

Lesson Plan: Standing Rock

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Featured resources

[KQED's The Lowdown: Standing Rock](#)

[Vox: The Fight Over the Dakota Access Pipeline Explained](#)

(video: 2:56)



Standingrock.org

Opening quick write prompt:

Would you ever join a protest camp like the one currently happening on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation? Why or why not? If so, describe the issue or event that would motivate you to protest around the clock, outside, regardless of the weather?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Objective

- Students will analyze the historical factors and current issues surrounding the protests of the Dakota Access Pipeline project on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation.
- Students will reflect on the motivation and potential impact of long-term protests.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

Why are people protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline?

On Dec. 5, the Army Corps of Engineers put on hold the Dakota Access Pipeline, a controversial project that spurred protests nationwide, including a protest camp adjacent to the pipeline construction site on disputed land at the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in North Dakota. The Standing Rock Sioux led this protest, claiming the pipeline's route threatened their only water source, provided no economic benefit to the tribe, and was planned without going through the proper channels. While pipeline construction has stopped, the fate of the project is still uncertain. President-elect Trump, a former shareholder in the company building the pipeline, has indicated his support. However, overriding the Army Corps of Engineers' decision would involve the courts and could not be decided by executive order.

Key vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the activity, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Cite (v.)	To quote a passage or book as evidence for an argument or statement
Desecrate (v.)	To treat a sacred place or thing with extreme disrespect, to violate
Fraught (adj.)	Filled with anxiety or stress
Implacable (adj.)	Unable to be stopped or pleased, opposed to someone or something in an angry way that cannot be changed
Slated (v.)	Planned or scheduled for a particular time

Lesson procedure/activity

- Discuss the quick write prompt: What, if anything, would cause students to protest as the Standing Rock protesters have done? What would motivate them to physically block a project, or to camp out in protest (as previous groups like Occupy Wall Street)?
- **Before watching.** Depending on your students' prior knowledge, provide a brief overview of the issue (see Lesson Context above). Ask students: What do you think has motivated the people who oppose the Dakota Access Pipeline to protest in the way they have? Students may know the reason or can speculate. Or, ask students to hold off their answer until after the video.
- Watch the [Vox video: The Fight Over the Dakota Access Pipeline Explained](#). (Note: Use a platform like [EdPuzzle](#) or [PlayPost](#) to insert questions directly into the video. Find strategies for how to make classroom videos interactive [HERE](#).)
- **While watching**
 - Pause at 0:47: Why are Standing Rock Sioux and others protesting the pipeline?
 - Pause at 1:20: Do you think protesters are right to be concerned about the pipeline contaminating the water? What do the builders of the pipeline say?
 - Pause at 1:50: What other problems has the pipeline project caused for the Standing Rock Sioux?
 - Pause at the end: Pipeline construction has stopped, but what is still unknown about the future of the pipeline?
- **After watching:** Individually or in small groups, student read [The Lowdown post: Standing Rock](#) in preparation for the following discussion.

Discussion questions

- Why are the Standing Rock Sioux and others protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline? List all of the reasons behind the protests.
- Do you think the Dakota Access Pipeline would have been delayed if the Standing Rock Sioux and others hadn't protested by occupying nearby land for weeks at a time? Why or why not?
- Do you think the protesters are justified in fearing that the pipeline may threaten their water supply? Why or why not? Cite evidence to support your answer.
- What are two examples of how the United States government has failed to honor treaties with American Indian tribes in the past? How you think this history influences the action of the Standing Rock protesters today?
- If the Dakota Access Pipeline or a similar pipeline was planned to go through your community, would you join a protest? Why or why not?

Circle chats, small-group discussions and think-pair-share provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.

Extension activities

Exploring primary sources: [The National Archives' Record of Rights](#) has a wide selection of treaties between the U.S. government and American Indian tribes. Students research a particular treaty and share their findings with the class using online presentation tools like using a poster-making or presentation tool such as [Prezi](#), [Easel.ly](#), [Piktochart](#), [Infogr.am](#).

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.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.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.