

George Floyd Protests

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Who is George Floyd?
2. What is a protest?
3. What do you know about #BlackLivesMatter?



B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. fake | a) a device put around a person's wrists to restrict arm movement |
| _____ 2. handcuffs | b) to loudly repeat the same word or phrase over and over |
| _____ 3. witness (<i>noun</i>) | c) to find guilty in a court of law |
| _____ 4. protest (<i>verb</i>) | d) not real |
| _____ 5. chant (<i>verb</i>) | e) fairness |
| _____ 6. justice | f) an observer |
| _____ 7. charge (<i>noun</i>) | g) to express disagreement or anger about something in public |
| _____ 8. convict (<i>verb</i>) | h) a formal accusation of a crime |

Reading

1. On May 25, 2020, the Minneapolis police answered a call from a shopkeeper. The caller said a black man used **fake** money at his store. When the police arrived, they put George Floyd in **handcuffs** and forced him to the ground. A white officer began kneeling on Floyd's neck. Two other officers helped hold him down. As people gathered around, a fourth officer stood guard. Floyd repeated "I can't breathe" several times. Many **witnesses** asked the police to get off of him. Officer Derek Chauvin kept his knee on Floyd's neck for more than eight minutes.
2. Several witnesses took videos as George Floyd took his last breaths. Many people saw these videos and went into the streets to **protest**. They protested in Minneapolis and in many other US cities, including Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Chicago. People soon began protesting in cities all over the world. Most people protested peacefully. They **chanted** Floyd's dying words, "I can't breathe."
3. George Floyd was not the first black American to use these dying words. In 2014, Eric Garner cried "I can't breathe" 11 times after police put him in a choke hold. He died before the ambulance arrived. #BlackLivesMatter uses these dying words at their events and marches. This group fights for **justice** for black victims like Floyd and Garner, as well as many others, including Freddie Gray and Ahmaud Arbery. They want to see an end to racial discrimination and police violence.
4. After seven nights of protests following George Floyd's death, there was an important announcement. All four officers on the case are now facing **charges**. Derek Chauvin faces a second-degree murder charge. The other officers face charges of helping Chauvin kill Floyd.
5. Everyone knows that it is not easy to **convict** a police officer of murder, but these charges gave protesters a bit of hope. Even some police agree that things have to change. Some officers took the first step by shaking hands and kneeling with protesters.

"Get your knee off our necks."

—Al Sharpton, civil rights activist and minister

Ideas for Reading Practice

- Read together.
- Listen and read along.
- Read silently.
- Circle words you don't know.
- Look up words you don't know.
- Read out loud to a partner.
- Read out loud to yourself.
- Read out loud to your teacher.
- Review difficult words.

Comprehension

A. Timeline

Place the following in chronological order (1–6).

- _____ A white officer began to kneel on George Floyd's neck.
- _____ People began to watch videos of George Floyd's last breaths.
- _____ A shopkeeper called the police on George Floyd.
- _____ George Floyd was unable to breathe.
- _____ Protesters filled the streets of Minneapolis and many other cities.
- _____ Charges against all four officers gave protesters hope for justice.

B. Ask & Answer

Practice asking and answering the following questions with your partner. Then write your answers in your notebook.

1. What is the reading mainly about?
2. What did witnesses do?
3. What was similar about George Floyd and Eric Garner?
4. Which other victims does the author mention?
5. Who is Derek Chauvin?
6. How does the article end?

Common Error

The words *breathe* and *breath* are commonly confused in writing and speaking.

The word *breathe* is a verb. It has a long E sound.

- I can't **breathe**. (*verb*)

The word *breath* is a noun. It has a short E sound.

- He took his last **breath**. (*noun*)

Vocabulary Review

A. Complete the Sentences

Use words from page 1 to complete the sentences.

1. The _____ is second-degree murder.
2. We have to _____ peacefully and passionately.
3. #BlackLivesMatter wants _____ for black people all over the world.
4. To _____ a police officer of a crime, you need a very strong case.
5. Why are you putting him in _____? He didn't do anything wrong.

B. Odd One Out

Which word does not belong in the group?

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. a) fake
b) unreal
c) fair | 4. a) observer
b) witness
c) officer | 7. a) handcuffs
b) charge
c) accusation |
| 2. a) shout
b) sit
c) chant | 5. a) convict
b) chant
c) find guilty | 8. a) chant
b) handcuffs
c) wrists |
| 3. a) fairness
b) justice
c) witness | 6. a) protest
b) breathe
c) march | 9. a) kneel on
b) charge
c) pin down |

Reference

A. Charge

The word *charge* has a few different meanings in English.

#	Word Form	Definition	Example Sentence
1	noun	an accusation of a crime	Police officers rarely face murder charges .
2	verb	to have enough proof to accuse a person of a crime	They charged him with murder.
3	noun	an amount you have to pay	There is a \$4.00 service charge .
4	verb	to ask for money for payment	We charge a \$5.00 service fee.
5	verb	to run toward something or someone quickly and forcefully	The police charged into the crowd.
6	verb	to plug in a battery-operated device	I need to charge my phone.

B. Writing Practice

Write three sentences using different forms of the word *charge*. Then challenge a partner to identify the usage from the chart (1–6).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Note

A *charge* is not a conviction. After *charging* a person with a crime, the case goes to court. To convict a person, the court (or jury) must decide if the person is guilty. If the person is found guilty, he or she will face a punishment, such as a fine or jail time.

Discussion

1. At the memorial service, Al Sharpton said, "George Floyd's story is the story of black folks." What did the minister mean?
2. George Floyd died in the year 2020. Why is racism still a major problem in the US and many other countries?
3. Is police violence a problem in your town or city?

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about the killing of a black man by police and the social justice protests that followed. Students learn about and discuss racism and police violence.

LEVEL: Low Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: George Floyd Protests, George Floyd, Black Lives Matter, racial discrimination, police brutality, police violence, race, black Americans, protests

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

- George Floyd is the black man who was killed by police on May 25, 2020. Witnesses recorded the police violence on video. This sparked protests all over the world.
- Protests are large public gatherings and marches where people express anger about a person, event, or cause.
- Answers will vary.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

Note that the part of speech is given for terms with two or more common forms.

- | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1. d | 3. f | 5. b | 7. h |
| 2. a | 4. g | 6. e | 8. c |

Reading

Read the article with your class and go through difficult vocabulary with them. Try some of the additional reading strategies with students who need more practice with the text. A recording is also available. Discuss the quote from George Floyd's memorial service.

Comprehension

A. TIMELINE

- A white officer began to kneel on George Floyd's neck.
- People began to watch videos of George Floyd's last breaths.
- A shopkeeper called the police on George Floyd.
- George Floyd was unable to breathe.
- Protesters filled the streets of Minneapolis and many other cities.
- Charges against all four officers gave protesters hope for justice.

B. ASK & ANSWER

- The reading is mainly about the death of George Floyd and the fight for justice for black lives.
- Witnesses asked the police to get off George Floyd. They also filmed the police violence.
- George Floyd and Eric Garner were both black American men who cried "I can't breathe" many times before they died at the hands of police.
- In addition to Floyd and Garner, the author mentions Freddie Gray and Ahmaud Arbery.
- Derek Chauvin is the white police officer that knelt on George Floyd's neck. He faces a charge of second-degree murder.
- At the end of the article, it says that some police agree that there is a need for change. Some officers took the first step during these protests by shaking hands or kneeling with protesters.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Vocabulary Review

A. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| 1. charge | 4. convict |
| 2. protest | 5. handcuffs |
| 3. justice | |

B. ODD ONE OUT

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. c | 3. c | 5. b | 7. a | 9. b |
| 2. b | 4. c | 6. b | 8. a | |

Reference

A. CHARGE

Go over the different word forms, meanings, and examples with your students.

B. WRITING PRACTICE

Have students practice writing example sentences using different forms of the word *charge*. Then have students take turns reading out their examples while their partners try to guess which use of *charge* they picked to write about (1–6).

Discussion

Answers will vary.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This lesson mentions vowel sounds on page 3. Note that the long E sound can also be represented by /e/ (IPA) or /ei/. The short E sound is also represented by /ɛ/ (IPA) or /e/.