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"Hooray! The war will be over in a week! I found a four-leaf clover!"

A LITTLE GOOD NEWS

THE BATTLE OF THE EASTERN SEABOARD

The Merchant Marine and Dr. Seuss May 1942

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Turn Out Those Lights!

The Merchant Marine and U-Boat Lane, 1942

> *In far places and near, our soldiers, our sailors, our air pilots, the beleaguered men of the Merchant Marine, have shown the stuff of heroes. Everything we have asked of them they have delivered. Everything—and more.*
>
> —President Franklin D. Roosevelt (May, 1942)

Caroline C. Sheffield and Andrew J. Nichols

AS we approach the 70th anniversary of the United States' entrance into the Second World War (December 8, 1941), it is important to reflect back on an often overlooked, yet vital story of the war—that of the merchant marine. The longest and costliest battle of World War II occurred neither on the island of Iwo Jima nor in the forest of Bastogne, but in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Between 1939 and 1945, nearly 2,259 allied merchant ships were lost in the Battle of the Atlantic. More than 60,000 men and women of the Allied countries were killed in the battle; of this total, about 36,000 were members of the civilian merchant marine forces.[1]

Drawing on a Primary Source

In this article we focus on a small part of the bigger story, the six months in 1942 when German submarines attacked, with little resistance, merchant vessels along the United States' eastern coast. We introduce students to this topic with a drawing by an artist and author whom they are probably very familiar: Dr. Seuss.

Long before he was a famous author and illustrator of children's books, Theodor Seuss Geisel (1904–1991) was the chief editorial cartoonist for a New York newspaper *PM*. He drew over 400 editorial cartoons that are now available at a website of the University of California, San Diego.[2] Students who visit this online collection will be curious to see Dr. Seuss's zany animals put to use as characters in political commentary and war propaganda. A teacher should monitor students as they view this website and be ready to discuss Dr. Seuss's racial stereotyping of the enemy—the Germans and Japanese—during the war years.[3]

Numbers Tell a Story

Dr. Seuss's editorial cartoon of May 21, 1942, which shows the skyline of New York City as seen by a German submarine, requires some interpretation. Its meaning will become clear to students as they view some of his other drawings from this period and study data of ships lost in the Atlantic. The numbers tell of enormous loss. In 1939, as the war was beginning in Europe, 47 merchant ships were sunk in the North Atlantic. In 1942, the year after the United States had entered the war, that number rose to 1,006.

Discussing and analyzing these data and primary source documents with your students will help them learn about this period of history and the sacrifices of "the greatest generation." They will also practice critical thinking as they make connections between art, numbers, and words—placing Dr. Seuss's drawings within a historical context.

Vital Transport

The U.S. Merchant Marine has served in every armed conflict, from the Revolutionary War onward.[4] Founded in 1775, the Merchant Marine has transported men and supplies wherever they were needed. The actions of the merchant seamen during World War II are perhaps the maritime service's crowning achievement.

An all-volunteer service, the merchant sailors of World War II included experienced mariners, individuals either too young or too old for military service, those with disabilities disqualifying them from military service, and individuals who preferred a less-ritualized environment than the traditional armed forces.[5]

Over the course of World War II, the merchant sailors saw action in both the Atlantic and Pacific. Their casualty rate was the highest of U.S. services, with 1 in 26 mariners dying from combat-related activities. (The next highest casualty rate, 1 in 34, was that of the U.S. Marine Corps.)[6] During the height of the Battle of the Atlantic, one in three ships was sunk.

U-boat Lane

Beginning with the January 14, 1942 sinking of a Panamanian tanker *Norness* near Long Island, German U-boats hunted along the United States' eastern coast unabated for nearly six months.[7] U-boats were small, quiet submarines that carried deadly torpedoes. Due to the German success in this region, the waters along North America's Atlantic coast became known as "U-boat Lane."

Within the first three months of 1942, forty American ships went down in the waters of U-boat Lane. These ships were unarmed sitting ducks for the German U-boats. For example, the torpedoing of the steamer *City of Atlanta* on January 19, 1942, killed 40 of 43 crewmembers. A month later, 14 miles off the coast of Stuart, Florida, only one man survived the torpedoing of the tanker *W.D. Anderson*.[8] As the United States entered the war, the front line for Americans wasn't in some distant location, it was within miles of sunbathers sitting on Atlantic beaches!

Much of the carnage along U-boat Lane can be attributed to the United States' lack of preparation and its false sense of isolation from the destruction of war. The United States had made no plans to protect American shipping from German U-boat attack, despite the fact that German submarines had entered U.S. waters during World War I. The United States was caught as unaware in the Atlantic as it had been at Pearl Harbor in the Pacific.

RESOURCES

The Battle of the Atlantic (website)
Produced by the BBC, this website emphasizes the critical role north Atlantic shipping played in providing food, equipment, fuel and troops to Great Britain throughout World War II. Interesting anecdotes describe the growth of Germany's U-boat fleet, the tactics developed to counter the U-boat threat, and how the sinking of American vessels helped push the United States in to the war. **www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/battle_atlantic_01.shtml.**

The Battle of the Atlantic Game (online game)
This online game allows students to experience the sensation of commanding a merchant marine convoy across the Atlantic. Players study historical strategies as a member of the Western Approaches Tactical Unit and engage U-boats as they progress across the ocean. **www.bbc.co.uk/history/interactive/games/battle_atlantic/index_embed.shtml.**

American Merchant Marine at War (website)
This expansive website provides numerous links emphasizing the role of merchant mariners within every major American conflict from the Revolutionary to the Gulf wars. In addition to numerous historical references, the site describes the struggle for World War II mariners to achieve veteran status. Various lists include casualties, ship names, medals, and insignias, at **www.usmm.org.** The Office of War Information Poster, "A Careless Word, A Needless Sinking," is one of many such colorful posters available via a number of websites; the easiest to access is **www.usmm.org/postertalk2a.html.**

Action in the North Atlantic (film)
One of the classic propaganda films created by Hollywood during World War II, this 1943 movie tells an "underdog" story: the efforts of the merchant mariners. Humphrey Bogart stars with Raymond Massey as first officer and captain, respectively, of a merchant ship on the infamous Murmansk run. The vivid battle scenes depict the danger to ships crossing treacherous waters of the North Atlantic. The film was produced by Warner Brothers.

Battle in the Arctic Seas (book)
Written by award-winning author of young adult literature Theodore Taylor, this 2007 nonfiction account of the disastrous convoy PQ-17 is told through the experiences of the *Troubador*, one of the few ships to survive the slaughter of the Murmansk run. Useful illustrations, photos, and a map are included. The book was published by Sterling.

In a letter to Winston Churchill dated March 18, 1942, President Roosevelt described his frustration with the U.S. Navy's inability to deal with German U-boats off the American coast. "My Navy has been definitely slack in preparing for this submarine war off our coast. As I need not tell you, most naval officers have declined in the past to think in terms of any vessel of less than two thousand tons. You learned the lesson two years ago. We still have to learn it."[9] It wasn't until May 14, 1942, that convoys were utilized to protect merchant shipping along the U.S. Atlantic coast.

Backlit Targets

In addition to a lack of armed protection, the actions of civilians living along the coast further endangered merchant vessels. Cities refused to shut down their night-lights, afraid that doing so would affect tourism.[10] Unfortunately, the glaring lights from these cities provided a bright background against which merchant vessels appeared as stark silhouettes.

In a May 21, 1942 political cartoon, Dr. Seuss highlighted the need to black out the lights of eastern cities, reminding residents that their lights helped U-boat officers view and attack merchant ships. He created at least two other cartoons on this theme. Other artists, hired by the government, created posters to change public opinion about this vital problem. By the end of May, New York and other coastal cities dimmed their evening lights to aid merchant shipping.

By August of 1942, the U-boat threat along the Atlantic coast was essentially eliminated, due largely to the presence of armed U.S. Navy ships that accompanied convoys. No longer able to easily hunt their prey, the German U-boats moved on to other places, such as the frigid waters between Iceland and Murmansk, U.S.S.R., where they still inflicted enormous casualties.[11]

Forgotten Heroes

The civilian sailors of the merchant marine repeatedly volunteered for some of the most dangerous, yet crucial, service in World War II. The merchant mariners carried the materials and soldiers desperately needed to fight a world war, yet their story is all but forgotten in the history books.

During the war, merchant mariners were often portrayed as over-paid draft-dodgers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Many of the men serving in the maritime service were ineligible for the armed forces; the merchant marine was their only option to serve on the "front line." Experienced mariners were discouraged from entering into the U.S. Navy; their know-how was needed in the merchant fleet.

The mariners' pay on the surface looked to be more than that of those in the armed forces. However, when the servicemen's allowances were added to their pay, the merchant seamen and the members of the armed forces made comparable salaries. Unlike members of the other armed forces, the pay of the civilian seaman was dependent upon being aboard ship. If a merchant sailor's ship was sunk, his pay stopped. If he was taken prisoner, his pay stopped. And, should the merchant seaman find himself stranded overseas, he was responsible for finding his own way back to the United States.[12]

Despite the high casualty rate, the frequency of combat, and the risk of income loss, the merchant mariners continued to volunteer for the most dangerous service of the war. After all, America was supplying the materials necessary to fight the Axis, and those supplies needed to be delivered. When President Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, the merchant mariners lost their biggest advocate in Washington. Prior to his death, Roosevelt had called on Congress to institute a Seaman's Bill of Rights, similar to the G.I. Bill of Rights that was granted to returning servicemen. After his death, the bill was defeated. Merchant mariners received no veterans' benefits until 1988, well after they could benefit from the housing and education assistance granted to members of the armed services.

The accompanying lesson plan is one way to introduce middle school students to the contributions of the United States Merchant Marines. It can be utilized in a geography, American history, or world history class.

Notes

1. David Fairbank White, *Bitter Ocean: The Battle of the Atlantic*, 1939–1945 (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).
2. The Dr. Seuss Collection in the Mandeville Special Collections Library at the University of California, San Diego, contains the original drawings or newspaper clippings of his cartoons for the newspaper *PM* (published 1940-1948). Visit orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic.
3. Richard H. Minear, *Dr. Suess Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel* (New York: The New Press, 2001).
4. American Merchant Marine at War, www.usmm.org/quotes.html#anchor2778174.
5. Brian Herbert, *The Forgotten Heroes: The Heroic Story of the United States Merchant Marine* (New York: Forge, 2004). Merchant sailors may be referred to as "mariners" (three syllables, like "carpenters"), but never "marines" (two syllables), as the latter term refers to members of the U.S. Marines.
6. Casualty statistics from the American Merchant Marine at War Website www.usmm.org and National Combat History Archive, *The Winter Winds of Hell* (video, 2007).
7. Winston Churchill, *Memoirs of the Second World War* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1949).
8. John Bunker, *Heroes in Dungarees: The Story of the American Merchant Marine in World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006).
9. American Merchant Marine at War, www.usmm.org/quotes.html#anchor2778174.
10. National Combat History Archive.
11. Bunker.
12. Herbert.

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Handout

All 3 cartoons are from the collection at orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/

The Merchant Marine in 1942

Curricular Themes

II TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE; IX GLOBAL CONNECTIONS; VII PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION; III PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS; VI POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE

Time Required

Each of the three activities described below could consume a 50-minute period.

Activity 1: Analyzing a Cartoon

1. Project onto a screen, or distribute copies of the May 21, 1942 editorial cartoon by Dr. Seuss, "Illumintion for the Shooting Gallery." Without any context or specific background knowledge, this can be a puzzling image. The New York City skyline is lit up in the background. The silhouettes of about five ships can be seen in the water. Something is lurking in the lower left corner; it's a submarine and, if you look hard, it is marked with a swastika. Above the city is the caption, "These are Your Lights Mister!"
2. Ask students to discuss what is happening in the drawing. Can they describe each detail and guess at its meaning? Can they piece together a coherent explanation? Students might notice Dr. Seuss's signature in the lower left corner. Why would he create such a drawing? Was this a message for kids?
3. Distribute two other cartoons by Dr. Seuss on this same topic, from May 17 (the "gas chizzelers" viewing a sinking tanker) and May 26 (The Optimist's Picnic) 1942. Provide the dates that the three cartoons were published. Explain Dr. Seuss's employment at this period in his life, when young children were not his main reading audience. (He was an editorial cartoonist for a newspaper.)
4. Conduct a class discussion based on students' observations, hypotheses, and the historical facts, which can now be revealed. Toward the end of the discussion, inform the students that the mariners' pay stopped when they weren't on a ship, this includes when their ship was sunk.

Activity 2: Examining Some of the Data

1. Provide students with a copy of Table 1, "Losses in the North Atlantic-1942." Instruct students to create a bar graph of merchant ships lost, delineated by month along the x-axis. What would be a good increment to display along the y-axis? (Maybe 10 or 20 lost ships per tic mark.)
2. Have students partner with another student to discuss any pattern they notice in the data (losses are greatest in May and June and decline in the winter months; losses were the heaviest in the summer months, which can be attributed in part to the constant sunlight, bringing good visibility for hitting a target.)
3. Have students sum the total losses for the year of 1942 (a total of 1,006 allied ships were sunk in the North Atlantic in that single year).
4. Now provide students with a copy of Table 2, "Losses in the North Atlantic, 1939-1945." Categories include losses of allied ships, losses of U.S. ships, and U-boats sunk. Ask students to make observations and conclusions about the rate of merchant ships sunk throughout the course of the war in the North Atlantic. What are some of the factors that led to a sharp decline in U.S. ships lost in 1943 from the previous year? (The United States began successfully attacking U-boats, as can be inferred from the third column of data; cities dimmed their nighttime lights as advised by newspapers and the government.)

Activity 3: Understanding Lyrics

Vocabulary: Merchant Marine, U-boat, hull, breech, wolf pack, pension, provisions, frigate, corvette, carnage

1. Show students the YouTube video of the song Merchant Marine (see page 7). Instruct students to write down any aspects if the performance that catches their attention. After viewing, have students briefly share these items.
2. Distribute the lyrics (p. 7). Replay the video while students read along silently. Have students answer, either individually or in small groups, the questions below.
3. Conduct a class discussion of the students' answers. You could also play the video a final time, and ask students whether they had previously heard of the Merchant Marine and the role they played in World War II.

Questions to Consider

According to the lyrics on the Handout (page 7):

1. What did the Merchant Marine do during World War II?
2. What type of weather did the sailors face in the North Atlantic?
3. Why did the Germans attack merchant vessels? How would sinking merchant ships achieve this goal?
4. How did the U-boats attack the merchant ships? How did the merchant ships defend themselves against the U-boat wolf packs?
5. What line in the song suggests that the merchant sailor's efforts weren't always appreciated? What does this suggest about the men (and women) who volunteered for the merchant marine service?
6. What do you think is the songwriter's opinion of the World War II merchant mariners? What do you think was his purpose in writing this song?
7. What was your emotional reaction to the song? Give an example of your reaction to a specific lyric.

Handout

Table 1. Losses in the North Atlantic (1942)

Month	Total Allied Merchant Ships	German U-boats
January	48	1
February	73	1
March	95	0
April	66	1
May	120	0
June	124	0
July	98	2
August	96	5
September	95	4
October	62	11
November	83	5
December	46	5
Total		

Source: White, David Fairbank, *Bitter Ocean: The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939–1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

Table 2. Losses in the North Atlantic (1939–1945)

Year	Total Allied Merchant Ships	U.S. Merchant Ships	German U-boats
1939	47	0	6
1940	375	0	18
1941	496	1	19
1942	1,006	138	35
1943	285	42	150
1944	31	22	111
1945	19	16	71
Total			

Sources: Bunker, John, *Heroes in Dungarees: The Story of the American Merchant Marine in World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006); White, David Fairbank, *Bitter Ocean: The Battle of the Atlantic, 1939-1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

Merchant Marine

Written by Nathan Bishop MacDonald 2001, performed by Celtae. Reprinted by permission. Website **www.celtae.ca.** Video at **www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO_drlO5vSU**

Chorus

We're the Merchant Marine
And we sail across the sea,
As the U-boat's torpedoes
Hunt for hulls that they can breech.
We will brave the rugged ocean,
Blistering winds test our devotion,
But we'll keep steaming
Til our cargo's on the beach.

Verse 1

We arrived in Halifax
With all we owned upon our backs,
For we knew a brave man's duty
Was to labour for the fight.
But it takes more than bravery
To survive killers you can't see.
Those bastard wolf packs hunt by day
And strike by night.
We have barely any weapons.
Every day our lives are threatened
And if we die the navy sends
No pension to our wives.
Winter on the North Atlantic
Is hellish, cold and frantic,
For the sea alone's a challenge to survive.

Verse 2

In the war of Hitler's visions
The allies would get no provisions.
Total war was his decision;
Sinking ships not built to fight.
The finest liners of our day
Are now painted battle grey,
But the two small guns they mounted
Cause no fright.
Now it's true we had protection,
Two destroyers in our section,
Three frigates, two corvettes
To shepherd fifty through the waves.
But one destroyer's now debris,
Both corvettes lost under the sea,
And our sister ship's an underwater grave.

Verse 3

Now we mourn our fallen brothers,
Pray to God there'll be no others
Blown to bits by diving demons deep below!
For the carnage and the thunder
That sucked those good boys under
Happens daily and
We've three more days to go.

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The Greensboro Sit-In: When Students Took Charge of Social Change

Eric Groce, Tina Heafner, and Katie O'Connor

In 1950, Ezell Blair, Jr., was an elementary student at J.C. Price School in Greensboro, North Carolina. A small but feisty nine-year-old African American boy, Ezell was already tired of the limitations imposed on his life by Jim Crow laws and traditions. On the school playground, he promised his playmates that he would challenge segregation, boasting that he would one day have a meal in downtown Greensboro and drink from a "white" water fountain. "As kids, we always wanted to know what water from a white water fountain tasted like—we thought it would taste like lemonade." [1]

Times Are A Changin'

As Ezell continued through middle and high school, he heard encouraging words from community leaders, ministers, and teachers (including his father, Ezell Blair, Sr., a teacher at Dudley High School) about the need for social and political change. The 1950s witnessed many hallmark moments of what would later be called the Civil Rights Movement, including the *Brown v. Board* ruling (1954), the murder of Emmett Till (1955), the protest of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott (1955), and the integration of public schools in Little Rock (1957). In 1958, Ezell went to nearby Bennett College to hear a speech by a rising leader in the Civil Rights Movement, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A few sit-ins occurred during the 1950s, but most of these protests were limited to Northern cities. (Sidebar, page 11)

At Dudley High School, Ezell grew to be a leader among his peers, who included David Richmond and Franklin McCain. Ezell was elected president of the student government association, and after graduation, he enrolled at his hometown college, The Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina (commonly referred to as "the A&T"), along with David and Franklin.[2] They soon met and befriended Joseph McNeil, who joined them in late night discussions in their dorm rooms about the injustices of segregation and the exciting protests that were challenging the status quo.

Despite civil rights victories such as the Supreme Court ruling on Brown and the success of the Montgomery bus boycott, progress in realizing civil rights seemed excruciatingly slow to many African Americans in 1960. School desegregation had met with white-community resistance in the South (ex. Prince Edwards County, Virginia) and North (ex. Boston, Massachusetts). Black citizens were still denied the right to vote in many Southern states. Businesses openly practiced racial discrimination. Joseph described how, when he traveled to New York for Christmas break, he was served in restaurants and stores with no problems, but was refused service when he returned to the South at the Greensboro Trailways Bus Terminal.[3]

Photo by Eric C. Groce

The exterior of Woolworth's and historic street sign in Greensboro, North Carolina, as they appear today.

John "Jack" Moebes, *Greensboro News & Record*

The Greensboro Four leaving Woolworth's after the first day of the sit-ins, February 1, 1960. Left to right: David Richmond, Franklin McCain, Ezell Blair, and Joseph McNeil.

Franklin said that he did not want to be known as an armchair activist. "We finally felt we were being hypocritical because we were doing the same thing that everyone else had done, nothing."[4] A few weeks into the spring semester, these four young men conceived a plan. They would meet the next afternoon at the library at 4:00pm sharp, and then walk up East Market Street toward downtown Greensboro, their destination being the lunch counter at Woolworth's five-and-dime store.

The Initial Spark

The next day, February 1, 1960, the four students from the A&T campus entered Woolworth's, where they purchased some toothpaste and other small items. Then they sat on the alternating orange and teal stools in front of the stainless steel lunch counter and waited for someone to take their order. Ezell spoke up first as a waitress approached,

"I'd like a cup of coffee, please."

The waitress said, "I'm sorry. We don't serve Negroes here."[5] Ezell continued to politely request service, but the brief exchange ended when the employee realized these four black college students were not going to move to the far end of the service area and take their meals at the "stand-up counter" where African Americans were allowed to dine. She went to get help.

After the students did not respond to further prompting from a black employee, the store manager, C.L. "Curly" Harris, instructed his employees to ignore the four students. Then he walked a few blocks to the police station. The rest of the afternoon was an uneasy stalemate. Two policemen repeatedly strolled behind the lunch counter "squatters," popping their nightsticks into their open palms, but not saying a single word. A photographer from the *Greensboro Record*, Jack Moebes, stopped by to capture an image of the protesters.

When they were informed the store was closing, the protesters politely left, but remarked,

"We'll be back tomorrow with A&T College."

Outside the store, Ezell Blair, Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McCain, and Joseph McNeil finally breathed a sigh of relief: they had challenged segregation, yet had not been arrested, jailed, or beaten. They enjoyed a triumphant mile-and-a-half walk back to campus.

Eric C. Groce/International Civil Rights Center & Museum, www.sitinmovement.org.

The lunch counter as it is exhibited today in the interior of Woolworth's, which is now the home of the International Civil Rights Center & Museum, www.sitinmovement.org.

A Shift in Social Order

The protesters did return the next day, with more than 25 supporters from the college. And protesters appeared the day after that. Newspapers reported on the protest, and soon other students at other campuses were demonstrating in solidarity. Four college freshmen had started it, but now, no one could stop it. One observer called it the "Greensboro 'Coffee Party' of 1960" and remarked that the event "would rank in history with the Boston Tea Party as a harbinger of revolutionary shifts in social order."[6]

Students at Dudley High School sustained the sit-in after the college students returned home for the summer. Ironically, black employees at Woolworth's were the first to successfully integrate the lunch counter (with the corporation's approval) when they enjoyed a quiet and brief meal in late July 1960. The event was not recorded in the newspapers, and it passed without fanfare, but something had shifted in the American landscape; a tremor had become an earthquake.

The Movement Spreads

By February 10, 1960, ten cities across North Carolina (Charlotte, Concord, Durham, Elizabeth City, Fayetteville, Greensboro, Henderson, High Point, Raleigh, and Winston-Salem) faced sit-ins at retail chains such as Woolworth's, Kress, Kresge's, and McClellan's. Students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) led many of these efforts.

In many locations, the nonviolent protestors faced angry resistance, including heckling, being covered with food products, threats with knives or guns, or brutal beatings. Several Woolworth stores removed their lunch-counter stools entirely.[7] When students arrived to protest at a Woolworth's in Raleigh, they were arrested for trespassing, charged and fined. Students in Winston-Salem were also arrested, although the judgment was suspended when city leaders and business owners agreed to integrate lunch counters. In some cities, white students joined with blacks in protest.

On February 13, 1960, Nashville, Tennessee, joined the ranks of cities with sit-in protests, followed by Atlanta, Georgia, on March 15. Sit-ins soon spread to South Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Alabama, Maryland, Florida, Arkansas and Texas. Within three months, sit-ins were taking place in more than 55 cities in 13 states.[8] By August 1961, the sit-in movement involved over 70,000 participants and had resulted in 3,000 arrests.[9]

An Effective Method of Protest

The effectiveness of the sit-in derived in part from its economic message: a dollar spent by a black consumer was no different than a dollar spent by a white consumer. Why should the service be different? The profits lost by the targeted business (and those nearby) could be significant, as customers tended to avoid the scene of an ongoing protest—effectively turning a sit-in into a boycott.

The sit-in, as a method of protest, channeled the energy of high school and college students in nonviolent and public ways. In the words of Julian Bond, the sit-ins allowed young people to exercise "militant non-violence, an aggressive non-violence" so that blacks no longer waited for change to come to them, but instead took the issues to the people.[10]

The sit-ins were also successful because they were so simple. No special equipment, training, or elaborate planning was needed. All you had to do was gather a few friends, choose a site for the protest, and then weather whatever resistance might arise from onlookers and the local police.

This method of protest was, however, not easy. Protesters had to be prepared to return day after day to occupy the lunch counter seats. Persistence and steadfastness were prerequisites of success.

The established civil rights organizations in 1960 were surprised at the rapid spread of these youthful protests. A new organization—the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced "snick")—was born at the Southwide Student Leadership Conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, on April 15–17, 1960. SNCC's membership—high school and college students—represented the youthful, well-educated future of America. Over the next few years, SNCC members were central in many key events, including Freedom Rides, voter registration drives, and protest marches. Although SNCC hampered by internal conflicts and effectively folded by the end of the decade, for a few years, the youthful leaders of SNCC quickened the

Origins of the Sit-In

The origins of the sit-in protest can be traced back at least to the abolition movement in the United States. An 1841 meeting of the Massachusetts Antislavery Society discussed a resolution for white Abolitionists "to take their seats in it ["the Negro-pew"] wherever it may be found, whether in a gentile synagogue [church], a railroad car, a steamboat, or a stage coach." The resolution was defeated, but such protests did occur.*

Mohandas K. Gandhi led non-violent sit-ins during India's struggle for independence from Great Britain in the 1920s and 30s. Detroit autoworkers employed this method of protest against General Motors in the 1930s. (It's difficult for managers at a factory to replace workers on strike while they are occupying—and thus obstructing—their workstations.) Chippewa Indians occupied the local office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1938 to halt its planned move from their reservation to the city of Duluth, Minnesota.* The U.S. Secretary of the Interior rescinded the move.

As early as the mid 1940s, Chicago experienced sit-ins led by a pioneer of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, James Farmer. Lunch counter sit-ins occurred in Northern cities of Detroit, Chicago, and St. Louis, throughout the 1940s and 1950s—as well as in Baltimore and Durham.** (While sit-ins ended some segregation practices in the North, they did not catch on in more southern states until the Greensboro sit-in of 1960.)

In Wichita, Kansas, on July 5, 1958, a group of ten students led by Carol Parks-Haun and her cousin, Ron Walters, protested racial segregation practices at Dockum, a local branch of the Rexall Drugstore chain.*** Their actions did not receive the publicity or notoriety of later sit-ins, but they did successfully end lunch counter segregation in Wichita. The owner of Dockum apparently tallied up the economic losses incurred during the sit-ins and decided that segregation had to go.

NOTES

* Sharp, Gene. *The Politics of Nonviolent Action. Part Two: The Methods of Nonviolent Protest* (Boston, MA: Porter Sargent, 1973): 371-374. Visit the Albert Einstein Institution, a nonprofit organization advancing the study and use of strategic nonviolent action in conflicts throughout the world, at www.aeinstein.org.

** Gruson, Lindsey, "Greensboro Still at War over 'First' Sit-in." *Greensboro Daily News* (December 24, 1979).

*** Eckels, Clara. "Kansas Sit-in Gets its Due at Last." NPR. (October 23, 2006), www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyID=6355095; Walters, Ron. "Sit-ins Omitted from the History Books," *The Chronicle* (February 28, 2002).

pace of a social revolution and gained valuable life experience in grassroots political organizing.

Social Power

Something about the sit-in protests sparked the imagination and ambition of the younger generation. The sit-ins were soon followed by the Freedom Rides, designed to test a 1960 Supreme Court ruling that declared segregation in interstate travel facilities unconstitutional. Diane Nash (who led a group of SNCC students from Nashville, Tennessee, to finish the rides despite vicious attacks by segregationists) recalled, "When you are that age, you don't feel powerful. I remember realizing that with what we were doing, trying to abolish segregation, we were coming up against governors, judges, politicians, businessmen, and I remember thinking, I'm only twenty-two years old, what do I know, what am I doing?" [11]

The sit-in movement awoke in young and old alike the memory that, in the United States, all people are created equal, and that the government derives its just powers from the consent of the governed. It began in 1960, when Ezell Blair, Jr., and his three dorm mates studied the situation, weighed their options, and decided to do something. They made good on Ezell's promise made years earlier on a school playground to "one day have a meal in downtown Greensboro."

Notes

1. Jim Schlosser, "Four Men Summon Courage to Alter Course of History," *Greensboro News & Record* (January 27, 1985).
2. In 1967, the college gained university status and became North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.
3. William. H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1980).
4. Schlosser.
5. Miles Wolff, *Lunch at the 5 & 10*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1990).
6. Chafe.
7. Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years 1954-1965* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1987), 129.
8. International Civil Rights Center and Museum, www.sitinmovement.org/history/sit-in-movement.asp.
9. Clayborne Carson et al., *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader* (New York: Penguin Putnam, 1991).
10. Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1991), 64.
11. Hampton and Fayer, 59.

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Dent, Tom (2001). *Southern Journey: A Return to the Civil Rights Movement.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001.

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The authors would like to thank the librarians and archival staff at North Carolina A&T University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro for their valuable assistance during this project, as well as the International Civil Rights Center & Museum (www.sitinmovement.org) in Greensboro.

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1. The Greensboro sit-ins illustrate some characteristics of good citizenship. Ezell Blair Jr., Joseph McNeil, Franklin McCain, and David Richmond **thought carefully** about the problems they observed and **discussed** what they might do. They exhibited **perseverance** as they continued to return to the lunch counter, even as tensions ran high and no end to the daily protests was in sight. They continued their protest using this **nonviolent** method, remaining calm and collected in the face of insults and prejudicial treatment. Finally, **they enlisted others** in the protest to make it more effective and to share the work.

Ask students to discuss an instance when they had to **persevere** to achieve a goal for the common good. Then, ask students to research other nonviolent methods of protest. Specifically, have students examine when, where, and why sit-ins (or other examples of nonviolent obstruction) have been used in the past. Be sure to look for examples outside of the United States.

2. Take the students on a virtual field-trip of the Greensboro sit-in at the National Museum of American History. Use the videos and conversation about the Greensboro Four in the online exhibit "Stories of Freedom and Justice," at **americanhistory.si.edu/freedomandjustice.**

3. Follow a middle school lesson plan "Nonviolent Direct Action at Southern Lunch Counters" by Sean O'Mara at the Gilder Lehrman website, **www.gilderlehrman.org/historynow/06_2009/lp2.php.** These are Sean's essential questions: What is nonviolent direct action? How and why was it used in the fight for civil rights and against segregation? Should the civil rights workers be considered American heroes?

4. Primary sources can be powerful. Use these websites to obtain photographs and of sit-ins: **www1.american.edu/bgriff/H207web/civrights/sit-ins1963.gif** and **www.learnnc.org/lp/multimedia/13824.** Questions for classroom discussion could include: (a) How do you think the demonstrators feel in these photographs? Use evidence to justify your response. (b) What do you imagine the onlookers are thinking? (c) In what ways do you think the demonstrators (and observers) affected history? (d) Describe a time when you believed strongly in a cause. What did you do in response?

5. As a class, small groups, or individual students, create a map using the website Community Walk, **www.communitywalk.com.** Use the interactive features to recreate the era of the Greensboro sit-ins and to describe the perspectives of the protesters, store manager, and onlookers of the protest.

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Is This Candy an Advertisement for Cigarettes? A Media Literacy Activity

Steven S. Lapham

Brands, icons and symbols permeate our visual culture. Too often we assume that everyone interprets the symbols the same way. Yet, as we know from current events, symbols like the American flag can mean different things to different people.

—Center for Media Literacy[1]

A box of Target bubble gum (Handout, page 16) resembles a pack of cigarettes. The white box with its centered red circle is a dead ringer for a pack of Luck Strike.[2] What does this box of candy mean to the consumer who might buy it? Your students might be likely consumers of this product.

Here is an outline of a classroom activity that could be used with a unit of study on media literacy, advertising in the industrial age, current events, or health. It's a discussion based on seven questions.

Question 1—"What is this Product?"—seems to have an obvious answer, but does it?

Questions 2-6 in this activity are actually the "Five Key Questions" to ask when analyzing media messages, as advocated by the Center for Media Literacy (CML).

Question 7 is especially important for our students to discuss as consumers—and as citizens.

The procedures of this 50-minute activity are flexible, and teachers could create a writing assignment for reflection and assessment based on any one of the questions.

1. What is this product?

One could kick off the classroom discussion by holding up a box of Target chewing gum and asking students, "What is this product?" At a quick glance, some children may think it's an actual pack of cigarettes, but the words "bubble gum" are there. Other students may have purchased a similar box, or been given one by their friends or parents. If students show any confusion about what the product is—well, that would be worth pointing out. (See question 6.)

2. Who created this message?

Ask students to speculate about this. Someone might guess that a tobacco company makes the candy and created the ad. (Now why would a cigarette company have any interest in making such a product?) The candy is, in fact, made buy World Candies of Brooklyn, New York, which sells its products all over the world.

Once students are engaged in the conversation, they will be motivated to learn some of the tools they'll need when analyzing media messages—useful vocabulary terms (page 15). Pause in the discussion to go over these terms with the class. Then, as you proceed through steps 3-7, use this product to generate an example for each term. For example, as you discuss question 4, ask, Who might be the "target audience" of this product packaging?

3. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Some of these elements of design in this package are effective in their own right. Big red circles can be used to sell candy, cigarettes, soap, or clothes; think of the Target department store logo.

On the other hand, there are certainly similarities between the packaging of this candy and that of a pack of cigarettes: the proportions of the box, the image and colors, the styles of

font, and the blue tab at the top that resembles a tax stamp. The sticks of gum themselves are wrapped in white paper with a tan tip. (Another variety of Target candy features little white sticks of sugar with red tips.) What might young consumers find attractive about the design and words used in this packaging?

Advertisers have a wide array of techniques to use in constructing their persuasive messages. Social research has shown that people do make all sorts of links in their minds between very different things. Is candy the *product* here, or is candy being used as a *technique* for selling yet another product?

4. How might different people understand this message differently?

What people think about this product might depend on how old they are. A five year old might enjoy this candy for one reason, while a ten year old enjoys it for another.

Some children might notice cigarette advertising in magazines, see adults smoke, and then be attracted to a similar-looking product. The situation raises interesting questions. Does the "cigarette image" of the packaging help sell the candy to such children? Or does the candy help sell cigarettes to teenagers, who enjoyed the candy as kids? Or are both forces at work over the years?

What kind of social research could we do to study this question? Is it possible that some people establish life-long habits as children, while others are not affected by eating candy in any negative way? Are some children more vulnerable to picking up the bad habit of smoking? What might be the characteristics, the "risk factors," of such children?

5. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?

For children, it's often fun to pretend to be an adult. Since it is illegal to sell or give cigarettes to minors, smoking is something that only adults can do. Does this product convey the message that "smoking is a way to have fun and be mature"?

Is there a particular lifestyle that your students associate with smoking? Can students determine where such ideas came from? A key point to make for the students is that often—even as adults—we are not fully aware of how concepts and opinions originated and then evolved in our minds. This makes social research into such questions challenging.

6. Why is this message being sent?

Advertisers work hard to create links or "associations" in the minds of the consumer. For example: This cigarette will make you tough and rugged like a cowboy! This drink will make you strong and fast like an athlete! This food will make your family have fun just like this bunch at the beach!

Certainly, candy makers want to sell more candy. If a child thinks that a box of cigarettes is exciting or a desirable "sign of being grown up," maybe it would be useful to link a box of cigarettes (that adults would use) with a box of candy (that children would use).

7. What should I do in response to this message?

What should you do as a consumer? Would your students consider buying this candy for themselves? Would they hand a box of Target to a younger sibling? Why or why not?

What should one do as a citizen? Maybe we should petition some branch of government to take action, banning candy that looks like cigarettes. But that would limit our freedom as producers and consumers. Today, it's not illegal to in the United States to sell candy that looks like cigarettes, space creatures, rocks, or anything else.

Or maybe we should ask social scientists to do research on the question of whether this type of candy encourages children to smoke once they reach adulthood.[3] But how long would this research take? How much would it cost? And how would you begin to study this question about human behavior and attitudes? We cannot simply ask people if they are influenced by an advertisement because they may say, "No influence!" when actually, if we observed them in the store—or over several years—they do change their behavior after exposure to advertisements!

Personal Responsibility

Responsible parents will make up their own rules about what their children are allowed to buy. Parents can certainly forbid their child to buy candy cigarettes. We don't need a new law for that to happen, so maybe no government action of any sort is called for.

All advertisements include a "call to action," an appeal to "buy this product," but there is a difference between what the ad may call for us to do and what we may decide to do. We are all responsible for the choices we make, no matter what message advertisements are aiming to deliver. So there is certainly a role for the individual consumer to play. But is there also a reasonable role for government to play?[4]

Government Protection

The United States does have important regulations about foods, drugs, and products like tobacco. At the federal level, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates food products—as well as advertising about food. For example, it is against the law for advertisers to claim that a food will help prevent a specific disease unless scientific research has shown this to be accurate.

In the 1960s, medical studies proved conclusively that cigarettes were a deadly product. Whereas cars and guns cause fatalities, neither product is necessarily dangerous if the owner uses it responsibly. Cigarettes are different.

Cigarettes, *when used as directed,* will kill you. A federal law banning the advertising of cigarettes on television took effect on January 1, 1971. But cigarette advertising is still a major source of income for many magazines today.

Do candy cigarettes advertise tobacco to children? Would it be reasonable for citizens to petition to direct the FDA to ban candy that is packaged to look like cigarettes?[5] If so, Congress might then write a new law. Some people think it's a good idea. The selling of candy cigarettes has been banned in St. Paul, Minnesota, as well as in Australia, Canada, Finland, Norway, the Republic of Ireland, Thailand, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.[6]

How Our Minds Work

Eating candy in moderation will not necessarily harm you. But humans do make associations between one product and another. For example, a child who enjoys riding a tricycle will probably, eventually want to learn how to ride a bicycle.

How strong is the association between a child enjoying a piece of candy that looks like a cigarette and a teenager smoking his or her first real cigarette? There is no easy answer to this question. But it is vital that our students be aware of the question and discuss it openly.

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Notes

1. Center for Media Literacy Lesson Plan #3B, "Silent Symbols Speak Loudly: Icons, Brands, and You", www.medialit.org/reading_room/article697.html. Read about Center for Media Literacy (www.medialit.org) magazine *Media & Values* and visit the Lesson Plan Library at www.medialit.org/reading_room/rr4_lessonplan.php.
2. Although filtered varieties were discontinued in North America in 2006, R. J. Reynolds continues to market non-filtered Luck Strike cigarettes in the United States. "History of Lucky Strike Cigarettes." lucky-strike-cigarettes.blogspot.com /2008/03/history-of-lucky-strike-cigarettes.html.
3. J. D. Klein and Steve St Clair, "Do Candy Cigarettes Encourage Young People to Smoke?" *British Medical Journal* 321 (August 2000): 362-365.
4. Performance Expectation (a): "Examine persistent issues involving the rights, roles, and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare." ❻ **Power, Authority, & Governance**, in National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Washington, DC: NCSS, 1994): 94.
5. Petition to Ban Candy Cigarettes, www.thepetitionsite.com/2/Ban-candy-cigarettes-in-the-USA.
6. *Star Tribune* (April 8, 2009), www.startribune.com/local/stpaul/42714232.html.

Vocabulary for Media Literacy

Key Terms	Definition
Audience	those who engage with a media text. reading, hearing, or viewing the message
Advertisement	a message that has the primary purpose of selling a product
Brand	the name, logo, slogan, or design of a specific product (See also "image")
Consumer	the person who buys the product
Corporate Identity	the name of the company that made the product (See also "image")
Framing	deciding what will be in the picture and what will be left out
Image	the illustration in an ad; this term can also be used to mean the overall impression that people have about a product or a corporation, the "image in their heads"
Media	methods of communicating information to people. The singular is "medium." Television is a medium of communication.
Packaging	any material surrounding the product. Often, advertising is part of the packaging
Product	the item being sold
Production	the work of making a product, its packaging, or the advertising for it
Regulation	laws that control what is in a product and how advertisers describe it
Target Audience	a group of people that advertisers wish will buy or use their product
Text	the written part of an advertisement or product, as opposed to "images"

Source: Based on MediaWise: Critical Questions abut Food Ads, **www.medialit.org/pdf/mlk/mediawise.pdf**

Handout

What Do You Think about this Product?

Take a careful look at this product. Then read and discuss the seven questions below. There are no simple answers to some of these questions, no clear "right" or "wrong" answers that everyone will agree on. But these are important questions, especially for middle school students. What do you think? What choices will you make as a consumer and as a citizen?

1. **What is this?**

____

2. **Who created this message?**

____

3. **What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?**

____

4. **How might different people understand this message differently?**

____

5. **What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?**

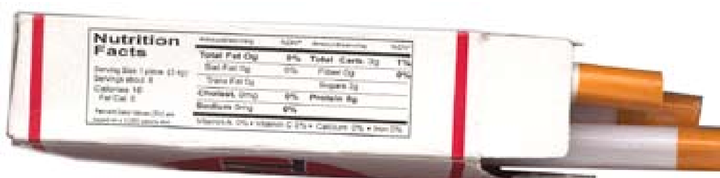
____

6. **Why is this message being sent?**

____

7. **What should I do in response to this message?**

____



Source: See the Five Key Questions (included above as 2-6) and discussion at the Center for Media Literacy, **www.medialit.org.**

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