

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).

- _____
- _____
- _____

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

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