



WE CAN ALL BE ‘KID PRESIDENT’

‘Kid President’ is a series of YouTube videos and a television show produced by an organization called Soul Pancake. Kid President is played by an 11-year-old actor named Robby Novak, who shares inspiring ideas about how to change the world and pep talks and advice about how people should connect with each other. The idea came about from Brad Montague, the owner’s (and Robby’s brother-in-law) camp experience with young people who wanted to change the world and it made him think: “Wouldn’t it be cool if we listened to kids more?” Kid President recently recorded and distributed a video on Martin Luther King, Jr., sharing what MLK did to change the world and how his words and actions relate to our lives today.

This lesson will use Kid President’s recent video on Martin Luther King, Jr. as a jumping off point to talk with elementary students about activists. Students in grades 2–5 will have the opportunity to learn more about the activities and qualities of activists, identify and explore famous and ordinary activists and conduct research on an activist of their choice which will culminate in a written speech and video that is similar in style to Kid President’s video.

See these additional ADL resources: [10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism](#), *Current Events Classroom* lessons “[Who Is Malala Yousafzai?](#),” “[Who Was César Chávez?](#)” and “[Nelson Mandela: A True Hero of Conscience](#).”

Grade Level: grades 2–5

Time: 45 minutes (with additional time for creating videos)

Common Core Anchor Standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

Learning Objectives:

- Students will reflect on what activism is and what characteristic traits activists possess.
- Students will identify both ordinary and famous activists.
- Students will select an activist to research and then create a speech and video about the activist and how they are inspiring in today’s world.

Material:

- *The Story of Martin Luther King Jr. by Kid President* YouTube video (3½ minutes, 2015, Soul Pancake), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xXZhXTFWnE>
- “No superheroes, just real heroes: comic book tells the civil rights story” (Newsela, February 1, 2015, <https://newsela.com/articles/Civilrights-comicbook/id/7066/>), one for each student
- [Activists](#) (one for each student)
- [Speech Organizing Worksheet](#) (one for each student)

- *Post-it Notes®* (3 for each student)

Vocabulary:

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL's "[Glossary of Education Terms](#).")

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|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| • abolitionist | • equality | • paraphrase |
| • activist | • inequality | • suffrage |
| • Apartheid | • inspiring | |
| • civil rights | • laws | |

VIDEO VIEWING: “THE STORY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.” BY KID PRESIDENT

1. Ask students if they have ever heard of “Kid President.” Explain that Kid President is a person named Robby Novak, an 11-year-old actor best known for making inspirational videos about how kids can change the world, which stems from a belief “that kids have voices worth listening to.” Ask students: *Do you agree with Kid President about that?* Tell students that the Kid President videos have over 75 million views and explain how large that number is by sharing the total population of the United States—over 320 million (about one-fourth of 75 million).

NOTE: You can learn more about Kid President at www.kidpresident.com/whoweare.html.

2. Show the three minute video, [The Story of Martin Luther King Jr. by Kid President](#).
3. After showing the video, engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - How did you feel while watching the video?
 - What was Kid President’s message in the video?
 - What did he share about Martin Luther King, Jr.?
 - How did he make the video interesting to kids?
 - How did he paraphrase what Martin Luther King, Jr. said and put it in his own words?
 - Do you think you could make a video like this?

WHAT IS AN ACTIVIST?

1. Ask students: *What is an activist?* Come to a definition as:

Someone who gets involved in activities that are meant to achieve political or social change; this also includes being a member of an organization which is working on change.

2. Ask students: *Do you know any activists?* Explain that an activist can be someone famous like Martin Luther King, Jr. or it can be an ordinary person who is fighting for change in their community or elsewhere. Share an example of someone you know that is not famous and someone who is (below are some examples of famous activists).

3. For each activist named by the students, ask them (or tell them if they don't know) what the person did to make them an activist and what social change the person is seeking. Create a list that may include [Activists](#) from the handout.
4. Distribute three *Post-it Notes*® to each student and ask: *What are the qualities of activists?* Have them write one word on each post-it note that describes a characteristic of an activist. They don't have to use all three post-it notes. If time permits, have students read their words aloud and then post them on a wall or board in the front of the room and organize them so like words are placed together.

READING ACTIVITY

1. Distribute a copy of the article "[No superheroes, just real heroes: comic book tells the civil rights story](#)" to each student.

NOTE: This article is written at a third grade reading level. If your students are younger, read the article aloud. You must register for [Newslea](#) (free) in order to access this article. Newslea is an excellent free resource for non-fiction articles about current events. Every article is written at five different reading levels so you can adjust the reading level that is right for your students.

2. After reading the article, have students turn and talk with a partner about one thing they found interesting, amazing or awesome about what they read about John Lewis. They should take one minute each to share.
3. After the pairs are finished sharing, engage students in a discussion about the reading by asking the following questions:
 - What was happening in the early 1960s that made John Lewis an activist?
 - How old was John Lewis when he became an activist?
 - What were some of the activities that made John Lewis an activist?
 - Why do you think he wanted to make a comic book about the Civil Rights Movement?
 - Do you think John Lewis is an activist today? How so?

CHOOSE AN ACTIVIST

1. Distribute the [Activists](#) handout to each student and add to it (on the board) any other names that the students generated from the previous discussion. Have students take turns to read the names aloud and help with pronunciation if needed. For each of the names, ask students if they have heard of the person and if so, share what they know. While you read the names, note what category of activism they participated in indicate below (it is not noted on the student handout). Define the categories if necessary.

Malala Yousafzai (girls' education)
Rosa Parks (civil rights)
Ruby Bridges (civil rights)
Claudette Colvin (civil rights)
Harriet Tubman (abolitionist)
Harvey Milk (LGBT rights)
Ralph Abernathy (civil rights)
Susan B. Anthony (women's suffrage)

Cesar Chavez (workers' rights)
Frederick Douglass (abolitionist)
Medgar Evers (civil rights)
Eleanor Roosevelt (women's and labor rights)
Anne Frank (Holocaust resistance)
Helen Keller (women's suffrage, labor rights)
Sojourner Truth (abolitionist, women's rights)
Elizabeth Cady Stanton (women's suffrage)

Betty Friedan (women's rights)
Mahatma Gandhi (Independence, civil disobedience)
Nelson Mandela (anti-Apartheid, equality)
Malcolm X (civil rights)
Che Guevara (inequality)
Crazy Horse (Native American rights)
Nat Turner (abolitionist)
John Dewey (education)
Russell Means (Native American rights)
Mary Harris "Mother" Jones (labor rights)

Eugene Debs (labor rights)
Margaret Sanger (women's rights)
Jackie Robinson (civil rights)
Bayard Rustin (civil rights, LGBT rights)
Dolores Huerta (workers' rights)
George Takei (LGBT rights)
Clara Lemlich (workers' rights)
Muhammed Ali (anti-war)
Billie Jean King (women's equality)
Sitting Bull (Native American rights)

2. Have students choose one activist for whom they will focus their research. Explain that each of them will choose one of the activists (more than one student can choose particular activist) and they will (1) do more reading and research on their person, (2) write a short speech about the person, which will include what they learned and what is inspiring about the activist today and (3) prepare and deliver their speech which will be recorded.
3. Give students some parameters about the research they will conduct. Direct them to (1) books in the classroom or school library, (2) books from the public library, (3) internet sources especially for elementary students such as [BrainPOP](#), [BrainPOP Jr.](#) (K-3), [Sweet Search](#), [Fact Monster](#) and [Scholastic Teacher's page](#) and (4) other media sources like videos, etc.

WRITING ACTIVITY

1. After students have selected their activists, go over the steps for completing a research project and give students a timeline for completion. Remind them that their end product will be a speech written by them and then recorded so it has a "Kid President" feel to it.
2. You may want students to compile the facts and research they collect into notecards in order to organize their information. Then, have them begin the writing process by using the [Speech Organizing Worksheet](#). This worksheet is a way for them to organize information about the activist as well as how they will make the speech interesting and inspiring. Have a brief discussion about how Kid President made his speech interesting and remind students to use some of those strategies. Some of this work can be done in class and some can be assigned for homework.
3. When students have completed their first drafts, they should conference with another student to get feedback and revise their speech. They will also need to practice delivering their speech to make it engaging and interesting for a video.
4. When the final drafts of the speeches have been written and rehearsed, you will video all of the students delivering them. For older students, you may want to give them the opportunity to do the recording themselves where they can work in pairs and each person can record the other person's speech. The final culmination will be to watch the videos together and consider sharing them with other classes in the school and/or invite family members in to share.

CLOSING

Do a go-round and ask each student to complete one of these sentences aloud:

"If I could be an activist, I would change _____."

"I am an activist because I _____."

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- *A is for Activist* by [Innosanto Nagara](#) (Triangle Square, 2013)
- "[Be More Awesome — With Help From Kid President](#)" (NPR, February 1, 2015)
- [BrainPOP](#)
- [Fact Monster](#)
- [Kid President](#)
- [Newslea](#)

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 1: 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.
Writing
Standard 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.
Standard 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaboration with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
Standard 5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

ACTIVISTS

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Malala Yousafzai | Nelson Mandela |
| Rosa Parks | Malcolm X |
| Ruby Bridges | Che Guevara |
| Claudette Colvin | Crazy Horse |
| Harriet Tubman | Nat Turner |
| Harvey Milk | John Dewey |
| Ralph Abernathy | Russell Means |
| Susan B. Anthony | Mary Harris “Mother” Jones |
| Cesar Chavez | Eugene Debs |
| Frederick Douglass | Margaret Sanger |
| Medgar Evers | Jackie Robinson |
| Eleanor Roosevelt | Bayard Rustin |
| Anne Frank | Dolores Huerta |
| Helen Keller | George Takei |
| Sojourner Truth | Clara Lemlich |
| Elizabeth Cady Stanton | Muhammed Ali |
| Betty Friedan | Billie Jean King |
| Mahatma Gandhi | Sitting Bull |

SPEECH ORGANIZING WORKSHEET

BACKGROUND

Name of Activist: _____

What did they do, what were their accomplishments? _____

How is the person an activist? _____

SPEECH

How can you connect what your activist did in the past to what kids are interested in nowadays? Why will they care?

What are one or two important quotes from the person and what does the quote(s) mean? _____

How will you end the speech on an inspiring note? _____

RESEARCH SOURCES

Articles: _____

Books: _____

Internet Sources (BrainPop, Fact Monster, etc.): _____

Videos: _____