



# Sometimes People March

by TESSA ALLEN

## Educators' Guide

### About the Book

In this debut picture book, spare, inspiring text describes the many reasons people march, and delicate watercolor illustrations depict activist movements throughout American history. Use this timely and timeless introduction to activism to spark age-appropriate conversation about the ways in which people gather to seek change.

**Interest Level:** age 4–9

**Guided Reading Level:** H

**Themes:** Activism, Social Justice, Civil Rights

### Discussion Questions

1. What do you notice about the crowd of people on the cover of the book? How would you describe the crowd? What does that make you think the book will be about?
2. What does it mean to resist injustice? What are some examples of small injustices? What are some examples of big injustices? How is marching a way of resisting?
3. If signs can share stories of resistance, what stories do you see in the signs the people are holding in the book? Have you seen these signs around you?
4. The book mentions many ways of resisting: with voices, words, songs, and art. How do you think people decide what they will use to resist? What would you use to resist?
5. Why does it take courage to march? Is it a risky thing to do? Why? What scary things can happen when people march?
6. What part does listening play in bringing about change? Why is listening to others so important? How can you tell when it's your turn to listen? How can you tell when it's your turn to speak up?
7. What questions do you have about the world that might bring people together? Do you think marching would be a good way to make people think about your questions and start to make changes?
8. When people march, they are sending a message to people who are more powerful than they are, and can make decisions and rules about their lives. How can marching together change who has power? Why are people stronger when they march together?
9. Marching also sends a message to people who don't yet care about a cause. How do you think people might change their minds when they see many people marching for a cause they didn't think about or agree with?
10. There have been many recent marches and protests that aren't depicted in this book. Do you know people who have been part of a march? Have you marched before? How did it feel? Would anyone like to share your story?
11. How can feelings of fear or anger or injustice turn to hope for change? What are the people in the book doing that might make their feelings more active and positive?





## Classroom Activities

### 1. Some Things Change; Some Stay the Same.

Make several sets of large index cards labeled with some of the marches and movements listed in the backmatter. Introduce each briefly to the students. Have students work in teams of two or three to find similarities between historical movements and more recent movements. After students have tried to match the movements up by purpose, demands, or theme, review the pairs as a class. Discuss why some issues recur throughout history; explain how persistent issues like racism change slowly and require ongoing, intentional work to dismantle the systems that perpetuate them.

**2. Community Mural.** Show the class a variety of murals and ask them to consider what they say about and to the communities they're in. Ask the class what messages they want to see and send about their own school community. Provide a piece of butcher paper or several pieces of poster board and work together to plan a mural with your chosen messages. Have students sketch pieces of the mural on smaller sheets of paper and plan how to put the pieces together. Work in small groups to complete the large mural to scale.

**3. Words and Images Tell a Story.** Provide sheets of construction paper or cardstock to each child, along with pencils and art supplies. Ask your students to choose a message or a story of resistance they want to share and make two or three signs to represent their message to the world. Let students brainstorm and discuss their messages before beginning. Each sign should be different, using symbols, art, and/or words. When they share their signs with the class, have the class reflect on how the signs make them feel, then have the creator say what their work means to them.

**4. The Spirit of a March.** Show your students videos of various protests and marches, showcasing songs such as "We Shall Overcome," chants, and speeches. After each video, ask the students to discuss how the song, chant, or speech made them feel. Ask how they think those emotions help people stay energized to work toward a goal.

Guide prepared by Autumn Allen, EdM, MA-MFA, educator, writer and critic.



## Dear Reader,

I recently found a note I scribbled to myself November 10th, 2016: “I am struggling to reconcile my identity as an American.”

While recent political history has brought this challenge to the front of my mind, this is something I had felt challenged by before. Patriotism always felt like a very particular brand of stars and stripes that did not fit me or my ideals. In recent years this question of American identity seems not just a struggle for me but for the country at large.

In the wake of the 2016 presidential election, I’d find myself walking with my nieces or students or kids I was babysitting and we’d come across a mass of people chanting, singing, or marching with signs. The children I was with would ask “What is going on?” Their question echoed what we adults, and often the marchers themselves, were asking: What is going on?! The answer to either version of the question is not a simple one, but one I felt was too important to gloss over.

There was a lot going on: politics, anger, fear, anticipation, reaction, the need for action, activism, civic pride, moral duty, camaraderie, hope, change. Even though it wasn’t simple, perhaps *because* it wasn’t, I didn’t want to ignore these hard conversations. So together we would notice things about these protests: emotions, loudness, and togetherness. For some kids it felt confusing or scary, and I found myself saying, “Sometimes people march—it is something Americans have done for a long time.” Connecting today’s activism to history made it easier to talk about: Marching has always been an important part of what it means to be an American.

In these conversations I recognized in myself a swelling patriotism. It is through those who have fought for justice with their creativity, resilience, togetherness, and courage that I find my pride in America—and it is through that same activism that I feel hope for its future.

—Tessa Allen, author/illustrator  
of *Sometimes People March*

