

## Teen Activists: Making a Difference

Right now, somewhere in the world, a teenager is doing something important. It might be changing a law or launching a movement. Or maybe they're calling out an injustice that adults overlooked. We live in an age where social media gives one voice the power to reach millions. Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping how information spreads and who gets heard. Young people are more powerful than ever. The question is no longer whether teens can make a difference. The question is: What difference will YOU make?



You have probably heard of social justice and activism. These words often bring to mind great leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. or Mother Teresa. These people are so legendary, they hardly seem real anymore. But every day, kids and teens do big things, too. When Marley Dias was in sixth grade, she launched #1000BlackGirlBooks. She realized the books at her school almost never featured characters who looked like her. She went from a girl who loved reading to a published author and advocate. Teen activist Emma Lembke founded the organization Log Off. She saw how social media algorithms were harming her peers' mental health. She has since testified before Congress. What do these activists have in common? They started with something they were passionate about. They did not wait for permission.

Today, AI is changing the world in ways that directly affect communities. It can spread false information or reinforce unfair outcomes. It can even widen inequality. But it can also amplify causes and help find creative solutions. Whatever issue you care about, AI is likely already playing a role. Understanding that connection is part of being an informed activist today.

You will collaborate with a group to identify a social justice issue that matters to you, research a teen activist already working on it, examine how technology or AI connects to the issue, and publish an authentic product that presents your findings and a concrete action plan for how YOU will take a meaningful step toward change.

No matter your age, no matter the obstacle, you can leave the world a little better than you found it. The activists of tomorrow are the students taking action today. That student could be you.

## Teen Activists: Making a Difference *Analytic Rubric*

	<i>Novice</i>	<i>Apprentice</i>	<i>Practitioner</i>	<i>Expert</i>
Background Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a persuasive tone to describe a current social justice issue in detail</li> <li>identifies that technology or AI is somehow related to the issue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a persuasive tone to describe a current social justice issue in detail</li> <li>describes how AI or technology affects the issue with at least one example</li> <li>lists information from sources</li> <li>cites sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>uses a persuasive tone to describe a current social justice issue in detail</li> <li>explains how AI or technology is both a challenge and a potential tool for the issue, using evidence from at least one credible source</li> <li>draws a conclusion that connects information at least two credible sources</li> <li>cites sources and uses direct quotes from sources</li> </ul>	all of <i>Practitioner</i> plus: evaluates the ethical implications of AI in relation to the issue or identifies a specific tech-based solution activists are already using
Teen Activist	teen activist profile includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>who they are</li> <li>how they became involved in the issue</li> <li>what they have done to promote social justice</li> </ul>	teen activist profile attempts to cite textual evidence and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>who they are</li> <li>how they became involved in the issue</li> <li>what they have done to promote social justice</li> <li>why/how they have inspired you to act</li> </ul>	teen activist profile includes textual evidence cited from at least one credible source, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>who they are</li> <li>how they became involved in the issue</li> <li>what they have done to promote social justice</li> <li>why/how they have inspired you to act</li> <li>how they have used technology or social media to advance their cause</li> </ul>	all of <i>Practitioner</i> plus: attempts to connect with the activist via email, letter, etc.

<b>Plan for the Future</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• action plan includes at least one short-term and one long-term goal</li> <li>• outlines possible next steps to promote change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• action plan includes long-term and short-term goals</li> <li>• identifies specific steps that must be taken to reach goals</li> <li>• attempts to create a timeline for the plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• action plan includes long-term and short-term goals</li> <li>• specifies specific steps that must be taken to reach goals</li> <li>• creates a timeline and a list of necessary resources and potential supports (established organizations or people)</li> </ul>	all of <i>Practitioner</i> plus: an explanation of possible roadblocks or groups of resistance and how they will be addressed
<b>Published Product</b>	final product is published to a public forum (classmates, school, community, or world)	published product is professional and uses all conventions correctly	published product is professional, uses all conventions correctly, and contains multimedia content	all of <i>Practitioner</i> plus: reflections of the first stage of implementation are included

**Teen Activists: Making a Difference** *Sample Scaffold for Learning*

**Benchmark Video and Discussions**

- Addressing Roadblocks/Resistance
- Inspiring Activists
- Promoting Change



**Instructional Activities: Learning**

**Instructional Activities: Additional**

<p><b>Instructional Texts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiction and nonfiction texts from your curriculum (I/P)</li> <li>• Articles on activism</li> <li>• <i>Marley Dias Gets It Done and So Can You</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Instructional Videos</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key details of a text (IV)</li> <li>• Write an objective summary (I)</li> <li>• Use context clues (I/P)</li> <li>• Determine main idea (I)</li> <li>• Teen Activists in History</li> <li>• How to Effect Change</li> <li>• Assess the credibility of sources</li> </ul>	<p><b>How-to Sheets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize a text</li> <li>• Cite text evidence</li> <li>• Identify reliable sources</li> <li>• Write an action plan</li> <li>• Cite in MLA format</li> <li>• Conduct preliminary research on a topic/person</li> <li>• Assess the credibility of sources</li> </ul>	<p><b>Practice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the main topic of a text (HW)</li> <li>• Identify key details of a text (I)</li> <li>• Exploring topics/teen activists (HW)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interactive Websites</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ReadWorks</li> <li>• IXL</li> <li>• TED Talks, TED-Ed</li> </ul>	<p><b>Learning Centers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize informational texts (P)</li> <li>• Match main ideas and supporting key details (P/SG)</li> <li>• Categorize: Reliable v. unreliable sources (SG)</li> <li>• Persuasive Techniques (I/P)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Small-Group Mini-Lessons</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize informational texts</li> <li>• Elements of Paragraph Writing</li> <li>• Tone: Persuasive</li> <li>• Creating an original/creative product</li> </ul>	<p><b>Application</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Editing/polishing final product</li> <li>• Analyze a current event related to a social justice issue</li> <li>• Write a short persuasive paragraph</li> </ul>
			<p><b>Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use rubric to self-assess (I)</li> <li>• Peer edit of all elements in final product (P)</li> </ul>
			<p><b>Reflection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning exit ticket</li> <li>• Two stars and a wish</li> <li>• Complete: Something that I thought was tricky today was . . .</li> </ul>

**Key:** Individual (I), Pairs (P), Small Groups (SG), Activities suitable for homework (HW), Insights Video (IV)

## Teen Activists: Making a Difference *Facilitation Questions*

<p><b>COMPREHENSION</b></p> <p><i>Ask questions that ensure students understand content and skills needed to solve the problem.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you need to do to accomplish this task?</li> <li>• How can you find that information on the internet?</li> <li>• What are some persuasive techniques?</li> <li>• Who are some current activists?</li> <li>• Who are some activists from history?</li> <li>• What is an activist?</li> </ul>
<p><b>APPLICATION</b></p> <p><i>Ask questions that ensure the ability of students to apply learning to new situations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can you use what you learned about (activist/topic) in history to promote change today?</li> <li>• What are social issues that you have an interest in?</li> <li>• What would someone have to do in order to inspire you to make a change?</li> <li>• How will learning about persuasive techniques help you solve this problem?</li> </ul>
<p><b>CONNECTION</b></p> <p><i>Ask questions that ensure the ability of students to apply learning to their lives.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did you choose this topic? How do you connect with it personally?</li> <li>• How will you use persuasive techniques to benefit yourself or society in the future?</li> <li>• What are other situations in which knowing how to write an action plan will be helpful to you?</li> </ul>
<p><b>SYNTHESIS</b></p> <p><i>Ask questions that encourage students to create new information from existing data.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can you convince others that this topic deserves their attention?</li> <li>• What information and visuals would be most compelling for your final product?</li> <li>• What social issues do you think will gain attention in the future?</li> </ul>
<p><b>METACOGNITION</b></p> <p><i>Ask questions that prompt students to think about their own thinking process.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was the hardest part of this task for you?</li> <li>• How were your views changed by what you learned?</li> <li>• How do you determine the credibility of a source when you're doing research?</li> <li>• If you could start at the beginning of this project again, what would you do differently, knowing what you know now?</li> </ul>



**Teen Activists: Making a Difference** *Transfer Task*

You are now well-versed in what it takes to become an activist. You have explored how young people are making a difference today, examined the role that technology and AI play in modern movements, and developed your own plan for change. Now it is time to put your thinking to work independently.

You will select one article from the Newsela text set "Inspiring People" and use it as the basis for a written argument. Your argument should answer this question: Why is the person in your article a model for what effective activism looks like today, and what can young people your age learn from them?

In your response, be sure to go beyond simply describing who the person is. Make a case. Use evidence from your article to support your argument, connect their story to at least one idea you explored during this unit, and explain what their approach to creating change reveals about what it actually takes to make a difference in the world.

Be sure your writing includes the following:

- An introduction to the person and what he/she has done to inspire others
- Your reasons as to why this person is a good role model for someone your age (remember those persuasive techniques you learned about!)
- Textual evidence
- A conclusion
- Correct use of grammar and conventions

## Teen Activists: Making a Difference *Teacher Notes Guide*

<b>Unit Overview</b>	
Students will learn about the role of teen activists in history and today and have the opportunity to take a stand on a current issue. In doing so, they will develop and strengthen skills in research, argument writing, and creating an authentic platform to share their passion.	
<b>Common Core State Standards Addressed</b>	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.6.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1.A; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1.B; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1.C; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1.D; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.1.E; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.4; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.6; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.7; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.8; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.5; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.1; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.1.A; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.1.B; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.2; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.2.A; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.2.B; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.3.A; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.6.3.B	
<b>Enduring Understandings</b>	<b>Essential Questions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● People can make their voices heard through well thought out plans with supporting claims.</li> <li>● It is the responsibility of global citizens to stand up for what they believe in.</li> <li>● The way that you present information determines how it is received by others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How can we use what we know about teen activists to make a difference in the world around us?</li> <li>● How can the average citizen begin to make an impact and effect change in today’s society?</li> <li>● How can a developed skillset of argument writing techniques help me in the future?</li> </ul>
<b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Addressed</b>	
<p><i>Core Content and Interdisciplinary Themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Subject-Area Mastery</li> <li>● Global Awareness</li> </ul> <p><i>Learning and Innovation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Critical Thinking and Problem Solving</li> <li>● Creativity and Innovation</li> <li>● Communication and Collaboration</li> </ul>	<p><i>Information and Media Literacy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information Literacy</li> <li>● Media Literacy</li> <li>● Information and Communication Technology</li> </ul> <p><i>Life and Career</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiative and Self-Direction</li> <li>● Social and Cross-Cultural Skills</li> <li>● Productivity and Accountability</li> <li>● Leadership and Responsibility</li> </ul>