

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

High School (9-12)

Description: In this lesson, students analyzed key concepts and differing viewpoints from two prominent figures in American history. They examined original texts to identify both areas of agreement and disagreement in the ideas put forth by these philosophers and political activists. For homework, students are assigned to read excerpts from Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience."

Lesson Plan:

<https://images.movingbeyondthepage.com/curriculum/samples/high-school-1-sample-civil-disobedience.pdf>

Highlights:

Thoreau	Overlapping Ideas	King
<p>Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once?</p> <p>I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice</p> <p>I please myself with imagining a State at least which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor...</p>		<p>A just law is a man made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. ... Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority. Segregation, to use the terminology of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, substitutes an "I it" relationship for an "I thou" relationship and ends up relegating persons to the status of things.</p>

- The image above represents one component of this lesson where students compare and analyze the writings of both Dr. King and Thoreau, allowing them to draw parallels between the era from which Thoreau was writing versus King
- The final aspect of this lesson presents students with excerpts of Thoreau's writing and asks questions such as identifying the difference between what is legal and what is just
- This lesson exposes students to high-level writing and concepts and asks them to think about how they feel about those same concepts

