

Lesson #4: The Challenge of Change

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LESSON PLAN



Printed Documents

The Challenge of Change

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will examine a passage about change from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community*, explore King's use of language and the meaning of the passage.
- Students will relate King's passage about change to excerpts from letters about a controversial community issue, the renaming of State Street to Martin Luther King Blvd.
- Students will work in groups to complete tasks and report to the class.
- Students will identify challenges to change.

Vocabulary:

liabilities, status quo, fraternities, indifferent, notorious, vigilant, metaphor

Media:

Excerpts from letters to *The Ithaca Journal*

Materials Needed:

- *Teacher Guide* for Lesson 4
- 2-page student worksheet: *Exploring the Text*
- Six 2-page student worksheets: *Taking a Position*
- Six blank Sheets of paper, one for each group

Time:

40 minutes

Lesson Procedures:

1. Organize and make copies of the worksheets.
2. Introduce the lesson.
3. Hand out the worksheet, *Exploring the Text*. Have students work individually or in groups to complete the worksheet.
4. Review the answers to the worksheet using the prompts in the *Teacher Guide*.
5. Hand out the 6 different worksheets, *Taking a Position*, each with a different letter to the editor or guest column excerpt. Have the groups complete one worksheet each.
6. Have each group report out on their letter excerpt. Other students keep notes and list the "challenges to change" on the blank sheets of paper and turn in.
7. OPTIONAL: Assign writing activities at the completion of this lesson.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Challenge of Change

1. **Organize and make copies** for the class activities.
2. **Introduce the lesson:**

Introduce the Lesson

In the spring of 2004, the *Circle of Recovery*—a group of high school seniors led by Gino Bush, a local activist—suggested that a street in Ithaca be named in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. in order to recognize his contributions and those of African Americans today and in the past. Later, the group specifically suggested that State Street be renamed Martin Luther King Blvd.

As the suggestion was considered in press and in municipal forums, controversy grew. Most of those opposed cited costs of changing street markers and addresses on business stationery as the reason they opposed the idea. Many of them said that they supported a fitting memorial to Dr. King but they were opposed to changing the name of State Street. Some of those who favored the renaming of State Street viewed the opposition's arguments as trivial or as thinly disguised examples of racism.

Today, we are going to explore the challenges to change these young people experienced. Studying challenges and support for change can help us be more effective at working for social justice. We will start by exploring a passage from Dr. King's book, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*

3. **Hand out the worksheet** *Exploring the Text*.
Have students work individually or in groups to complete the worksheet.
4. **Review the answers** to the worksheet.

5. **Hand out the 6 different worksheets**, *Taking a Position*, each with a different letter to the editor excerpt.

Have 6 groups complete the worksheets.

Roles in groups:

- Facilitator of group work—also reports out on question 1
- Reader of letter
- Notetaker (sheet must be turned in)
- Reporter for question 2
- Reporter for question 3

6. **Have each group report out** their answers on their letter excerpt.

Ask each group to read the quote and letter and answer the questions including:

1. Is this letter advocating or opposing the street name change?
2. What are the main arguments for their position?
3. Given the above quote from King, do you think that he would have supported or opposed the change? Give evidence to back up your position.

After each presentation, **have students keep a log of the “challenges to change”** on a separate sheet of paper, or alternatively on the worksheets themselves.

OPTIONAL WRITING ACTIVITIES

Create a class poem using students’ statements of challenges to change.

Ask each student to write a letter to a local paper about a change they want to propose in their community. Letters should include a clear statement of the desired change, arguments in support of the change, and responses to challenges they anticipate.