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Themed Vocabulary:

Words of the Civil Rights Movement

After the Civil War (1861-1865), amendments to the United States Constitution were supposed to put an end to slavery, make African Americans citizens, and extend voting rights to former slaves and their descendants.

But African Americans continued to be denied many rights, particularly in the South. The civil rights movement was an organized effort during the 1950s and 60s to secure these rights. The words below are important to know when reading, writing, or speaking about the civil rights movement.

1. civil rights (SIV-uhl rayhts) *noun*; Civil rights are the rights that all citizens should morally and legally have in a society no matter their race, gender, ability, religion, etc. The right to vote, the right to a fair trial in a court of law, and the right to a quality public education are examples of civil rights.

2. discrimination (dish-krim-ih-NAY-shuhn) *noun*; Discrimination is the unfair treatment of a person or a group of people because of their race, gender, religion, age, or other characteristic.

3. injustice (in-JUHS-tis) *noun*; Justice (JUHS-tis) is behavior or treatment that is just, meaning that it is morally right and guided by truth and fairness.

The prefix *in* means “not,” “opposite of,” or “without.” Injustice is the absence of justice. *Injustice* can also refer to an unjust act—a situation in which the rights of a person or a group of people are ignored. For example, it is an injustice that millions of girls around the world are denied the right to an education.

4. integrated (IN-tih-grey-tid) *adjective*; The verb *integrate* means “to combine two or more things into a whole, or to make one person or thing part of another group or thing.” The members of a group might do research separately and then integrate their work for a presentation. Things that are integrated have been brought together.

Often, *integrated* is used to mean “no longer practicing racial segregation.” (See *segregation*, on page 2.)

5. negotiate (ni-GOH-shee-eyt) *verb*; To negotiate is to discuss something to try to work out an agreement. You might try to negotiate a weekly allowance from your parents by offering to do chores around the house. Two countries might negotiate an agreement that helps create peace.

6. protest (PROH-test) *noun or verb*; As a noun, *protest* means “a statement or action that shows disapproval or objection.” Your dad might tell your little brother to go to bed despite your brother’s protests that he isn’t tired. When a group of people gather together and publicly express their unhappiness with something happening in their community or in their country, that is also a protest. (A person who participates in this kind of protest is called a protester.)

As a verb, *protest* means “to express strong disagreement or disapproval of something.” Football fans may protest a referee’s call with loud booing. If a company is planning to tear down a beloved park in your town to build a shopping center, people who believe that the park should be left alone might gather and protest the building of the shopping center.

7. segregation (seg-rih-GAY-shuhn) *noun*; Segregation is the act of keeping different groups (such as people of different races or religions) apart from one another

8. strike (strahyk) *noun*; In a strike, workers refuse to do their work until the owners of their company agree to certain worker demands. Workers might, for example, demand better pay or safer facilities.

Often when workers hold a strike, they gather outside and hold up signs about why they are striking. In the late 1930s, “sit-down strikes” became popular. In a sit-down strike, workers stop working but instead of gathering outside, they sit down at work.

Inspired by sit-down strikes of the 1930s and ’40s, activists of the civil rights movement started a new kind of sit-down strike in which protesters would sit down in a business or public place and refuse to leave until they were forced out or until their demands were met. This sort of strike is also known as a sit-in.

Directions: On the back of this page, list any other words from the play or speech whose definitions you are not sure about. For each word, use context clues to try to figure out the meaning. Then look up the word in a few different dictionaries. Discuss the meaning of the word with your teacher or another adult. Then write a definition for the word and one example sentence.

Vocabulary Practice

The Girl Who Dared

Directions: Read the passage below about a famous protest during the civil rights movement. Circle the bolded word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

On February 1, 1960, four college students entered a Woolworth department store in Greensboro, North Carolina. As a form of **protest/injustice**, the young black men sat down at Woolworth’s “whites only” lunch counter and ordered coffee. At the time, this sort of **discrimination/strike**—refusing to serve people because of the color of their skin—was common and legal. The young men had been inspired by other activists’ nonviolent actions in the fight for **civil rights/discrimination**. They decided to hold a sit-down **strike/injustice** to protest Woolworth’s practice of **segregation/civil rights**.

The store’s staff refused to serve the young men. The manager asked them to leave, but the students were determined to take a stand against **injustice/strikes**. They stayed seated at the counter until the store closed and then returned the next day—and the next, and again for many days after that. As time passed, hundreds of other protesters joined them. Meanwhile, new sit-down strikes were started at various stores, restaurants, and other public places across the South. As a result, Woolworth and other restaurants began to **integrate/negotiate** their stores later that year.