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Student Materials

Mapping Informed Action

An Artist Takes Action (Art as Civic Action): Matika Wilbur and Project 562

Introduction

Democratic citizens often engage as civic actors—they participate in the census, pay taxes, and even volunteer for civil service. In representative government, citizens have a responsibility to stay informed and hold government accountable to the people it represents. Systems of government and societies are not perfect; it is the duty of citizens to challenge civic, political, social, and cultural institutions in order to move towards a more perfect union. One of the most famous historical examples of taking informed action is the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery. Taking informed action requires first learning about an issue, then assessing what options will best address that issue and, finally, employing strategic steps that create change. Being informed about issues in your community, region, and nation is critical to making meaningful change. Native Nations have a long history of organizing to bring about change. We can look to the stories of Native Peoples and Nations to better understand how individuals, groups, and communities organize and effect meaningful change. Explore the case study to learn about how Native Americans take informed action to mediate social and political issues and create change.

Part A—Analyzing the Issue

Directions: After analyzing the sources in the case study, describe in detail the issue that was in need of informed action. Use the example about the March on Selma provided below to get started.

Example: The March on Selma—Even though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 strengthened voting rights for African Americans, non-white voters continued to face serious difficulty exercising this most basic civil right. In Alabama many African Americans were unable to register and vote. As a result, only one percent of the state's population decided who would be elected to government positions. Segregationists used many tactics to keep African Americans from the polls. They found ways to get African Americans fired from their jobs, refused to allow African Americans to enter courthouses, unjustly arrested peaceful protestors, and killed some civil rights activists. Violence galvanized into public outcry in 1963 when the 16th Street Baptist Church was bombed, killing four young girls.

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Directions: Identify and describe the opposing perspectives that caused the issue to arise; then make inferences to determine possible points of agreement.

Perspective A:	Perspective B:
Identify points of agreement or opportunities to find common ground.	

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Part B—Analyzing Action

Directions: Describe the informed action carried out by Project 562 that directly addressed the issue in Part A.

Directions: Taking informed action usually requires a number of smaller actions as part of the planning and organizing process. In the graphic organizer below, list and categorize the actions that Matika Wilbur uses in order to educate the nation and shift the collective consciousness toward recognizing indigenous communities. Make inferences to determine possible steps needed to effect change. For example, if a group decides to gather signatures for a petition, they would have to inform their community about the issue and get individuals to join their cause. This might involve using social media or circulating flyers. Then, they would have to find a way to collect signatures. They might choose to use Change.org to do that. Use the examples below to help you determine and categorize actions.

Inform	Advocate	Serve	Give	Direct Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Tweet ✓ Have a conversation about the facts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Put a sign in your window ✓ Write to an elected official 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Join a coalition ✓ Volunteer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Start a "Go Fund Me" for charity ✓ Donate nonperishables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Organize and/or attend a march about the issue. ✓ Get signatures on a petition

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Part C—Identifying Barriers

Directions: Citizens organizing to take action often encounter barriers. Use the sources provided in the case study to make inferences about the possible barriers that Matika Wilbur might encounter while working on Project 562 and brainstorm possible solutions. An example from the 1965 March on Selma is provided in the graphic organizer below.

Barriers	Solutions
Example: Governor Wallace refused to protect the marchers and Judge Frank Minis Johnson issued a restraining order prohibiting the march.	Example: Voting rights coalitions attempted to get a court order to allow a peaceful protest march. The order was delayed. As an expression of resolve to conduct the march, Dr. King led a group of marchers to the Edmund Pettus Bridge, knelt in prayer, and then turned around. After pressure from the public, President Johnson had no choice but to permit the march. Judge Johnson then passed an order to allow the march to proceed with protection.

Part D—Extension

Directions: In an expository writing sample, use the information above along with the case study to explain the causality for the informed action. Analyze its effectiveness in creating change, describe points of conflict, and draw parallels to other situations where this type of action might be applicable.

