



ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY

A DANGER UNLIKE ANY DANGER:
Nuclear Disarmament Campaigns 1957-1985



OVERVIEW

Students will examine primary sources to consider responses to nuclear power and weapons in New York City during the Cold War.

STUDENT GOALS

- Students will study everyday objects and consider their historical purpose.
- Students will analyze a protest item to understand different concerns about nuclear power.
- Students will synthesize their observations and analysis with a hands-on activity.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Grade 4:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1

Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Grades 6-8:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Grades 9-10:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

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KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

- Nuclear
 - Fallout
 - Proliferation
 - Disarmament
 - The Cold War
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ACTIVISTS

- Dorothy Day
 - Cora Weiss
 - A.J. Muste
 - Leslie Cagan
 - Jack O'Dell
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ORGANIZATIONS

- Mobilization for Survival
 - SANE
 - War Resisters League
 - Women Strike for Peace
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INTRODUCING RESOURCES 1, 2 & 3

On June 12, 1982, the largest protest in American history converged in New York, as demonstrators marched to the United Nations to demand an end to nuclear weapons. The march was the culmination of a meeting 25 years earlier, amidst the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, when activists met at the Overseas Press Club in Manhattan to discuss how to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The group that emerged, “A National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy,” or “SANE,” inaugurated a widespread peace movement. New York City, with its longstanding pacifist tradition and key institutions of international relations, became the center of the disarmament movement.

New Yorkers remained at the forefront of local and global anti-nuclear campaigns through the 1980s, when President Ronald Reagan began to shift his position on nuclear arms buildup and the Cold War came to an end. Still, the threat of nuclear weapons continued to mobilize activists fearful of their enormous power for destruction in New York and beyond.

INTRODUCING RESOURCE 1

Fallout Shelter Sign, 1961. Photographed 2016.

The federal government introduced the fallout shelter sign in late 1961 to mark spaces where residents could escape radiation in the event of nuclear attack. In New York, shelters were often in schools or basements of apartment or office buildings; some contained water and canned food. A small group of New Yorkers protested the very idea of the shelters, arguing that they would be insufficient in a nuclear attack and offered a false sense of security. Although the shelters are no longer in use, the signs often remain.

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Fallout Shelter Sign, 1961. Photographed 2016.

DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

- What do you think this sign was used for? What information does it provide?
- Why would someone need to use a fallout shelter?
- If you were walking past a building and saw a sign like this, would you feel safer or less safe? Why? Discuss with a partner.

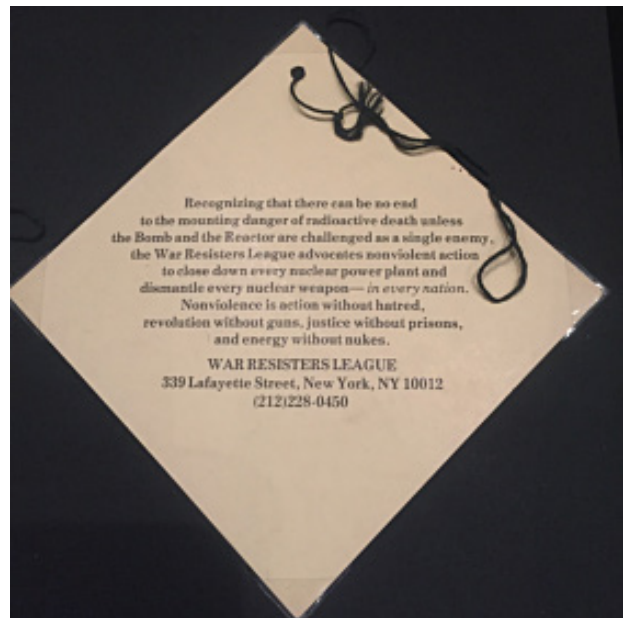
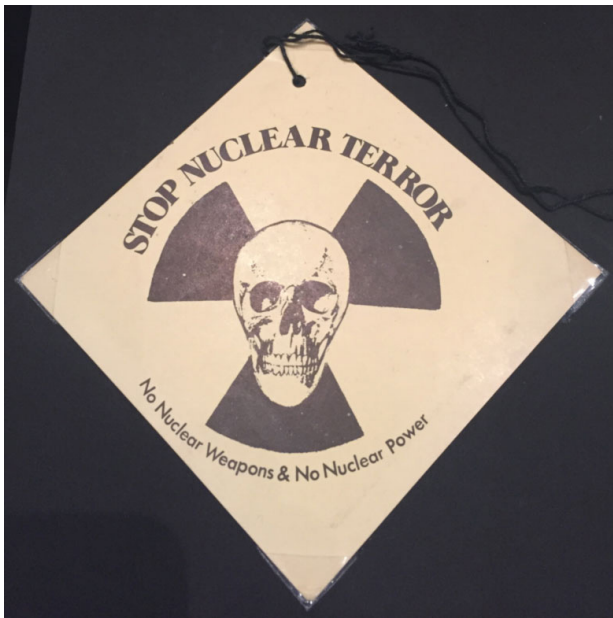
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INTRODUCING RESOURCE 2

Door knocker, 1980. Lent by Interference Archive

This door knocker shows the circulation of anti-nuclear images locally and globally, and illustrates connections activists made between nuclear weapons and nuclear power. It was created by the War Resister's League, the nation's oldest secular pacifist organization, which was founded in New York in 1923 and is still active today.



Door knocker, 1980. Lent by Interference Archive

DOCUMENT BASED QUESTIONS

- Describe what you see on the front of the door knocker. What statement is it making about nuclear weapons?
- Read the back of the door knocker. Who made this and what were their goals?
- What words do the War Resisters League use to describe nuclear power? Circle or underline them.
- What form of protest do they believe in? Why?
- How does this door knocker support their goals?

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ACTIVITY

An estimated one million protesters gathered in Central Park and marched through the streets of Manhattan to the United Nations on June 12, 1982, to call for an end to nuclear weapons. The protest coincided with the second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD-II). At a moment when the Cold War arms race had reignited, activists demanded a freeze and reduction of nuclear weapons, and “the transfer of funds from military budgets to human needs.”

The June 12 Rally Committee, comprised of dedicated staff and leaders of groups founded in New York—like SANE and Mobilization for Survival—engaged in extensive planning with hundreds of organizations. Leslie Cagan, also active in feminist and LGBT campaigns, African-American communist Jack O’Dell, and longtime peace organizer Cora Weiss, all helped lead the efforts. Tensions surfaced, however, over whether to emphasize freezing or reducing the number of nuclear weapons, and whether the march was truly inclusive. Yet the sheer numbers of people made June 12 a landmark day in the movement for nuclear disarmament.

FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS:

You have been asked to make a poster promoting the No Nukes Rally. Consider:

- Who do you want your poster to appeal to?
- How will you get your message across?
- What images will help you convince people to oppose nuclear power?
- How can you use some of the underlined/circled words from the back of the door knocker to make a slogan?

FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS:

In 2016, Barack Obama made history as the first sitting American president to visit Hiroshima, which the United States attacked with a nuclear bomb in 1945. Imagine you are a reporter who has been assigned to cover President Obama’s trip to Hiroshima. Using the three present-day news stories included in this lesson plan for background information, write an article about his speech.

- How do his remarks connect to the present-day state of atomic weapons in the world?
- Do his words seem to support UNODA’s goals?
- Which way does it seem to you that the world will move on this issue?

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ADDITIONAL READING

THE NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLES

“Throngs Fill Manhattan to Protest Nuclear Weapons” by Paul L. Montgomery, June 13, 1982, is an account of the No Nukes Rally.

<http://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/13/world/throngs-fill-manhattan-to-protest-nuclear-weapons.html?pagewanted=all>

“A Movement Gathers Force” by Kurt Anderson, June 21, 1982, is another overview of the rally.

<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21645840-despite-optimistic-attempts-rid-world-nuclear-weapons-threat-they-pose-peace>

CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

“UNODA: United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs” provides maps, links, and resources pertaining to different types of weapons and where they are in the world, as well as U.N. efforts to limit nuclear weapons.

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear>

“Text of President Obama’s Speech in Hiroshima, Japan,” May 27, 2016. The transcript of President Obama’s remarks upon visiting Hiroshima, one of two Japanese cities the United States attacked with nuclear weapons in 1945.

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/28/world/asia/text-of-president-obamas-speech-in-hiroshima-japan.html?_r=0

“Nuclear Weapons: The Unkicked Addiction,” March 7, 2015, weighs the strategic importance and hazards of nuclear weapons globally, along with several infographics about the distributions of nuclear weapons around the world.

<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21645840-despite-optimistic-attempts-rid-world-nuclear-weapons-threat-they-pose-peace>

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Danielson, Leila. *American Gandhi: A.J. Muste and the History of Radicalism in the Twentieth Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

Day, Dorothy. "Union Square Speech." November 6, 1965. *Voices of Democracy*
U.S. Oratory Project.

<http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/day-union-square-speech-speech-text/>

Door Knocker. War Resisters League, 1980. Interference Archive.

Fallout Shelter Sign, 1961. Photographed 2016.

Montgomery, Paul L. "Throngs Fill Manhattan to Protest Nuclear Weapons."
The New York Times, June 13, 1982.

Obama, Barack. Speech in Hiroshima, Japan. *The New York Times* May 27, 2016.

Unknown. "Nuclear Weapons: The Unkicked Addiction." *The Economist*
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