin Kaepernick, the former N.F.L. quarterback with the San Francisco 49ers, is prominently featured as part of Nike's 30th anniversary "Just Do It" campaign. The campaign's slogan "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything" is featured in the ad. Kaepernick previously had a deal with Nike that was set to expire, but it was renegotiated into a multi-year deal in conjunction with this campaign. This ad was first tweeted by Kaepernick.
5. Share some or all of the following background information:
  - Colin Kaepernick is a football player who was the quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers from 2011 to 2016. In August 2016, Kaepernick decided to take a stand about racial injustice by refusing to stand for the National Anthem at football games. He spent much of the season either sitting or kneeling during the anthem. It was the subject of a lot of public discussion and controversy. After the 2016 season, Kaepernick opted out of his contract with the 49ers, which made him a free agent at the beginning of the 2017 season, but he has not been hired by another team.
  - In 2017, early in the football season, the controversy re-emerged again when more than 200 N.F.L. players took a knee during the anthem. In addition to professional football players taking a knee, many middle and high school sports players across the country took a knee in solidarity with Kaepernick and the issues raised by his protest.
  - The protest movement Kaepernick started has been interpreted by some as being disrespectful to the American flag and the military. Political conservatives have widely condemned it. However, Kaepernick has been clear that his protest is about racial injustice and in particular about the recent deaths of Black and Latino men at the hands of police.
  - In May 2018, the N.F.L. announced that that all players who are on the field when the National Anthem is played before a game must stand and if they don't want to, they have to remain in the locker room or they will incur a penalty. The N.F.L. said that teams will be subject to a fine if a player disobeys this rule. Team owners expressed different reactions to this policy. Then in July, the N.F.L. announced they were temporarily stopping their new anthem policy so they can negotiate terms with the N.F.L. Players Association (NFLPA), following reports that the Miami Dolphins were considering four-game suspensions for the "punishable offense" of taking a knee.
  - Since the Nike ad came out featuring Kaepernick, there have been a variety of responses including praise for Nike and the ad, as well as people vowing to boycott Nike and their products.
6. Engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:
  - Does anything about this surprise you? If so, please explain.
  - What do you think about the ad?

- Among your friends, peers and family members, what has been the response so far about the ad?
- What do you think has been/will be the response in society at large? Why do you think that?
- Do you think the protest is effective in terms of raising awareness about issues of racial injustice?
- Why do you think Nike used Kaepernick and his story to illustrate believing in something even if it means giving up everything? What does Kaepernick believe and what is he giving up?

### Self-Reflection Activity: What do you believe in?

1. Ask students: *What is something you strongly believe in?* Explain that this belief can be an opinion, value, principle, political point of view or something else. Explain to students that it should not be about something superficial like a food or a sports team.
2. Distribute index cards to each student and have them write that belief on a notecard in the form of a sentence that starts with “I believe....”). Tell students not to include their names.
3. Collect the notecards and mix them up; then redistribute the cards so everyone gets a different card than their own. Have students to read the card in their hand, one at a time.



### Reading Activity

1. Distribute a copy of the article, “[Colin Kaepernick’s Nike Campaign Keeps N.F.L. Anthem Kneeling in Spotlight](#),” to each student and give them 10 minutes to read silently.

**NOTE:** If the article above is too difficult for your students, use this article from [Newsela](#), which publishes high-interest news articles daily at different reading levels. The article above is an 8th grade reading level. This particular content is available at grades 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8th grade levels. You can register (free) to access.

2. Engage students in a class discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
  - Why did Colin Kaepernick and other players engage in the protest by taking a knee?
  - What are your thoughts about the claim that these protests are disrespectful to the American flag and the military?
  - Why do you think Nike decided to make the ad?
  - Do you think Nike’s decision to make Kaepernick the face of the campaign a “business decision” or a decision based on principle? Explain your thinking.
  - How does the slogan “Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything” relate to Kaepernick?
  - What does the slogan mean to you?



### Writing Activity: Believing in Something

1. Write the following question on the board/smart board or post on chart paper:  
What does the slogan in the Nike Ad (“Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.”) mean to you?
2. Tell students they are going to do a “quick write,” which means they will have five minutes (timed) to write their response to the posted question.  
To get students thinking, ask aloud the following questions:
  - What does the slogan mean to you?
  - What does it mean in relation to Kaepernick?
  - How does it relate to someone in history or something you hear about in the news?

3. Tell students when to start writing their response and time them.
4. When the five minutes are up, ask a few students to share their responses with the class.

**NOTE:** As an alternative, you can also have them share their writing with a person sitting next to them.

### Creative Writing Project: What's Your Slogan?

1. Have students create an ad that includes an image and a slogan about something that they believe in, something that gets to an issue or principle that is deep and meaningful to them. It could be a quote that they like, line from a song or poem, slogan or something they say a lot that illustrates something important to them. Brainstorm slogans with the class and also elicit ideas about how to find slogans.
2. Have students take selfies or pictures of something else that will help to illustrate their slogan. Use Snapchat or an app like [Pic Collage](#), [Phontograph](#) or a similar app to create their ad. If more time is needed, have students complete for homework. Consider posting the ads on a bulletin board in school, an online gallery of ads or create a short video with all of the students displaying their ads.

### Homework: Social Media Response

1. For homework, have students explore what some of the responses (both pro and con) to the Nike ad have been on social media by looking up specific hashtags and users. First, brainstorm some possible users and/or hashtags upon which to search, which might include some of the following:

@Nike	#NikeBoycott	#ImWithKap
#Nike	@Kaepernick7	#JustDolt
#NikeAd	#Kaepernick	

2. Have students research these users and hashtags, noting what some of the most popular posts are, how people are responding (both pro and con), etc. The next day, have students report back what they found by presenting in class, writing an essay or doing a PowerPoint.

### Closing

Show the video, [Kaepernick Nike Ad](#), the full Nike ad in commemoration of their 30th anniversary. After watching, have students share a one-word response to the video.

### ADDITIONAL READING

- ["Nike goes all in: Colin Kaepernick voices 'Just Do It' ad to air during NFL's kick-off game"](#) (*USA Today*, September 6, 2018)
- ["Nike's Colin Kaepernick 'Just Do It' ad airs during NFL season opener"](#) (CBS News, September 6, 2018)
- ["The most powerful brand in sports follows the most powerful man in the world into the anthem protest debate"](#) (*The Washington Post*, September 4, 2018)
- ["Why Kaepernick Takes the Knee"](#) (*The New York Times*, September 25, 2017)
- ["Why the NFL Put Its New Kneeling Policy on Hold"](#) (Rolling Stone, July 20, 2018)

## Common Core Standards

CONTENT AREA/STANDARD
Reading
R1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
R2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Writing
W3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.
Speaking and Listening
SL1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
SL5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
Language
L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
L6: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

## Nike Ad



**Colin Kaepernick**  @Kaepernick7 · Sep 3

Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything. #JustDolt



 47K  369K  918K