





# What is Included?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Current Events: Protesting the National Anthem

**The History of the National Anthem and Sports**

Since 1791, it has been a custom in America to stand while "The Star-Spangled Banner" is played. In 1918, "The Star-Spangled Banner" was played at the first game of the World Series. The performance of this patriotic song had a large effect on Americans since this was in the midst of World War I. In 1933, President Herbert Hoover signed a bill to make "The Star-Spangled Banner" the national anthem for America.

During World War II, playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at baseball games became a standard practice. This tradition soon spread to football games, as well. After World War II, NFL Commissioner Elmer Layden requested that "The Star-Spangled Banner" be played at all games. He stated, "The national anthem should be as much a part of every game as the kick-off. We must not drop it simply because the war is over. We should never forget what it stands for." Until 2009, NFL players waited in the locker room while the anthem was being played.

**Making Their Stance**

In August 2016, Colin Kaepernick, quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, sat on the bench while the national anthem played during the third preseason game. Kaepernick chose to sit because he was protesting the treatment of African Americans in the United States and current issues with police brutality against African Americans. He stated,

*I'm going to continue to stand with the people that are being oppressed. To me this is something that has to change. When there's significant change and I feel like that is something that it's supposed to represent this country is representing people the way that it's supposed to, I'll stand. This stand wasn't for me. This is because the way that it's supposed to, I'll stand. This stand wasn't for me. This is because I'm seeing things happen to people that don't have a voice, people that don't have a platform to talk and have their voices heard, and effect change. So I'm in the position where I can do that and I'm going to do that for people that can't.*

**Controversy Arises**

After news of Kaepernick's silent protests spread, criticism also became widespread. People thought that sitting for the national anthem was unpatriotic and disrespectful to the soldiers who had fought for the country.



Kaepernick responded by stating that he respected the men and women who fought for America. He was protesting because he believed that these men and women wanted justice for everyone. This was not happening for minorities.

After widespread media coverage and continued criticism, Kaepernick met with Nate Boyer, a former army sergeant. Boyer and Kaepernick decided that kneeling during the anthem, opposed to sitting, would be more respectful.

Other NFL players began to join Kaepernick in his protests, including Eric Reid and Brandon Marshall. High school athletes also began to participate in the peaceful protests. During Week 3 of the 2017 season, President Donald Trump tweeted his disapproval for the protests. He tweeted that the NFL needed to fire the football players who disrespected the flag.

*If a player wants the privilege of making millions of dollars in the NFL, or other leagues, he or she should not be allowed to disrespect...our Great American Flag (or Country) and should stand for the National Anthem. If not, YOU'RE FIRED. Find something else to do!*

Trump also called for fans to stop watching NFL games.

Washington Redskins during the national anthem before a game against the Oakland Raiders on September 24, 2017.

While some Americans have supported these message of unity and protest by these football players, the players have also been booed and criticized. On October 8, 2017, Vice President Mike Pence left the Colts versus 49ers football game after some players knelt during the national anthem. Pence tweeted, "I left today's Colts game because @POTUS and I will not dignify any event that disrespects our soldiers, our flag, or our National Anthem."

The national anthem protests have become a widespread debate among Americans. Some believe that the athletes are exercising their right to free speech. They are using their platforms to make a change toward racial equality in America. Others believe that these athletes are being disrespectful toward our country and those who have fought for our freedom. Regardless of a person's opinion on this topic, one of the beauties of our country is that we have the right to express our differing views.



Members of the Oakland Raiders kneeling for the national anthem in September 2017.

Three page article written  
for 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Current Events: Determine the Viewpoint

Directions: Read the following quotations made by people about the national anthem protests. Determine if their viewpoints are for or against the protests.


Quotation	Viewpoint (For or against national anthem protests.)
"Kneeling during the national anthem has everything to do with race, just like your presidency. Those players are protesting racial injustice. They're not protesting the American flag. Saying that kneeling is a protest against the flag is like saying Gandhi's hunger strikes were a protest against smoking." -Stephen Colbert, comedian	
"I do not think the place to express yourself in society is as we recognize the American flag." -Jerry Jones, owner of the Dallas Cowboys	
"It is PRECISELY for men like [Colin Kaepernick], and his right to peacefully protest injustice, that we were willing to serve." -Michael Sand, former Green Beret and from a family of military servicemembers	
"I think it's misguided to protest the anthem or the flag because people don't see it as an issue, as some political issue -- they see it as protesting against the people who have given their lives for this country and the ideals we all strive for to make a more perfect union." - Paul Ryan, House Speaker	

Determine the Viewpoint  
Worksheet

## Summarize Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Current Events: Summarize



What is this article about? \_\_\_\_\_

Who is this article written for? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the main idea? \_\_\_\_\_

What are three important details or facts that support the main idea?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**WHEN?**

When did the topic of this article take place? \_\_\_\_\_

**WHERE?**

Where did the topic of this article take place? \_\_\_\_\_

**WHY?**

Why is this subject important? \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Current Events: What is Your Opinion?

Directions: Write a paragraph about your opinion on the NFL protests. Be sure to include text evidence and direct quotations from the article.

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Opinion Writing

# Lesson suggestions

This three page article was written on a 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. I recommend reading this article with your students if they are on a 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading level or lower.

- Read and have a class discussion about the article.
- Discuss how people have different viewpoints or opinions on current even topics. People can feel passionate about these issues. It is important to listen to everyone's viewpoint and respect others even if they don't see things the same way we do.
- Discuss different viewpoints portrayed in the media on the topic of kneeling for the national anthem. We rely on news, but it is also important to note that many news stations and articles have a particular viewpoint. It is important to be aware of the viewpoints of the media and people in the media so we can form our own opinions.
- Have students complete the worksheet "Determine the Viewpoint" independently, with partners, or in groups.
- Have students write a paragraph on their viewpoint on the issue.

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# Current Events:

## Protesting the National Anthem

### The History of the National Anthem and Sports

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During World War II, playing "The Star-Spangled Banner" at baseball games became a standard practice. This tradition soon spread to football games, as well. After World War II, NFL Commissioner Elmer Layden requested that "The Star-Spangled Banner" be played at all games. He stated, "The national anthem should be as much a part of every game as the kick-off. We must not drop it simply because the war is over. We should never forget what it stands for." Until 2009, NFL players waited in the locker room while the anthem was being played.

### Making Their Stance

In August 2016, Colin Kaepernick, quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers, sat on the bench while the national anthem played during a preseason game. People didn't notice until a photo circulated of Kaepernick sitting during the third preseason game. Kaepernick chose to sit during the anthem in protest of how minorities are treated in the United States and current issues with police brutality against African Americans. He states,

*I'm going to continue to stand with the people that are being oppressed. To me this is something that has to change. When there's significant change and I feel like that flag represents what it's supposed to represent, this country is representing people the way that it's supposed to, I'll stand... This stand wasn't for me... This is because I'm seeing things happen to people that don't have a voice, people that don't have a platform to talk and have their voices heard, and effect change. So I'm in the position where I can do that and I'm going to do that for people that can't.*

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# Current Events: Summarize



## WHO?

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Who was this article written for? \_\_\_\_\_

## WHAT?

What is the main idea? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are three important details or facts that support the main idea?

• \_\_\_\_\_

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When did the topic of this article take place? \_\_\_\_\_

## WHERE?

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## WHY?

Why is this subject important? \_\_\_\_\_

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