VIVIAN BEAUMONT THEATER

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MARK PIGOTT KBE & FRANKLIN THEATRICAL GROUP
TED SNOWDON & DEROY-SCHMOOKLER PRODUCTIONS

SHADOWCATCHER ENTERTAINMENT & JACOB SOROKEN PORTER
and LINCOLN CENTER THEATER

present

BRIAN COX

in

THE GREAT SOCIETY

by

ROBERT SCHENKkan

by

MARC KUDISCH BRYCE PINKHAM FRANK WOOD GORDON CLAPP MARCHANT DAVIS BRIAN DYKSTRA
BARBARA GARRICK DAVID GARRISON TY JONES CHRISTOPHER LIVINGSTON
ANGELA PIERCE MATTHEW RAUCH NIKKOLE SALTER TRAMELL TILLMAN
TED DEASY ROBYN KERR JABEN EARLY CHRISTOPHER McHALE NANCY RODRIGUEZ

with

GRANTHAM COLEMAN as MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

and

RICHARD THOMAS as HUBERT HUMPHREY

Directed by

BILL RAUCH

Commissioned by Seattle Repertory Theatre and developed by Oregon Shakespeare Festival’s American Revolutions: The United States History Cycle

World Premiere co-produced by

Oregon Shakespeare Festival Seattle Repertory Theater
Bill Rauch, Artistic Director Jerry Manning, Artistic Director
Cynthia Rider, Executive Director Benjamin Moore, Managing Director

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The Orchard Project, a program of The Exchange (exchangeny.org)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 1

THE PLAYWRIGHT: Robert Schenkkan ................................. 1

WHO WAS LYNDON JOHNSON? ........................................ 2

GREAT SOCIETY, GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS .................... 5

THE VIETNAM WAR AND THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT .......... 7

LBJ AND CIVIL RIGHTS .................................................. 11

    Classroom Activity: The Voting Rights Act of 1965 .... 13

THE FBI UNDER J. EDGAR HOOVER AND LBJ ..................... 14

PRESENT DAY CONNECTIONS TO THE GREAT SOCIETY .... 15

    The Health Care Legacy of The Great Society .......... 15

    Youth-Led Protest Movements in the U.S. Today ........ 15

    Climate Change ......................................................... 16

    March For Our Lives ................................................. 17

    Classroom Activity: Political Songs in LBJ’s Era and Today. 18

    Classroom Activity: The Role of Television in The LBJ Era 20

RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................... 22
Welcome to the teacher resource guide for the 2019 production of *The Great Society*. We are excited for students to experience this play written by Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winning writer Robert Schenkkan, directed by Bill Rauch and starring Emmy and Olivier Award winning actor Brian Cox as Lyndon B. Johnson.

**How to use this guide**

Arts experiences resonate most strongly for students when themes and ideas from the play can be aligned to your curriculum. This resource guide has been created to help prepare your students to see *The Great Society* at the Vivian Beaumont Theater. We also hope to direct you to resources that can further your classroom exploration of the play. We encourage you to print and share pages of this guide with your students. Each section also includes links to additional materials, as well as activities you can do with your students before and after seeing the play.

**Learning Opportunities**

- Lyndon B. Johnson
- The role of protest in American history
- The Great Society and its legacy
- Voting rights
- The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s
- Health care in the Great Society and today
- The Vietnam War and the anti-war movement

**THE PLAYWRIGHT: Robert Schenkkan**


Robert is a New Dramatists alum, a member of the National Theatre Conference, Ensemble Studio Theatre and the Dramatists Guild council, and a board member of The Lilly Awards and The Orchard Project. He is currently working with John Doyle on a new musical *The 12*, and a feature film, *The Last Airman*, for Jake Gyllenhaal at Amazon.
WHO WAS LYNDON JOHNSON?

“An assassin’s bullet has thrust upon me the awesome burden of the presidency.”  
–Lyndon B. Johnson

Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) was born in rural central Texas on August 27, 1908. His father worked variously as a farmer, teacher, land dealer, and Texas legislator. His mother worked in the home and loved to write poetry and prose. LBJ graduated from high school at fifteen and then hitchhiked to California, where he spent several years doing farm, road, and restaurant work. From 1927 to 1930, he put himself through Southwest Texas State Teachers College by working as a janitor. After college, he taught high school near the Texas-Mexico border in Cotulla for a year in 1930, an experience he drew upon throughout his life.

LBJ was a politically ambitious young man. In 1931, his father helped him secure a job in Washington, D.C. as a legislative secretary to a Texas Democratic Congressman. When LBJ arrived in Washington, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was in the process of launching the New Deal, an ambitious series of economic stimulus programs intended to lift the United States out of the Great Depression. LBJ was a staunch supporter of the New Deal and a lifelong admirer of FDR.

Brian Cox is Lyndon Baines Johnson in The Great Society on Broadway. Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.
In 1934, LBJ fell in love with and married Claudia “Lady Bird” Taylor. They had two daughters, Lynda Bird and Luci Baines.

LBJ, a Democrat, was elected to the House of Representatives in 1937 on a New Deal platform. In 1948, he won a close and contested election to the U.S. Senate. Only five years later, in 1953, he became the youngest Minority Senate leader ever. After the Democrats took control of the Senate in 1954, he was named Majority Leader.

LBJ was considered a powerful Senate Majority Leader. Arkansas Senator William J. Fulbright acknowledged that “he made the Senate function better than anyone” through his expertise in political negotiation. As Washington Senator Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson recalled, “He would threaten you, would cajole you, bribe you or charm you, he would do whatever he had to. But he would get the vote.”

LBJ’s next goal was to run for president, but he lost the Democratic nomination in 1960 to the young Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy (JFK). JFK selected LBJ as his Vice President largely for tactical reasons; he needed the backing of the Southern Democrats who were allied with LBJ.

In November 1963, JFK was assassinated as the President and LBJ travelled just two cars apart in a motorcade through Dallas. A few hours later, LBJ was sworn in as the 36th president of the United States on board the presidential plane Air Force One.

In the 1964 presidential election, LBJ and his running mate, Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey, won with 61% of the popular vote, the largest margin of victory in U.S. election history. Once in office, LBJ used his political capital to quickly begin sending laws to Congress to address such social issues as poverty, racial inequality, education, environmental conservation, and health. “Great Society” legislation was the most ambitious series of domestic programs to be enacted since FDR’s New Deal.
LBJ’s domestic policy successes at home were tempered by the conflict in Vietnam. The U.S.’s military involvement in Vietnam dated back to the Truman administration. However, U.S. involvement began to escalate during LBJ’s administration, siphoning money and political will away from his domestic agenda. In 1968, under pressure from the media and the burgeoning anti-war movement, and with a splintering political base among the Democratic Party, LBJ took the rare step of deciding not to seek re-election for a second term.

LBJ returned to Texas where he died of a sudden heart attack on January 23, 1973. Soon afterwards, his birthday was declared a Texas state holiday.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas:  
www.lbjlibrary.org

The American Presidency Project – President Lyndon B. Johnson  
www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php

The very first Great Society speech, with speechwriter Richard Goodwin and Johnson’s edits:  
GREAT SOCIETY,
GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

JOHNSON’S DREAM

LBJ’s vision for the U.S. was rooted in equality. He wanted to create a nation with the highest standard of living in the world and equal access to safe housing, education and health care. His Great Society programs represented the largest expansion of social services since Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal program of the 1930s.

Johnson fought hard for his War on Poverty, over 40 bills to improve living and working conditions for America’s poorest citizens.

“We have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society.”
–Lyndon B. Johnson

> Accomplishments

Over the course of his time in office, LBJ passed thousands of bills. Some notable ones are listed below:

Education

> Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
Funded primary and secondary schools, enforced equal opportunity, established high standards but forbade a uniform national curriculum.

> Higher Education Act of 1965
Increased federal money given to universities, created scholarships, gave low-interest loans for students, and established a National Teachers Corps.

> National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965
Established the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts to promote artistic progress and scholarship.

Environment

> Clean Air Act of 1964
Designed to control air pollution on a national level, the act put regulations in place to protect the public from hazardous airborne contaminants.

> Fish and Wildlife Conservation Protection Act (1966)
Protected some 35 species of mammals and 30-40 species of birds which conservationists believed would otherwise become extinct.
Civil Rights

> Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968
LBJ’s first civil rights legislation outlawed most forms of racial segregation. Four years later he passed another bill that provided equal housing opportunities.

> Voting Rights Act of 1965
Regulated the administration of elections so voters would not be discriminated against based on race. One of the key pieces of this legislation ensured that voting laws could not be changed at the state level. (In 2013 the Supreme Court struck down this part of the act, allowing nine Southern states to change election laws without advanced federal approval.)

Public Broadcasting

> Public Broadcasting Act of 1967
Created public broadcasting by providing funds for educational radio and TV programs. This act eventually led to the creation of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR).

Poverty and Healthcare

> Head Start Program (1965)
Provided early childhood education, nutrition, and parent services to low-income children.

> Medicare (1965)
Guaranteed health insurance for Americans age 65 and over who have worked and paid into the system, as well as younger people with disabilities.

> Medicaid (1965)
Provided health care for low income families and individuals of all ages.

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THE VIETNAM WAR AND
THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Between 1955 and 1975, 58,000 young Americans were killed and 288,000 were seriously wounded in Vietnam. The time period covered in *The Great Society*, from 1965 to 1968, coincides with an escalation of the conflict, as well as of the anti-war protest movement at home. However, U.S. involvement in Vietnam began much earlier and it extended through six American presidencies.

The post-World War II era was marked by a tense geo-political standoff between Western democracies allied with the U.S. and communist nations allied with the Soviet Union. This “Cold War” of ideals – communism versus democracy and capitalism – erupted around the world in proxy wars. The conflict in Vietnam was a prime example of a proxy war.

1945-1954:
Vietnam had been a French colony since 1887. In 1945, the Vietnamese declare independence from the French. France refuses to relinquish control of the area, resulting in the First Indochina War from 1946-1954. In 1950, U.S. President Harry Truman sends soldiers and money to support the French in Vietnam, as a bulwark against communist encroachment.

1954-1960:
Ho Chi Minh’s forces defeat the French and the country is split into North and South Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh and the communist Viet Minh government lead the North; Ngo Dinh Diem, an anti-communist, leads the South. Diem refuses to participate in elections to unify the country in 1956. North Vietnam, with the backing of communist China and the Soviet Union, uses force to make South Vietnam unify. The U.S., now under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, supports South Vietnam.

“I won’t be the architect of surrender.”
– Lyndon B. Johnson

Wounded U.S. paratroopers are helped by fellow soldiers to a medical evacuation helicopter on Oct. 5, 1965 during the Vietnam War. (AP Photo)
1960:
JFK is elected U.S. president. He continues U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

1963:
South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem is assassinated on November 1, 1963. JFK is assassinated three weeks later. LBJ becomes the fourth American president involved in Vietnam.

1964:
JFK’s Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara stays on as LBJ’s chief adviser on Vietnam throughout most of his presidency. Privately, LBJ reveals to his aides that he thinks the war is a disastrous quagmire. Nevertheless, when North Vietnamese boats in the Gulf of Tonkin torpedo two U.S. ships, LBJ orders retaliatory bombing.

1965:
LBJ orders North Vietnam to be bombed more frequently and intensely. The U.S. proposes economic aid to North Vietnam in exchange for peace but is rebuffed.

While pro-war supporters staunchly support the President, military leaders, and troops, criticism begins to mount from the media and is galvanized by student-led anti-war protests.

1966:
The news broadcasts daily war footage to the 93% of Americans who own a T.V., bolstering the anti-war movement. 385,000 American troops are now on the ground in Vietnam; 60,000 are offshore.

1967:
LBJ continues to increase the U.S. military presence in Vietnam, particularly in airplane and helicopter strikes.

Almost 100,000 people gather to protest the war at the Lincoln Memorial, followed by 28,000 protesters at the Pentagon. Norman Morrison, a Quaker, protests the war by setting himself on fire in front of the Pentagon.
Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara resigns.

At the urging of fellow civil rights leader Stokely Carmichael, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) announces his opposition to the war in Vietnam. He points out that $25 billion in military spending could be better directed to LBJ’s domestic programs.

**1968:**

The U.S. has over 500,000 troops in Vietnam. The Tet Offensive takes place in 100 cities and towns across South Vietnam and is considered a failure by the U.S. LBJ announces on T.V. the cessation of bombing of North Vietnam, peace talks in Paris, and that he isn’t running for re-election.

In April, MLK is assassinated. Two months later, anti-war Senator Robert Kennedy is assassinated moments after winning the California Democratic presidential primary.

At the Democratic Convention in Chicago, massive anti-war demonstrations receive extensive television news coverage. Hubert Humphrey, running a pro-war campaign, begins campaigning against the Republican candidate Richard Nixon, who served as Vice President under Eisenhower from 1952 to 1960.

**1969-1974:**

A mandatory draft is announced under the new Republican president Richard Nixon. Twenty-seven million men are declared eligible, and over two million are sent draft notices.

In 1973, the U.S. and its allies are pushed out of South Vietnam, which is quickly overtaken by North Vietnam.

Nixon is impeached and leaves office in 1974. His Vice President Gerald Ford becomes the 38th U.S. President.

**1975-1976:**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE VIETNAM WAR

Lesson plans on the Vietnam War and its legacy:
https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/regret-inform-legacies-memories-vietnam-war

Podcast of recordings LBJ made from the White House about Vietnam:
https://www.pri.org/programs/lbjs-war

Information and programs at the Vietnam War memorial in Washington D.C.:
https://www.vvmf.org/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIwo3TlzS45AIVBOiGCh06JQsBEAAYASAAE-gL55fD_BwE

Video describing the effect of the escalating Vietnam War on anti-poverty programs:

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT

Coverage of poet Robert Lowell's decision to decline his invitation to the White House in 1965:
https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1965/06/03/97204703.pdf

First Amendment Center sponsored by the Freedom Forum, with resources, lesson plans, videos, podcasts and current news:
www.firstamendmentcenter.org

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley appears as a character in The Great Society. This video shows footage of protests during the 1968 Chicago Democratic National Convention, when Daley was still the mayor of Chicago:

Vietnam War protestors outside the White House gates, including Coretta Scott King and Dr. Benjamin Spock. LBJ Library photo by Robert Knudsen.
The Civil Rights Movement helped to shape the political landscape during LBJ’s presidency and is a big part of Schenkkan’s play, The Great Society. Characters in the play include civil rights activists Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK), Coretta Scott King, Ralph Abernathy, Stokely Carmichael (who was later known as Kwame Ture), Bob Moses, James Bevel, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Hosea Williams and John Lewis. Key events in the play include the marches from Selma to Montgomery, the Chicago Freedom Movement, and the violent protests that erupted in Los Angeles in 1965.

From 1937 to 1957, LBJ consistently voted with other southern Democrats against civil rights legislation in the House and the Senate. However, as Vice President and President, LBJ’s views on civil rights evolved. His biographer Robert Caro said: “In 1957, he changes and pushes through the first civil rights bill since Reconstruction. He always had this true, deep compassion to help poor people and particularly poor people of color, but even stronger than the compassion was his ambition. But when the two aligned, when compassion and ambition finally are pointing in the same direction, then Lyndon Johnson becomes a force for racial justice, unequaled certainly since Lincoln.”

Grantham Coleman is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in The Great Society on Broadway. Photo by Evan Zimmerman for MurphyMade.
The famous March on Washington, where MLK shared his “I Have a Dream” speech with around 250,000 protesters, occurred in August 1963 and helped pressure JFK into drafting a Civil Rights Act. Five days after JFK’s assassination in November 1963, LBJ called for “national unity” and said “no memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy’s memory than the earliest possible passage of the civil rights bill for which he fought.” LBJ signed the Civil Rights Act into law in 1964.

Great Society legislation made great strides towards advancing civil rights for African Americans, but it didn’t go nearly far enough. Fifty-one years after the end of LBJ’s presidency and the assassination of MLK, many Americans are still fighting for their civil rights, whether by protesting voter suppression, police brutality, mass incarceration, or other issues.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

Representative John Lewis’ recollection of his day at Selma from the OWN Network:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XST4IV7HnO8

Photos of the Selma, Alabama march:
https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/rare-photos-selma-march-thick-history-180953874/

Teaching Tolerance lesson plans on examining civil rights legislation and the Constitution today:
https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/tolerance-lessons/the-civil-rights-act-and-the-ada

For documentary footage of the entire Civil Rights movement: *Eyes on the Prize: America’s Civil Rights Movement*

Video on Dr. King, Vietnam, LBJ’s anti-poverty programs and his assassination:
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:
The Voting Rights Act of 1965

WATCH:
In a speech on March 15, 1965, LBJ asked Congress to support the Voting Rights Act. This was one of LBJ’s most famous speeches and was broadcast on television nation-wide.

On March 25, 1965, following the marches on Selma, MLK addressed 25,000 protesters in front of the state capital building in Montgomery, AL. He reassured them that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.” You can view an excerpt of the speech here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAYITODNvlM

DISCUSS:
✪ What key phrases and quotes do you identify in each of the speeches?
✪ Which 2-3 parts in each do you personally agree with? Disagree with?
✪ These speeches are 54 years old. How have circumstances changed? How have they remained the same? What resonates with you now?

RESEARCH:
“But even if we pass this bill, the battle will not be over,” LBJ says in his speech to Congress. Gerrymandering and voting restrictions have remained in the news since the passing of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. The 2013 Supreme Court ruling in Shelby County v. Holder instituted key changes to the 1965 Voting Rights Act that had a swift effect on ballot access. By 2018, approximately 1,000 polling locations had closed, voting hours had been curtailed, and stricter enforcement of ID laws increased in some parts of the United States. Read the decision here:
https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/12pdf/12-96_6k47.pdf

DISCUSS:
✪ Gerrymandering has been in the news frequently. What is gerrymandering? How does it affect the right to vote?
✪ How and where are voting rights still being suppressed today?

RESEARCH:
✪ How would you explain the Supreme Court’s rationale for its ruling in Shelby County v. Holder? How did the four dissenting justices explain their positions?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
Teaching Tolerance lesson plans on the legacy of the Voting Rights Act:
When the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was founded in 1935, J. Edgar Hoover – who had led its predecessor organization, the Bureau of Investigation since 1924 – was appointed as its first Director. Hoover’s career as the head of American law enforcement spanned LBJ’s entire political career. While Hoover is credited with modernizing law enforcement, for instance by centralizing fingerprint databases, his tenure as director was highly controversial and marked by illegal and unconstitutional practices against what he termed “subversives.” In fact, Hoover’s practices shaped the definition of subversion in the Merriam-Webster dictionary: “In the 1950’s and 1960’s, many people worried about communist subversion of the U.S. government, though they often saw subversive activities where none existed. Non-democratic governments often claim that anyone who disagrees with them or joins a demonstration is a subversive.”

In the name of fighting communism and “subversives,” Hoover often manipulated and exaggerated evidence to obtain his goals. For instance, he directed the FBI to begin illegally spying on MLK starting in 1955, suspecting him of communist sympathies. Starting in October 1963, the FBI wiretapped MLK’s home and his office at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1964, Hoover publicly called MLK “the most notorious liar in the country.” Hoover’s actions complicated LBJ’s relationship with MLK, causing LBJ to enlist FBI Deputy Associate Director Deke DeLoach’s help in trying to make Hoover see “the bigger picture.” As the civil rights and anti-war movements continued to grow, Hoover instituted a domestic counter-intelligence program called COINTELPRO in 1967 with LBJ’s support in order to spy on, discredit, undermine, and disrupt “subversive” groups.

The FBI under Hoover initiated federal investigations of what had previously been viewed as local crimes. For example, in 1964, the Department of Justice asked the FBI to investigate the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, three activists who were killed in Mississippi while trying to register African American voters. JFK’s own assassination in Dallas in 1963 was considered a “local crime” until LBJ asked the FBI to conduct a federal investigation. In 1966, the Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling that federal law could be used to prosecute individuals, as well as state and local law enforcement officers, for civil rights violations.

J. Edgar Hoover died while in office in 1972, having served as FBI director for 37 years. In 1976, three years after LBJ’s death, the statutes were changed, limiting FBI directors to ten-year terms.
“Social and political progress is the result of the individual efforts of many ordinary people. You matter. What you do matters. Social justice will not happen by itself. It needs you.”
– The Great Society playwright Robert Schenkkan

The Great Society brings up many themes and issues of racial, political and economic justice that Americans are still grappling with today. This section provides additional background information, resources and questions for classroom discussion and activities.

THE HEALTH CARE LEGACY OF THE GREAT SOCIETY

LBJ’s hero, FDR, tried to pass national healthcare within his Social Security Act in 1934 but was unsuccessful. FDR’s successor, President Harry Truman, asked Congress for a national insurance plan but was criticized as supporting “socialized medicine.” Twenty years later, on July 30, 1965, with an elderly Truman at his side, LBJ passed amendments to the Social Security Act that created Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare provides health care coverage for senior citizens over the age of 65. Medicaid provides health care coverage for low-income people.

In the first major change and expansion to national health care since LBJ, President Barack Obama passed The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, on March 23, 2010. It expanded Medicaid and made changes to private health insurance company policies that resulted in roughly half of the previously uninsured citizens gaining at least some basic coverage by 2016. In 2017, Medicaid provided health insurance to 74 million people, 23% of all Americans. In 2018, 59.9 million people were covered by Medicare.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
Current health insurance information and coverage: https://www.hhs.gov/about/index.html

Lesson plans on teaching the Affordable Care Act from Morningside Center: https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/debate-over-obamacare

YOUTH-LED PROTEST MOVEMENTS IN THE U.S. TODAY

In the play The Great Society, LBJ tells his wife about a teenage protestor who manages to reach his car window while chanting, “Hey, Hey, LBJ, How many kids did you kill today?” The White House was more readily accessible to the public in the 1960’s than it is today. Protestors marched and chanted directly in front of the main gates and their voices were audible from most areas of the White House. LBJ’s presidency is largely remembered for the conflict in Vietnam overshadowing many of the social and political gains of the Great Society. However, it is important to note that the LBJ-era also saw the strengthening of the women’s movement, along with protest movements for LGBTQI, environmental, and Native American rights.
The recent Climate Strike in September 2019 was originated, organized, and led by young people. One leader of the climate change movement is 16-year old Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg. Like MLK, she has used strikes and speeches to effect change.

**DISCUSS:**
- What does it mean to protest something?
- The First Amendment gives people the right to assemble and protest. How are Americans protected in their right to protest, and how are they not?
- Have you ever joined a protest? What caused you to join? If not, what is an issue you would support by protesting? Why?

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

The recent Climate Strike in September 2019 was originated, organized, and led by young people. One leader of the climate change movement is 16-year old Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg. Like MLK, she has used strikes and speeches to effect change.

**DISCUSS:**
- How does climate change affect you or your community?
- Some schools have been inspired by their students to switch to metal straws instead of plastic ones, or to launch recycling initiatives. How might you or a group of young people make a change in your community related to the environment?

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**
- Greta Thunberg’s TED Talk: www.ted.com/speakers/greta_thunberg
- Information on the Sunrise Movement: www.sunrisemovement.org

Photo taken by Felton Davis at the Youth Climate March in New York City, May 24, 2019.
Since 2009, 1.2 million Americans have been victims of gun violence. After the shooting at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida in February 2018, students across the country launched the ‘March For Our Lives’ movement. Their motto: “Created by survivors, so you don’t have to be one.”

WRITE:
The Second Amendment reads: “A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.” How do you interpret this amendment as a NYC high school student in 2019? Write an essay explaining your position.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
March For Our Lives
www.marchforourlives.com

Gun Violence Statistics
www.lawcenter.giffords.org

March For Our Lives. Student led rally for gun control in the US. New York City, 2018 | wasikphoto.com
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:
Political Songs in LBJ’s Era and Today

“His were the words of a statesman and, more, they were the words of a poet. Dr. King must have agreed. He wiped away a tear at the point where Johnson said the words ‘We shall overcome.’”
— John Lewis, upon watching LBJ’s speech to Congress on March 15, 1965 with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Throughout American history, people have written and sung protest songs to support and share their messages with others. Perhaps one of the most famous American protest songs is “We Shall Overcome,” a gospel song derived from a hymn by Charles Albert Tindley that was first published in 1900. Starting in the 1940’s “We Shall Overcome” was sung on picket lines and during civil rights marches. At the 1963 March on Washington, at which MLK famously delivered his “I have a dream...”speech, folk singer Joan Baez led 250,000 protestors in singing the song. LBJ quoted the song in his famous speech before Congress on March 15, 1965 that urged passage of the Voting Rights Act: “It is all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and prejudice. And we shall overcome.”

ANALYZE
Read Pete Seeger’s version of the song “We Shall Overcome”:
https://www.songfacts.com/lyrics/pete-seeger/we-shall-overcome

LISTEN
Morehouse College choir version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aor6-DkzBJ0
Pete Seeger 1963 version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEZkZamGCMzE

COMPARE
Look at the lyrics to two other American protest songs: “Waist Deep in the Deep Muddy” and “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

Pete Seeger was a renowned American folk singer who was active in many political causes, including the civil rights movement. In 1967, he wrote “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy,” an anti-war song that was ostensibly about a World War II platoon but which was intended as a critique of the Vietnam War. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uXnJVkEX8O4

“Lift Every Voice and Sing” was originally a poem by James Weldon Johnson that was set to music by his brother in 1899. It was first performed in public by a group of 500 schoolchildren on the anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln’s birthday in 1900. In 1919, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chose it to be the ‘Black National Anthem’ and it has been sung ever since at moments of significance for African Americans. It was also sung by Beyoncé at Coachella in 2018. https://www.pbs.org/black-culture/explore/black-authors-spoken-word-poetry/lift-every-voice-and-sing/

DISCUSS:
✪ What is the tone of each of these songs?
✪ Why do you think “We Shall Overcome” become so important to and was sung by so many different groups in American history?
✪ What is the line in each song that most resonates for you?
✪ What are other protest songs from movements today and in history?
✪ What song would you choose to mobilize people to affect change on an issue that matters to you?

WRITE:
Ask your students to write a two-line protest chant or lyric, rhyming the sounds at the end of each line.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:
Recordings of songs during the march at Selma, Alabama in 1965:

More information on “We Shall Overcome”:
https://www.npr.org/2013/08/28/216482943/the-inspiring-force-of-we-shall-overcome
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:
The Role of Television in the LBJ Era

“As I sat in my office last evening, waiting to speak, I thought of the many times each week when television brings the war into the American home. No one can say exactly what effect those vivid scenes have on American opinion. Historians must only guess at the effect that television would have had during earlier conflicts on the future of this Nation: during the Korean war, for example, at that time when our forces were pushed back there to Pusan; of World War II, the Battle of the Bulge, or when our men were slugging it out in Europe or when most of our Air Force was shot down that day in June 1942 off Australia.”
— President Lyndon B. Johnson, April 1, 1968, the day after he announced he would not seek re-election

The set of The Great Society is dominated by television sets and projection screens that show images and footage from the LBJ era. By 1966, 93% of American homes had a television set. The Vietnam War has been called “the first televised war.” At the time, ABC, NBC and CBS were the only networks. News programs ran every night beginning at 6:00 PM and the networks competed for the “best” on-site coverage.
The civil rights-era marches were highly televised, and images of the violence inflicted on the marchers shaped the national consciousness about the movement. On the night of Bloody Sunday, ABC happened to be showing the popular film “Judgment at Nuremberg,” about Nazi brutality towards Jewish victims. ABC made the decision to cut from the film to news footage of the police brutally beating protestors in Alabama, broadcasting those shocking images to an audience of 48 million viewers. This brought immediate attention and empathy to the cause. Because of this, television camera crews and reporters were also occasionally attacked by white segregationists. Widespread television coverage changed the national conversation about the civil rights movement and subsequent movements, including those protesting the Vietnam War.

**MATERIALS:**
Paper for notes and dialogue
YouTube clips

**DISCUSS:**
In pairs, ask students to discuss the following:
✪ How do you get your news?
✪ What sources do you rely on? Which do you trust? Why?
✪ Have you seen a video of a current event that has shaped or changed your point of view?

**ACTIVITY:**
Social media has greatly changed the way Americans receive their news. These clips show news footage from the LBJ era:

CBS News reflects on their coverage of the Vietnam War:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5AeXZ0Zb7o

Documentary footage of the march on Selma, March 7, 1965 (Bloody Sunday):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6InULio9fo

1. Show these two clips to students and ask them to take notes on what they notice and one thing they would like to know more about. A note of caution: the first video contains graphic images from the Vietnam War and the second shows police brutality.

2. Break students into pairs. Ask them to share their notes and debrief with them. Ask students to collaborate on writing a short dialogue of 8-10 lines from the point of view two imagined characters, using the following questions as prompts:

✪ Imagine you were a person in the 1960s who had never seen footage like this before. Who might you want to talk to about this footage? What facts could you use to support your point of view? Does the other character have an opposing viewpoint? How might you articulate your reasons for disagreeing or agreeing with them?
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1960’s AND YOUTH-LED PROTESTS
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