

## Lesson Plan: The Youth of Standing Rock

By Rachel Roberson

### Featured resources

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

[Reveal: One Year at Standing Rock](#) (5:21)



Joe Catron/Flickr

### Opening quick write prompt:

In your own life, what inspires you to continue or persist after experiencing setbacks and not fully achieving your goals?

*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 how the experience of protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline affected the youth at the forefront of those protests.
- Students will evaluate and reflect on the experience of the Standing Rock youth.

### Essential Question and Lesson Context

**How are the youth who were involved in the Standing Rock protests reflecting on and learning from their experience? What can you learn from their experience?**

Indigenous youth were at the forefront of the protests against the Dakota Access Pipeline near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota. Their decision to run thousands of miles to speak with officials in Washington, D.C. helped inspire thousands of other people to join the protest and bring widespread attention to issues related to environmental justice and American Indian land rights. A year later, Standing Rock youth reflect on the life-changing experience and transformative nature of standing up for what you believe, even in light of the Trump administration's order to ultimately resume construction of the pipeline they fought so hard against.

### 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
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Appropriate (v.)	To take or use something, especially in an unfair way
Dismantle (v.)	To take apart
Sovereign (adj.)	Having independent authority and the right to govern
Steamroll (v.)	To overwhelm by using great force or pressure
Transformation (n.)	A complete or major change in something or someone

### Direct instruction and guided practice

- Discuss the quick-write prompt to gauge how students respond to setback or failure.
- Explain that it's been a year since the protests began at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. Ask students if they know what's happening now with the pipeline. (Construction has resumed and the protest camp was dismantled earlier this year.)
  - **Note:** *If students need a reminder or more background on both sides of the DAPL/Standing Rock issue, [this Lowdown post with Vox video](#) provides a good overview, but was written before the Trump Administration resumed construction of DAPL.)*
- Explain that one important aspect of the Standing Rock protest that gets frequently overshadowed is the initial actions taken by young people on the reservation to establish the first protest camps and then draw wider attention to the movement by running to Washington, D.C. to raise greater awareness of their cause.
- Watch [Oceti Sakowin Youth & Allies/Relay Run to Washington, D.C.](#) (1:33), a youth-created video to raise awareness of the run. After watching the video, ask students to explain in their own words why the youth decided to run the relay.
- **Transition to independent practice:** Given that the pipeline is being constructed and the protest has disbanded, how do you think the young people who did the run feel now? Have students do a think-pair-share or discuss the question in groups, then call on a few pairs to share their response.

### Independent practice

- As a class or in small groups, students watch [the Reveal video](#) and read [The Lowdown post](#).
- After reading and watching, students should prepare answers to the following questions in writing or on an online document in preparation for a class discussion:
  - Why were Standing Rock youth and other people protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline? List as many reasons as you can.

- What struggles, other than an oil pipeline adjacent to their land, do young people on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation face?
- How do youth involved in the Standing Rock protest feel about the experience of protesting, even though pipeline construction has resumed? Explain using evidence from the text or video.
- How would you feel if you were one of the youth who had participated in the run to Washington, D.C. and other aspects of the Standing Rock protest? Would you feel determined or discouraged? Explain.

### Assessment/Reflection

- As a class or in small groups, students share and discuss their responses, especially to the final two questions.
- After the discussion, students reflect individually, in writing, to the following questions:
  - What have you learned from the actions and/or mindset of the Standing Rock youth?
  - Is there an issue you're particularly passionate about? How could you raise more awareness of that issue?

*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/Homework

**Write/speak locally:** Students turn the issue they feel strongly about into a letter, short speech or presentation, then research ways to make their voice heard in their community. (Example: Speaking during the public comment section of a city council meeting, posting on an online forum, etc.) For a list of how to contact local officials in your area, check out [KQED Learning's Local Election Toolkit](#).

### Common Core standards

<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1</a>	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.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7</a>	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
<a href="#">CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W1</a>	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.