

Lesson Five – Good News: Emotions Can Bring About Much Needed Change in the World

“Happiness is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony.”
– Mahatma Gandhi

CREATIVE ACTIVITY – Protest Art

Lesson Intention:

In this lesson, we explore a new way of thinking about the role of emotions and how emotions can encourage us to make a positive change in our communities and in the world. When we feel a strong emotion, we can use that feeling as inspiration to reflect on what's important to us and to make positive changes. In this way, emotions come with a message – rather than repress or avoid them, we can think of our emotions as offering us wisdom and information. **This lesson focuses more closely on the ways that many emotions are tied to the problems and injustices in the world and helps us to consider how we can also channel these emotions into creative forms of expression.**

Learning Goals:

- Destigmatize emotions that are often labeled as negative by our culture.
- Raise awareness that students are not alone in their sadness or anxiety or challenging emotion.

Materials for Lesson:

- [Featured Video \(1\) – Simone Lawrence](#)
- [Additional Videos \(4\)](#)
- Lesson Plan (this document)
- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)
- [Student Examples of Creative Projects](#)

In Preparation for Lesson:

Prior to teaching this lesson, watch the guest artist video and create your own example of protest art.

Decide which materials will work best for your students and what to have ready for them to use. They could work digitally on their personal electronic devices (i.e. laptops, tablets, Chromebooks), or could use paper and a pen or pencil to draw, or even use magazines and newspapers to cut out words and images.

Featured Video:

Simone Lawrence describes the way she creates street art murals in order to make a statement about racism and inequality.

Additional Videos:

1. Paige explains the way the protest art project helped her speak about the anxiety and fear she feels about gun violence and her desire for change.
2. Dr. Ofelia Schepers shares her experience as a child being placed in an English as a second language class, though she was bilingual, and the way her emotions of anger and rejection drove her to become a teacher and education researcher. She explains that her work is her way of protesting the racism she experienced as a child.
3. Cordelia Zars explains that she channeled anger into writing a musical about the way boys are raised to ignore their emotions and this can lead to unhealthy relationships with women when they are older.
4. Stamy Paul explains why she founded Graffiti Heart, a nonprofit in Cleveland that supports the creation of street art and provides scholarships to student-artists.

Lesson Plan:

Display the 'welcome slide' from the Lesson 5 PowerPoint as you begin.

**Slide 1*

As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself and meaningful for your students.

Launching the Lesson:

** Slide 2*

This lesson explores the idea that our emotions can guide us to make a positive change in our communities or in the world. Introduce the guest artist video that you select by explaining that the guest artist will model today's creative activity and describe the way emotion can help inspire us.

Example of What You Could Say:

"In this lesson, we explore a new way of thinking about the role of emotions and how our feelings can encourage us to make a positive change in our communities and in the world. When we feel a strong emotion, we can use that feeling as inspiration to reflect on what's important to us and guide us to make a positive change. Rather than repress or avoid our emotions, we can think of our emotions as offering us wisdom and information. We are going to watch a video where the guest artist shares this idea and shows us how they used their channelled their feelings into art and creative expression."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Play Guest Artist Video:

Before you play the guest artist video, remember to give students a description of the video content, so that they can decide if they would like to view the video. The video descriptions are listed above each video. Prior to playing the video, you will remind students: "Stories hold potential for various forms of connection to the lives of those who hear them. This story may connect deeply to others who have had a similar experience. In this video... *(read the one sentence description that is above the video).*"

Introducing the Creative Activity:

**Slides 3 and 4*

Invite students to think about how emotions can bring about positive change in their community.

Example of What You Could Say:

"Let's take some time now to think about how our emotions can bring positive change to our community instead of just making us feel frustrated, sad, or angry. The guest artist helped us see the way a certain emotion inspired a creation of art to help bring about change. I looked back at my feelings and experiences to think about a change that I wanted to see in the world. Now, I want to share with you what I created (educator shares their own example of the creative activity.) Also, I want to share some inspiring examples of different protest art from students around the world."

Explain that it is now your students' turn to create their own protest art. They will look for their inspiration by thinking about their own life experiences.

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Example of What You Could Say:

“Now, you are all going to have the opportunity to create your own protest art. Your emotions can help inspire this creative activity. You can create your own drawing, painting, or digital art where you illustrate the positive change you want to see in your community. If you would like, you can also choose a picture or photograph and add words that you find empowering or inspiring.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Creative Activity:

* Slide 5

Students are invited to create a piece of protest art by using images they draw themselves or adding text to images they find on the computer. Give your students 15-20 minutes.

Lesson Closure:

- Invite students to share their protest art with the class. Students are welcome to talk about why this topic brings up strong emotions, and they are also invited to share their own lived experience as it relates to their art. As always, students do not have to share if they are not comfortable doing so.
- Once the students are done sharing, you may feel that your students would benefit from a closure activity to assist them in feeling grounded so that they can return to the rest of their school day. Since this lesson asks students to drop into a place of vulnerability, you can always choose to use one of the grounding activities found under [‘grounding activities after the lesson’](#) at the bottom of our lessons page.

Example of What You Could Say:

“Does anyone want to share their art or share how it felt to do the creative activity. If this activity brought up some difficult emotions, there is always additional support and resources at our school. We can also end with a grounding activity that can help us to feel centered as we continue throughout our day. I hope this lesson was helpful to remind us that our emotions can help us to bring about positive change in our communities.”

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Supplemental Information:

If you or your students would like to learn more about the ideas in this lesson, additional resources and third party links are included below.

1. Throughout her book *The Language of Emotions: What Your Feelings Are Trying to Tell You*, Karla McClaren argues that emotions carry information about our lives. The book guides readers in uncovering these messages by asking each emotion specific questions. Through specific examples and stories, McClaren illustrates this interpretation of the role of emotion in our lives.