

THE MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CENTER
FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE, INC.
BELOVED COMMUNITY TEACH-IN
FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



**2025 LESSON PLAN 3-5:
MISSION POSSIBLE -
A GRAPHIC NOVEL ADVENTURE**



Lesson Plan: Mission Possible – A Graphic Novel Adventure

Grade Level: 3-5

Theme: Mission Possible – Protecting Freedom, Justice, and Democracy in the Spirit of Nonviolence³⁶⁵

Duration: 45 minutes

Learning Objectives:

1. Students will understand the concepts of freedom, justice, and democracy through storytelling.
2. Students will create a graphic novel page that reflects their understanding of these concepts.
3. Students will engage in group discussions and collaborative activities to deepen their knowledge of civil rights and democracy.

Materials Needed:

- Comic strip templates (3-4 panels)
- Pencils, colored pencils, or markers
- Whiteboard and markers for class discussion
- Example graphic novel: “How We Saved the Duck” (7-panel comic)
- Appendix: Story text and 5 reasons why the story works (provided in the lesson plan)

Lesson Structure:

Introduction (10 minutes):

• Introduce the Mission and Theme:

o Begin by explaining the three key concepts:

- **Freedom:** The ability to make choices in your life (e.g., choosing what to do at recess).
- **Justice:** Treating everyone fairly and standing up for what is right (e.g., helping a friend who is being bullied).
- **Democracy:** A way of making decisions where everyone gets a vote and a say (e.g., voting on what game to play).

o Here are questions the teacher can ask:

Freedom:

- “What are some choices you get to make during the school day?”
- “How do you feel when you get to choose what to do?”

Justice:

- “Have you ever seen someone being treated unfairly? What did you do?”
- “Why do you think it’s important to treat everyone the same?”

Democracy:

- “Have you ever voted on something in school, like what game to play?”
- “Why is it important that everyone gets a chance to share their opinion?”

• **Show the Graphic Novel Example:**

- o Use the “How We Saved the Duck” graphic novel to show how the story teaches a lesson about freedom (the freedom of the duck to be safe), justice (standing up against bullies), and democracy (getting help from an authority figure).

o **Talking Points:**

- Graphic novels can be fun and creative ways to tell stories.
- They use pictures and words to show how characters deal with problems.
- In this graphic novel, the kids save the duck peacefully, which shows that being brave doesn’t always mean using your fists.

Activity 1: Understanding Freedom, Justice, and Democracy (10 minutes):

1. Group Discussion:

- o Divide students into small groups and assign each group one of the following words: Freedom, Justice, or Democracy.
- o Ask them to brainstorm what that word means to them and give examples of it in their daily lives. Below are possible answers:

Freedom (The ability to make choices for yourself)	Justice (Treating everyone fairly and standing up for what is right)	Democracy (A way of making decisions where everyone gets a say)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing what to play at recess (e.g., playing soccer or playing on the swings). • Deciding what book to read during independent reading time. • Picking what game to play with friends after school. • Choosing what to wear to school in the morning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sure everyone gets a turn on the swings at recess. • Standing up for a friend who is being teased or bullied. • Helping a classmate who is struggling with schoolwork. • Making sure everyone in a group project shares the work equally. • Ensuring everyone gets a turn at gym class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting on what game to play during gym class or recess. • Deciding with classmates what project to work on in a group activity. • Voting as a family on what to have for dinner or what movie to watch. • Giving everyone a chance to share their ideas during class discussions.

2. Share with the Class:

- o Have each group share their ideas with the class. Write the key points on the whiteboard.
- o Talk about how these values are connected. For example, freedom allows us to make choices, but justice ensures those choices are fair, and democracy helps us decide together.

Activity 2: Creating a Graphic Novel Page (20 minutes):

1. Design the Story:

- o Each student will design a graphic novel page showing a situation where freedom, justice, or democracy is important. The student can choose their theme (freedom, justice, or democracy) or the teacher may assign it.
- o Provide a comic strip template with 5 blank panels for students to illustrate their story.

Here are ideas for graphic novel pages (in case students need help):

- o Freedom: A story about choosing what to play during recess, deciding how to spend free time at home, or being able to speak up in class.
- o Justice: A story where a student stands up for a classmate who's being left out, making sure everyone shares the same opportunities in a game.
- o Democracy: A story about voting on which class activity to do, or how a group of friends decides together what to do after school.

2. Illustration and Storytelling:

- o Encourage students to draw their comic strip panels, adding simple dialogue or captions to explain what's happening. Consider having students use scratch paper for a first draft. Once they feel comfortable with their work, they can redraw their graphic novel on the provided handout.
- o Remind them to keep their stories connected to one of the themes—freedom, justice, or democracy—and to think of examples that reflect their own experiences.

Activity 3: Share and Reflect (5 minutes):

1. Sharing Time:

- o Ask students to share their graphic novel pages with a partner or small group.
- o Have them explain how their story reflects freedom, justice, or democracy.

2. Class Reflection:

- o End the lesson by asking, "How can we practice freedom, justice, and democracy in our classroom every day?" Listen to students' ideas, reinforcing the importance of these values in their daily lives.

Extensions (Optional):

- **Classroom Graphic Novel:** Compile each student's page into a classroom graphic novel focused on the theme. This could be hung up as a mural or printed as a small booklet for the class.
- **Research Component:** Students could research historical figures (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta Scott King, Rosa Parks) and create additional graphic novel pages that depict these figures standing up for freedom, justice, or democracy.

Supports for Diverse Learners:

Supports for Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs):

- **Visual Supports:** Use visual aids such as drawings or images to reinforce each concept (e.g., showing images of freedom, justice, and voting).
- **Movement Breaks:** Incorporate short, sensory-friendly movement breaks if necessary.
- **Simplified Instructions:** Offer clear and simple instructions for each activity. Provide additional verbal reminders as needed.
- **Extended Time:** Give additional time to complete the worksheets or participate in the voting activity.
- **Flexible Seating:** Allow students to work in comfortable seating arrangements if needed.

English Learner Supports:

- **Pre-Teach Vocabulary:** Introduce key terms like freedom, justice, and democracy with visual examples.
- **Bilingual Materials:** Provide worksheets with simplified text or translations in the students' home language.
- **Peer Support:** Pair English learners with a buddy who can assist with translating or explaining the activity.
- **Gestures and Visuals:** Use gestures, pictures, or props to demonstrate abstract ideas such as fairness and choice.
- **Simplified Language:** Use simple and direct language during instruction, repeating important concepts.

Appendix A: Story Text for Graphic Novel – Justice for a Duck

Title: Justice for a Duck

Panel 1: A Day at the Park

- **Image:** A sunny day at the park. Martin and his friend are playing near the pond while ducks swim peacefully.
- **Narration:** “It was a beautiful day at the park, but something didn’t feel right.”
- **Martin’s friend:** “Look, Martin! Those kids are throwing rocks at that duck!”

Panel 2: Spotting the Trouble

- **Image:** Close-up of three kids laughing and throwing rocks at a duck by the pond. The duck is scared, flapping its wings.
- **Martin:** “That’s not fair! We have to do something.”
- **Martin’s friend:** “But what can we do? There’s more of them than us!”

Panel 3: Standing Up for What's Right

- **Image:** Martin takes a step forward, standing tall while his friend looks nervous.
- **Narration:** “Martin knew they couldn't just stand by and watch.”
- **Martin:** “Hey, stop it! That's not right!”
- **Bully 1:** “What's it to you?”

Panel 4: The Bullies Turn

- **Image:** The bullies turn to face Martin and his friend, looking angry. The duck is still in the background.
- **Martin's friend:** “Let's just leave...”
- **Martin:** “No, we can't let them hurt the duck.”

Panel 5: Asking for Help

- **Image:** Martin turns and sees a park ranger nearby. He quickly waves for help.
- **Martin:** “We need help! Those kids are throwing rocks at the duck!”
- **Narration:** “Martin knew that sometimes, asking for help is the bravest thing to do.”

Panel 6: The Ranger Steps In

- **Image:** The park ranger arrives, putting a stop to the bullying. The bullies look guilty as they walk away.
- **Ranger:** “Throwing rocks at animals isn't allowed. You boys need to leave the duck alone.”
- **Martin's friend:** “I'm glad we spoke up!”

Panel 7: The Duck is Safe

- **Image:** Martin and his friend sit by the pond, watching the duck swim safely again.
- **Narration:** “The duck was safe, and Martin knew they did the right thing.”
- **Martin:** “Standing up for what's right isn't always easy, but it's always worth it.”
- **Martin's friend:** “Yeah, we really helped today.”

Appendix B: 5 Reasons Why the Story Works

- 1. Relatable Themes:** The situation is familiar to students—bullying and standing up for what’s right—and they can easily relate to the characters’ dilemma.
- 2. Teaching Nonviolence:** The kids in the story choose a nonviolent approach by seeking help from a teacher instead of confronting the bullies aggressively.
- 3. Justice and Courage:** The story highlights values of justice, freedom, and democracy in an accessible way, showing that standing up for justice takes courage.
- 4. Empathy and Kindness:** The story models empathy, as the children recognize the duck’s vulnerability and take action

Glossary for 3-5:

- **Advocacy:** Helping to make things better for others by speaking up for what is right.
- **Civil Rights Movement:** A time when people worked together to make sure everyone was treated fairly, no matter their skin color.
- **Democracy:** A way for people to make decisions together, like voting on what game to play.
- **Equality:** Treating everyone the same and making sure everyone has the same rights.
- **Freedom:** Being able to make choices for yourself, like what to play or what to wear.
- **Justice:** Making sure things are fair and that everyone is treated kindly.
- **Legacy:** Something special that is passed down from one person to another, like stories or important lessons.
- **Peace:** A time when everyone is calm and happy, without fighting.
- **Tension:** A feeling of worry or stress, often when people disagree or are not getting along.
- **Inclusivity:** Making sure everyone feels welcome and included, no matter who they are.

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My Graphic Novel: How I Helped Martin Create Justice, Freedom and Democracy



Create your own 5-panel graphic novel showing how you helped Martin build a community based on freedom, justice, and democracy.

Introduce the characters and where the story takes place.

Show a problem or challenge that fits the theme. This could be an unfair situation, a fight for freedom, or a time when people need to make an important decision together.

Show how the characters react to the problem. What do they do to face the challenge? Use their actions, words, and facial expressions to show how they feel and what they want to do.

Show the most important part of the story. This is when the characters make a big choice or take action that shows the importance of freedom, justice, or democracy.

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Mi Novela Gráfica: Cómo Ayudé a Martín a Crear Justicia, Libertad y Democracia



Crea tu propia novela gráfica de 5 paneles que muestre cómo ayudaste a Martín a construir una comunidad basada en la libertad, la justicia y la democracia.

Presenta a los personajes y el lugar donde ocurre la historia.

Muestra un problema o desafío que se ajusta al tema. Esto podría ser una situación injusta, una lucha por la libertad o un momento en el que las personas necesitan tomar una decisión importante juntas.

Muestra cómo reaccionan los personajes ante el problema. ¿Qué hacen para enfrentar el desafío? Utiliza sus acciones, palabras y expresiones faciales para mostrar cómo se sienten y qué quieren hacer.

Muestra la parte más importante de la historia. Este es el momento en que los personajes toman una gran decisión o acción que demuestra la importancia de la libertad, la justicia o la democracia.

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My Graphic Novel: How I Helped Martin Create Justice, Freedom and Democracy



Create your own 5-panel graphic novel showing how you helped Martin build a community based on freedom, justice, and democracy.

Introduce the characters and where the story takes place.

Show a problem or challenge that fits the theme. This could be an unfair situation, a fight for freedom, or a time when people need to make an important decision together.

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