

6.2 #ACTIVISM

Essential Question(s): What is “hashtag activism”? In what ways does “hashtag activism” help and hinder social movements?

Overview

#MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #IceBucketChallenge, #ThisIsOurLane and so many other hashtags are appearing on Twitter and various social media sites. With every hashtag posted, webs of content are created and individual voices are connected. For some people, their activism begins and ends with the use of a hashtag. For others, using a hashtag is just the beginning of their activism. As we learn about and watch people create new businesses, launch organizational events and organize protests, hashtags are an increasingly popular way to promote and involve others. It is no longer a question of whether a hashtag should be included in a civic activity, but rather how to best market the hashtag so it will be used widely. Hashtags can help raise awareness, connect people and focus content and actions. But are they really a form of activism? Can true, measurable change come from simply using a hashtag in a post? Are you participating in a civic movement by using the hashtag and not going out into the community?

Snapshot

What Students Will Learn:

In this lesson, students will learn about the benefits and drawbacks of hashtag activism while developing their own position on its effectiveness.

Standard(s):

D2.Civ.10.9-12

Time: 50 minutes each



WE CANT DRINK OIL!

#NODAPL

Objectives

- Explain hashtag activism.
- Analyze hashtag activism’s ability to create change in communities.

Differentiation

Students can work with partners.

What’s Needed

- Writing utensil and paper or 1:1 technology
- WiFi, internet, computer, screen or projector, speakers
- Board/Smart board and markers
- For procedure 9, choose to either show “Does Hashtag Activism Actually Work?” YouTube clip (2014, 2:20 min, ABC News, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ig4CQ5AeoNw) or have each student read “U. of C. professor on the power of hashtags in black activism” article (*Chicago Tribune*, July 14, 2015, www.chicagotribune.com/business/blue-sky/ct-cathy-cohen-hashtags-activism-bsi-20150714-story.html).
- Make copies of the “#Activism Research Worksheet,” one for each student.

Classroom Setup

Students will work independently after a “Snowball Fight.” Desks should be set up to best support independent work time and movement.

Direct Teaching

1. Facilitate a short discussion by asking students the following questions:
 - What is a hashtag?
 - What happens when you use a hashtag?
 - What are some famous hashtags that you see or use?
2. If students struggle with answering any of the above questions, you can provide them with the following information:

Hashtags are a way to connect content on social media platforms by using the pound (#) sign. When you use a hashtag, your content is collected and joins other content that has been tagged using the same hashtag. For example, if I used the hashtag, #Apples, all pictures and posts with the same hashtag would show up in a search. Some famous hashtags include: #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, #LikeForLike.

Key Vocabulary

activism
hashtag
social media
Twitter



3. Ask students to take out a writing utensil and a piece of paper. They do not need to write their name on it. Ask students to write down a definition for the term **hashtag activism**.

Remind them that **activism** is when people are involved in activities that are meant to achieve political or social change.

4. Once students have written a definition for hashtag activism, have them respond to the following question on the same paper: "Is hashtag activism helpful? Why or why not?"

If students have not heard of hashtag activism before, ask this second question: "Is it helpful to share articles about political movements?"

5. Explain to students that they are going to participate in a snowball activity. Have students crumple their piece of paper with their definition and response into a ball. Then, have them create a circle around the room. On the count of three, have students throw their paper across the room. Students should then pick up a new piece of paper and wait for further instructions.

If a circle cannot be made, students can throw in the general direction of someone else.

6. Once each student has a new piece of paper, have them spend a few minutes reading the definition and response to themselves. Ask a few students to share with the large group what their paper says. Keep track of the pros and cons of hashtag activism on the board by making a T-chart like the one below.

Pros of Hashtag Activism	Cons of Hashtag Activism

7. Ask students to return to their seats, then share the following information:

Hashtag activism, or slacktivism, or clicktivism, is a way to campaign or advocate for policy change, social change or political change using social media and other online methods. Some hashtags, such as #BlackLivesMatter, are tweeted about more than 17,000 times a day.

8. Show students the YouTube clip "[Does Hashtag Activism Actually Work?](#)" Or, have students read the article "[U. of C. professor on the power of hashtags in black activism.](#)"

9. Provide students with the following information from the Pew Research Center:

Overall, 69% of people in the U.S. feel that social media platforms are important for accomplishing political goals, such as raising awareness to certain issues. On top of that, 67% believe that social media can create movements for social change that are sustaining.

On the opposite end, 77% feel that social networking is distracting from what is really important and leads people to believe they are helping when they aren't.

10. Explain to students that they are going to research a hashtag that has been used in social justice activism. Some examples include:

#BlackLivesMatter
 #MeToo
 #BringBackOurGirls
 #NoDAPL
 #IceBucketChallenge

11. Distribute copies of the “[#Activism Research Worksheet](#)” and talk through it with students, pausing to answer questions that they may have.
12. Provide students work time to complete the assignment

Closing

Have students share whether their point of view changed about the effectiveness of hashtag activism.

#ACTIVISM RESEARCH WORKSHEET

Name: _____ Hour: _____

Directions: Complete this worksheet to research a hashtag that has been used in social justice activism. Think about the social movements that you are interested in. What do they focus on? What work has been done recently in that movement? How do people contribute to that movement?

1. Social justice movement that I am focusing on:

2. Hashtag(s) associated with the movement:

3. How many times has the hashtag been used? Include the source where you found your information.

4. Who has used the hashtag that is notable (famous, important, etc.)?

5. Who has used the hashtag that is in opposition of the movement? What is their argument?

6. How has the hashtag impacted the movement?

7. What would the movement look like without the hashtag?

8. Do you believe that the hashtag has had significant impact on the movement? Why or why not?
