

## **Lesson I - The Role Images Play: Otpor's Use of Humor and Four Other Socio-Political Protest Movements**

### **Learning objectives:**

Students will have the opportunity to understand:

- The form a successful protest might take will vary due to both the societal climate (*Zeitgeist*) and prevailing cultural worldview (*Weltanschauung*) at that moment in time.
- Humor was an effective means by which young people helped to bring about social and political change with the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic.
- Effective, nonviolent civil disobedience involves making unique choices regarding content and process that can be personally liberating and empowering.
- The medium can be the message; that is, a medium can determine the successful communication of a message.

### **Relevant NCSS Strands and Standards:**

The following themes and criteria are each applicable to the lesson plan, but may or may not be emphasized in individual implementation;

- I. "Culture" a,b,c,d,f,g
- II. "Time, Continuity & Change" c,e
- III. "People, Places & Environments" a,h,i
- IV. "Individual Development & Identity" a,b,c,e,f,g,ik
- V. "Individuals, Groups & Institutions" a,b,c,d,e,g,h
- VI. "Power, Authority & Governance" a,c,d,e,f,g,h
- VII. "Science, Technology & Society" a,b
- VIII. "Global Connections" a,b,c,e,f,g,h
- IX. "Civic Ideals & Practices" a,c,e,f,g,h

Regarding definitions of Standards, reference *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, National Council for the Social Studies, Washington, D.C., 1994; or see [Ten Thematic Strands in Social Studies](#).

### **Essential Skills:**

- Students will improve their abilities to listen and discuss in an open-minded, constructive and respectful manner.
- Students will improve their abilities to read and analyze, using excerpts from attached resources to characterize nonviolent movements.
- Students will be able to present their findings to the class in both a visual and oral format.
- Students will be able to research and discuss the concept of effective images in the four case studies contained herein.

- Students will be expected to take both narrative and analytical film notes and to maintain a record of class activities and discussions.
- Students will be able to research and report on the time period of each case study from their text and online resources.

### **Essential Content:**

- Students should identify, define, compare and contrast the four distinct methods of protest presented in the accompanying case studies.
- For each case study, students should gain an understanding of the relationship between the particular socio-political environment with the unique forms of protest adopted.
- Students should develop an understanding of Otpor's humorous approach in comparison with the other resistance movements.
- Students should recognize that the particular content and methods of protest in each of the case studies were chosen for their persuasive effect.
- In particular, students should consider why humor was so effective in Serbia in 2000 and why it was or was not the medium of choice in other protest movements.
- Students should develop an awareness of and sensitivity to the choices each protest movement made in communicating and marketing its message and image.
- Students should begin to recognize how a person's attitude and image effects what they are able to accomplish.

### **Essential Strategies/Methodologies:**

- Two 90-minute periods, or four 45-minute periods, are required.
- Students will work individually and in small groups.
- Students will identify and share their analyses of the methodology of the four protest movements.
- In their small groups and as a class, students will then discuss the provided questions and Addenda.

### **Resources/Materials:**

- Film: "Bringing Down A Dictator"
- Addenda:

[A] Historical Context for Gandhi's Thoughts and Actions,

[B] Excerpts from Gandhi's Writings

[C] Historical Context for King's Thoughts and Actions

[D] Excerpts from King's Letter from the Birmingham Jail

[E] The American Experience in the Vietnam Struggle for Independence

[F] The Anti-Vietnam War Movement in Popular Music

[G] Excerpts from *Bringing Down a Dictator*

[H] Evaluation Sheet

- Classroom Materials: Newsprint/paper and markers/pens/pencils.
- Internet access for further, individualized research

### **Preparation/Introduction:**

Before the first in-class activity, students should read for homework addenda **B, D, F,** and **G.** They should return to class prepared to discuss and ask questions about the four examples or case studies and to share their own preliminary, positive and negative reactions in class the next day.

### **First 45-Minute Block or First 90-minute period:**

- Ask the students to submit a preference list of the four case studies according to their interest level in each one.
- Divide the class into small groups (3-4 students) that reflect the students' first or second choices to the extent possible.
- The groups should then organize themselves to discuss the historical significance and success of their chosen/assigned case study's content and forms of protest. On newsprint posted around the room students should write any slogans, expressions and symbols associated with their case study, along with the goal of the protest movement and its methods of protest.
- While viewing and taking notes on the first half (approx. 30 minutes) of **Bringing Down A Dictator**, the students should pay particular attention to the reasons humor proved successful in effectively communicating Otpor's message.

### **Second 45-minute Block:**

- Students should continue viewing and taking notes on the second half of the film--again, about 30 minutes.
- As time permits, have the students share their notes and their reactions to the film for the remainder of the period.
- For homework, students should further research their small group's chosen case study for its *Zeitgeist* ("spirit of the times") and its *Weltanschauung* ("worldview"), looking at how those two factors influenced the content and the means of expression manifested in that particular protest movement. Groups should also decide on the manner and the means by which they will present their viewpoint(s) before returning to the next class.

### **Third 45-minute Block or Second 90-minute Block:**

- With the entire class, briefly review the film and discussions from the initial one or two class periods, making certain to reiterate the idea that the approaches of Gandhi, King, the Vietnam anti-war movement, and Otpor each reflected specific demographic, cultural and political times and places.
- Ask for and clarify any points of information.
- Remind the students of their content topics for the unit.
- For the next 25 minutes, working in their small groups, students should focus on the following questions as a guide: Based on the reading, discussions and outside research, list the contents and forms of protest that each of the case studies presented. Why did they choose these particular ideas and means of expression? Did public opinion mirror these images? Considering all four historical conflicts, would a single approach have worked in all of these circumstances? Why or why not?

### **Fourth 45-minute Block:**

- For the next 25 minutes, conclude small group discussions and activities. Groups are to present their case study and their answers to the questions above. The form of the presentation should be determined by the group, based on what they feel would be most effective for the class's learning. The groups will be evaluated by their peers and teacher based upon the worthiness of content and the effectiveness of presentation.
- Allow each group approximately five minutes for its presentation. All members of each group must participate in the presentations. The peer evaluations can be performed at the start of the next class period.
- If time remains in class, conclude by discussing how Otpor's carefully chosen attitude, methodology, and image empowered them. How do the attitudes the students have each day and the image they daily present of themselves (the clothes that they wear, the care they take with appearance) further their goals in life? If there is no time left, assign this material for homework.

### **Suggested Assessments:**

- The newsprint visual for the initial presentation can be graded co-equally on individual and group organizational practicality and responsibility, as well as the creativity of thought and expression regarding appropriateness and effectiveness of the name of the group, their symbol and slogan.
- The second presentation should be evaluated equally on the validity and thoroughness of the content and on the persuasiveness of presentation.
- Participation in discussions in both the small groups and entire class settings can be assessed by either the teacher or by peer/teacher evaluations as a co-equal grade. The rubric might focus on thoughtfulness and appropriateness of comments. See Addendum H.
- Class and Film notes can be collected for a co-equal, written grade.

- One or two homework grades.

### **Suggested Enrichment and Extensions in Reading and Film:**

#### **Regarding Technology:**

Students interested in technology can explore the role that IT played in Otpor's success. A comparison of the role information technology played in the other three case studies might reveal some surprises.

#### **Regarding Creating One's Own Self Image:**

Students enrolled in or interested in the fields of Sociology, Anthropology or Psychology might pursue an analysis of how and why individuals and groups create images/faces of themselves whether or not they are involved in protest movements.

#### **Regarding Humor:**

In 1923, Jaroslav Hašek, a Czech author, died after completing only the first four books of his classic, anti-war novel, *The Good Soldier Švejk (and His Fortunes in the World War)*. Covering army life in the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the First World War, this *comédie noire* not only exposed the Eastern Front to comedic interpretation but also set a standard for nonviolent resistance in the face of an authoritarian regime. Throughout the twentieth century, Hašek's novel, with illustrations by Josef Lada, provided inspiration for underground resistance to the Nazis in the Soviet Union.

Although not as widely read in Western Europe and the Americas as works such as *All Quiet on the Western Front*, such humor became the standard in Eastern Europe during the Cold War. For example, during the 1968 Czech uprising against the Soviets, banners and posters containing both quotes and cartoons from *The Good Soldier Švejk* were put up throughout Prague.

Students can investigate the historical and cultural roots of Otpor's use of humor against Slobodan Milosevic through a comparison of the two World War I-era novels mentioned above. Students can also compare Josef Lada's cartoons with the work of today's political cartoonists.

**Regarding Music:** Music was clearly a powerful medium in the Otpor message. During the protests of the 1960s in general, and in the Vietnam anti-war movement in particular, "counter-culture" music often led the way.

Students interested in studying the medium of such "protest" and/or "counter-culture" music and in the culture(s) fostering that music, might view the film *Woodstock*. Although "R" rated, the film provides a clear connection between the anti-war/protest mentality, its musical expression and youth culture. Additionally, students might consider a more contemporary American protest movement and culture in the genre of rap music during the 1980s and 1990s.