

We the CIVICS Kids



Speak Up & Speak Out!
See Some Shocking Results



Extra! Extra!
Read All About It

Get Organized
What Would You Do?

“Oh Beautiful...”
Sing it. Say it. Do it.



Lesson 7

Lesson 7: Historical Figures & Activists

“Extra...Extra...Read all about it!” This was the cry heard throughout New York City in the 1890’s. These were the shouts of the thousands of poor boys and girls whose job was to sell the daily newspaper. “Newsies,” as they were called, would get up very early each morning, pick up their bundle of papers and pay 50 cents for 100 papers. They would try to sell as many newspapers as they could. Any unsold newspapers at the end of the day could not be returned. These newsies usually earned about 30 cents for a hard day of work that could last up to 14 hours.

Because television had not been invented, people got their news by reading the newspaper. They were especially interested in the news during the 1898 Spanish-American War. More people wanted to read about the war, so the newsies sold more papers. Because more papers were being sold, the publisher of the *New York World* and *New York Journal* raised the price of each bundle of papers to 60 cents for 100. After the war, when less people were buying the newspaper, the two publishers did not lower the price the newsies had to pay for their bundle of papers.

The newsies thought this was unfair. They organized themselves under a leader, Kid Blink, and began what is now called The Newsboys Strike of 1899. These kid strikers demonstrated across the Brooklyn Bridge for several days bringing traffic to a halt. Some demonstrations drew more than 5,000 newsies. The newsies refused to sell either the *World* or the *Journal*. After several weeks of a strike and when sales of the two papers were down by over 50 percent, the publishers struck a deal with the newsies. They did not lower the cost for each bundle, but they agreed to buy back all the unsold newspapers. Why was this outcome a victory for the newsies?



The newsies who took part in The Newsboys Strike of 1899 are what we call activists. An activist is someone who takes action to support or oppose a cause or situation. An activist is a change agent who tries to get people involved in making their communities better places in which to live. Their actions can take many forms from writing letters to government representatives, giving speeches, organizing rallies and peaceful marches or even having a strike like the newsies.

Throughout our history there have been many activists.

- In the 1800s, a group of women organized themselves with the objective to get women the vote. They were known as the **Suffragettes**. They marched, petitioned the government, organized rallies – as anything to bring attention to their cause. **Susan B. Anthony** and **Elizabeth Cady Stanton** were early leaders and devoted 50 years to the woman’s suffrage movement. Although neither woman lived to see women gain the right to vote nationally, their work and the work of many other suffragists led to the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920.
- **Cesar Estrada Chavez** was a Mexican-American labor leader who used non-violent methods to fight for the rights of migrant farm workers. He organized strikes and boycotts of farm products in order to help workers get better wages and working conditions. As a result, legislators voted to make laws improving the lives of farm workers.
- **The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.** is one of the most well-known and respected civil rights leaders of the 1950s and 60s. Dr. King helped bring about laws that guarantee fairness and equality for all Americans. He believed in bringing about change with nonviolent protest, marches with his many followers, and speeches.

Sticky Situation

Your class has been chosen to plan, organize, and run a major school event.

Your best friend wants to be the chairperson of the committee. You know that he/she is disorganized and would not make a good chairperson.





Civic Literacy Links Historical Figures and Activists

- **The Ballot Box Battle** by Emily Arnold
- **I Could Do That** by Linda Arms White
- **Granddaddy's Gift** by Margaret King Mitchell
- **Biographies:** <http://gardenofpraise.com/leaders.htm>

Let's Hear Your Voices!

In order to prevent the elimination of certain school activities, some districts are considering requiring students to pay to participate in chorus, band, school plays, and clubs. Do you think this is a good idea?

- ★ Write your opinion and give at least one reason to support it.
- ★ If this happened at your school, what would you do to make your opinion known?
- ★ When you are finished, post your card on the Student Voices Bulletin Board and check out the other ideas already there!

