

I AM FOR: RELATING MAY 4 PROTESTS TO NOW

CRAFTED BY CHARLIE MALONE



**ARMED
WITH
OUR
VOICES**

LESSON PLANS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: CONTEXTUALIZING THE DRAFT

5 minutes

- Throughout the 1960s, Americans were faced with questions about what they believed in.
- The recent assassinations of Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. shook the country. President Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War turned public opinion against the war.
- The draft began on December 1, 1969. By the end of 1969, 36,956 American soldiers had died in Vietnam. North and South Vietnam were on their way to seeing 2 million civilians and an estimated 1.35 million Vietnamese soldiers killed on both sides. Against this turbulent backdrop, many Americans asked themselves what they stood for and against.

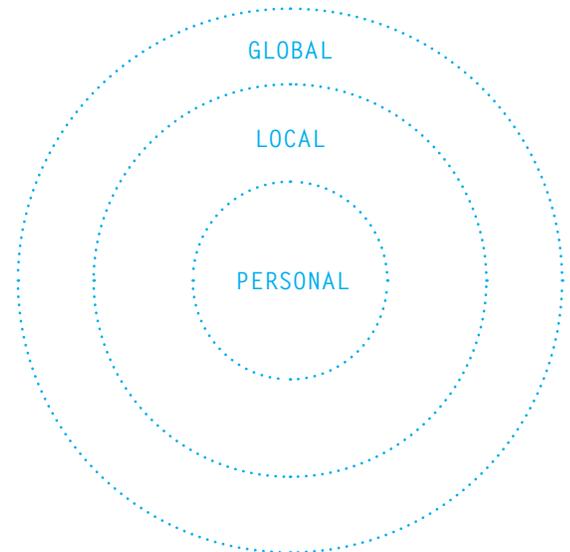
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NEXT PAGE →

PAGE 1

CHARGE THE AIR

10-15 minutes

- The concentric circles are a way to think about the moral questions we face. The outer circle contains global issues of which we are aware. The next circle represents local issues, then personal ones.
- *What issues concern you globally? (Climate, Well-Being of Refugees)*
- *What issues in the nation or state are you invested in? (Voting Rights, Mass Incarceration)*
- *What are the events that you feel most personally?*
- It can be helpful to draw these circles on the board so students can visualize the layering of issues.
- Have students share the issues that come to mind.



READ “THE DAY THE AUDIENCE WALKED OUT ON ME, AND WHY” BY DENISE LEVERTOV

15 minutes

- Levertov belonged to a Mennonite church. In this faith, it is traditional for members of the church to have the opportunity to stand and give an address. In this poem, Levertov addresses her congregation regarding the hypocrisy of public response between Kent State and other similar instances of the time.
- Consider Levertov’s use of sense, detail, and image.
- Can you think of a time where you might have felt like the speaker of this poem? Talking about what you believe in only to have people turn their backs on you and walk away?

INDIVIDUAL WRITING

15 minutes

- Consider the prompt “I am for...” or “I am against...” What is something you believe in? Something you would fight for? Something that would get you out of your room and protesting with others?
- Try to incorporate sensory images: hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting, smelling.
- Consider telling a story of a time you’ve advocated for something or a time you’ve been ignored for speaking your mind.

SHARE

10 minutes

- Have students share the poems they wrote.

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NEXT PAGE →

EXAMPLE POEM

**THE DAY THE
AUDIENCE WALKED
OUT ON ME, AND
WHY**

DENISE LEVERTOV

*(May 8th,
1970, Goucher
College,
Maryland)*

Like this it happened:
after the antiphonal reading from the psalms
and the dance of lamentation before the altar,
and the two poems, *Life at War* and *What Were They Like*,
I began my rap,
and said:

Yes, it is well that we have gathered
in this chapel to remember
the students shot at Kent State,

but let us be sure we know
our gathering is a mockery unless
we remember also
the black students shot at Orangeburg two years ago,
and Fred Hampton murdered in his bed
by the police only months ago.

And while I spoke the people
— girls, older women, a few men —
began to rise and turn
their backs to the altar and leave.

And I went on and said,
Yes, it is well that we remember
all of these, but let us be sure
we know it is hypocrisy
to think of them unless
we make our actions their memorial,
actions of militant resistance.

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NEXT PAGE →

EXAMPLE POEM (CONTINUED)

By then the pews were almost empty
and I returned to my seat and a man stood up
in the back of the quiet chapel
(near the wide-open doors through which
the green of May showed, and the long shadows
of late afternoon)
and said my words
desecrated a holy place.

And a few days later
when some more students (black) were shot
at Jackson, Mississippi,
no one desecrated the white folks' chapel,
because no memorial service was held.

Levertov, Denise: "The Day the Audience
Walked Out on Me and Why (May 8th, 1970,
Goucher College, Maryland.)",

*Kent State University Libraries. Special
Collections and Archives*, accessed February
17, 2020, [https://omeka.library.kent.edu/
special-collections/items/show/3235](https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/3235).