

US Occupiers Turn to History, Art and Solidarity

Difficulty:

AVERAGE

Date of release:

Monday 7th November 2011

Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson

Today's report was about the continuing protests in the Occupy movement in the US. When did the movement start, and how has it developed over time? Which people were interviewed in the report, and what did they say?

Extension discussion topics

A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text

Introduction = Details of the Occupy movement in the report.

1. What do you remember about the Occupy movement in general from the report?
 - in its second month.
 - prides itself on having no leaders.
 - includes activists, unemployed people, students, union leaders, friends...
 - Occupy groups and rallies have sprung up in parks and squares in major cities across the US (including one in downtown Washington).
 - it has varied goals, including an end to US foreign military action, raising taxes on the wealthy, greater emphasis on government social spending, learning how to live in a donation-based outdoor community, providing access to free information.
2. Which people spoke in the report, and what did they say?
 - PhD history candidate from a Washington university (Paul Adler) gave a talk on past US social movements.
 - a union organizer / leader (Anthony Sluder) emphasized the importance of discussing one's opinions in order to be able to present arguments well, and make more of an impact.
 - a reader in the sidewalk people's library (John Graysquirrel) was happy that literature and other written information was available and free.
 - a Tunisian cab driver (Abdennaceur Chamakh) was impressed by the movement, but felt that older Americans should show more support.

What do you think of what these people said?

3. What details do you remember of the Occupy movement in downtown Washington?
- protestors hold occasional rallies to get their message across.
 - they try to block intersections.
 - they hold regular meetings to decide how to deal with the police.
 - they teach each other how to play the guitar or paint.
 - they organize talks on a range of subjects, from US social history to recent changes in Africa.
 - the protesters have set up a sidewalk people's library, with books, newsletters and newspapers.
 - they hope the movement will last until at least the elections in November 2012.

What do you think of their activities?

B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Recent upheavals in North Africa and nearby – “The Arab Spring”.

1. An extraordinary number of Arab countries in North Africa and the Middle East have been affected in these upheavals. Where did the upheavals begin, how, and why? (18 December 2010 in Tunisia, following the self-immolation of street fruit and vegetable seller Mohamed Bouazizi. Other details?)
2. Which countries have been caught up in the Arab Spring? With what results? Have developments been freely reported in the different countries? (a revolution in [Egypt](#); civil war and the fall of the regime in [Libya](#); major civil unrest in [Syria](#), [Bahrain](#), and [Yemen](#); protests in [Algeria](#), [Iraq](#), [Jordan](#), [Morocco](#), and [Oman](#); smaller protests in [Kuwait](#), [Lebanon](#), [Mauritania](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Sudan](#), and [Western Sahara](#).)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arab_Spring_-_cite_note-14
3. Why do you think this has happened? Do you think modern technology is responsible for the situation? (Social media such as Facebook and Twitter can be used to organize, communicate and raise awareness) Do you think the mass revelations made by the Wikileaks website in late 2010 can be connected to the Arab Spring? Why / why not?

OR, Topic = One part of the Arab Spring.

Find out all you can about the Arab Spring in one of the countries mentioned above. Or choose a person who has had an important role, either as a national leader, or as a leader of the movement for change. Give an oral presentation of your findings to a partner or to your teacher.

C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = *The Occupy movement.*

1. The Occupy movement, which started as "Occupy Wall Street" in September 2011, follows both the Arab Spring, and the Indignants protests in Europe, which started in Spain in May 2011. It can also be linked to the Adbusters movement in Canada, which challenges consumer capitalism.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Spanish_protests
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adbusters>
Do you think that it is normal that problems in one country lead to similar protests in another? Why / why not?
2. It is said that since the original "Occupy" protests in September, further protests taking this name have been held in more than 900 cities around the world. Have there been such protests in your country? What details can you give? (Where, when, how many people were / are involved, what their goals were / are)
<http://globalvoicesonline.org/specialcoverage/occupy-worldwide/>
3. In Great Britain, the Occupy protesters in London were unable to camp outside the Stock Exchange, and instead, put up their tents on private land outside St Paul's Cathedral, a focal point of the Church of England and a famous tourist attraction. The church's response to their presence has been controversial, and has led to senior resignations and a crisis in the Church hierarchy. Have you heard any details of this? What is the current situation? What is your opinion of the fact that this protest has led to such problems in an institution that it wasn't trying to attack?
<http://bigthink.com/ideas/40855>
4. We were told in the report that "The Occupy movement prides itself in having no leaders" and that "Goals of the protests have been varied". What do you think is the future of the movement? Do you think it will last?

Audioscript

[PROTESTERS SHOUT "(Wall Street) sold out, let's not bail out... "]

Protesters with the progressive Occupy movement, now in its second month, such as here in downtown Washington, are still holding occasional street rallies to get their messages across. They also try to block intersections. They have regular meetings to share best practices on dealing with police.

They even teach each other how to play the guitar or paint.

Paul Adler, a PhD candidate in history at a Washington university, is holding a talk about past US social movements. "So the late 19th century, early 20th century, was this period of great foment - industrialization, the emergence of modern consumer capitalism and with that came great resistance, great social movements."

A union organizer who has joined the movement, Anthony Sluder, says everyone is learning to sharpen their arguments to make more of an impact. "We are having the conversations and we are developing what we need to develop so that we can change what needs to be changed."

Sluder would like to see much more government help on job creation.

A sidewalk people's library has also been set up, with free books and Occupy movement newsletters and newspapers to read.

One of those enjoying the education is John Graysquirrel. "Books should be free, literature should be free and it should be available to anybody who wants them." *

There have also been scheduled talks on learning from recent upheavals in North Africa.

The most peaceful movement unfolded earlier this year in Tunisia.

Abdennaceur Chamakh, a Tunisian cab driver, now celebrating new elections in his home country, says he has been impressed with the US Occupy movement. "The good thing (is) it starts with the young people like back home. But it should be supported from** everybody. For the American people, they should not leave them alone.*** So they should support them."

The Occupy movement prides itself in having no leaders, and has sprung up spontaneously among a combination of friends, activists and unemployed in outdoor parks and squares in major cities across the United States.

Goals of the protests have been varied, ranging from an end to US foreign military action, raising taxes on the wealthy, more emphasis on government social spending and learning how to live in a donation-based outdoor community.

Protesters said they hoped the movement would last until at least the next US presidential and congressional elections in November 2012.

[PROTESTERS SHOUT "Whose street? Our street!... "]

Nico Colombant, VOA News, Washington.

* The speaker should say: *"it should be available to anybody who wants **it**", or "**they** should be available to anybody who wants them".*

** The speaker should say: *"**by** everybody".*

*** The speaker should say: *"they should not leave them **on their own**".*