



Congressman John Lewis
United States
House of Representatives
Atlanta

***Stone Soup for a Sustainable World:
Life-Changing Stories of Young Heroes***

Get Into Good Trouble!
U.S. Congressman John Lewis
Atlanta, Georgia

U.S. Congressman John Lewis urged people to get into what he called “good trouble, necessary trouble.” As a child in Alabama, he experienced racism and segregation. When he was just 15 years old he heard Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speak on the radio, and it inspired him to join the Civil Rights movement. But when it was time for him to go to college, he was not allowed to enroll in the school he wanted to attend, because it was for whites only. He was a founding member of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), and he became one of the youngest leaders of the Civil Rights movement. He dedicated his life to fighting for equality and justice. Many times he put himself in personal danger in order to fight for fundamental rights for his people, including for many years as a U.S. Representative from the state of Georgia. The John Lewis Voting Rights Act is named in honor of his lifelong dedicated championship of voting rights.

Values Courage Dedication Commitment Justice Community Service

Lessons Learned

- There is only one appropriate response to injustice: Do something about it!
- Exercise your right to vote, and fight to strengthen our democracy. It is the most powerful tool we have against tyranny.
- When facing unjust laws, do what John Lewis encouraged us to do: get into “good trouble.”

English Language Arts

- What was the Civil Rights movement in America? What was John Lewis’s role in it? Create a 5–10-minute video in which you explain his lifelong involvement in and contributions to the movement.
- Write a research essay explaining the link between civil rights and climate change, and how Congressman Lewis used his experience fighting for civil rights to fight for climate justice for his constituents.
- Based on Congressman Lewis’s story, what does getting into “good trouble, necessary trouble” mean? Why was he an advocate of this type of trouble? Can you think of any situations nowadays that would warrant the need to get in “good trouble”? Used the attached handout to conduct a [Pinwheel Discussion](#) on these topics.
- Watch [this clip](#) of John Lewis’s historic speech as a young man, in 1963, in the March on Washington. After watching it, write a short description of his mannerisms, tone of voice, diction, and other details of the

delivery of his speech. How did these things affect his speech, and its effectiveness? In your opinion, what was the most important thing he did in that clip in order to make the greatest possible impact on his audience, and to get his ideas across?

STEM Activities

- In this [lesson plan on redistricting](#), define the practice of congressional redistricting, and analyze why it takes place. Then reflect on the practice of gerrymandering. Explore why it's so controversial, and learn about efforts to reform the redistricting process. Finally, practice redistricting a state, using an online simulation game.
- In this [lesson plan on algebraic variables and expressions](#), explore various variables related to literacy, with a focus on differences in literacy rates by race. Then, explore the variables that you think are important in order to propose an action that you might take as a class to impact literacy rates in your local community.
- Working in groups, figure out the hourly wage necessary for a family in Chicago to afford housing, by looking at [real data about hourly wages and the cost for renting a home each month](#). Then, using linear equations and graphs, show the challenges that families in Chicago face. The goal is to use mathematics to decide whether or not you think these six families in Chicago are being paid fair wages. [Links to resources](#) are provided to adapt the task for other cities.
- Using this [lesson plan on data analysis](#), examine demographic data about your school, and critically consider what story that data tells by interpreting and explaining the data through various types of graphs; determining and constructing appropriate graphs to display data; and describing the story that is being told by a graph and explaining why it is important.

Sustainability Innovations

- Congressman John Lewis had the unique opportunity to experience working with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the election of the first Black president in the United States. Review [The Civil Rights Movement](#) and compare activism in the 1960s to current activism in the U.S. How have things changed? What can we learn from individuals like Congressman John Lewis to achieve progress in our future?
- The John Lewis Voting rights Act, which still needs to be passed by the Senate, is one part of a greater movement to create efficacy on the ballots, and a proper representation of the American people. In 2021, further advancements were proposed through [H.R.1 - For the People Act of 2021](#). H.R. 1 states, "To expand Americans' access to the ballot box, reduce the influence of big money in politics, strengthen ethics rules for public servants, and implement other anti-corruption measures for the purpose of fortifying our democracy, and for other purposes." Review H.R.1, and highlight one aspect of the House bill that has resulted from the work of Congressman John Lewis and others over the years.
- How can activists gain support from the government to reach their goals? In this [USAID](#) article, partnerships between NGOs and their government partners are discussed.

Sustainable Career Pathways

- **Nonviolence Trainer.** Nonviolence is not only recognized as an effective protest strategy but is increasingly sought after as a more effective means of crisis prevention. Hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, and schools are all starting to recognize the value of nonviolent de-escalation of conflict. Would you like to become an expert in nonviolence and train others to use these skills as well? Here's one example of nonviolent crisis intervention training to explore: [The Crisis Prevention Institute](#).
- **Elected Official.** Along with getting people to engage with their elected representatives, it's important that they have good candidates to vote for. Perhaps you should run for elected office! One typically starts by running for local office, or working for an elected official to better learn the ropes. But there are many paths. [Listen to this NPR story to get a better sense of the process](#) of running for office.
- **Human Rights Lawyer.** When rights aren't protected, lawyers can help activists avoid, or at least navigate, difficult court systems—either in one's own country or in others. One can also help fight human rights abuses wherever they occur. While this is not an easy path, [this article offers an introduction on how to become a human rights lawyer, and what you can do with such training](#).

Call to Action: VOTE! Racial inequality continues to this day, and, sadly, racism is all around us. We each have a responsibility to change this: to inform ourselves, and to speak up. Go out and get into good trouble! Watch the movie *Good Trouble*. Be inspired!

[View State Standards](#)

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