

# RODNEY KING & THE LA RIOTS

"WHEN I LEAVE HERE...WHEN MY FINAL DAY ON EARTH IS UP, I WANT TO LEAVE IN PEACE.  
I WANT TO HAVE PEACE IN MY HEART." -RODNEY KING

On March 3, 1991, four police officers were filmed beating 25 year old taxi driver Rodney King after a **pursuit** through the streets of Los Angeles. The video shocked the city and the events that followed shocked the nation.

It was one of the first police **brutality** videos of its kind and forever changed the conversation about police and race in America. King, who was intoxicated, had been caught speeding and initially tried to evade the police. When he finally pulled over and exited his car, multiple LAPD units and a helicopter were following him.

Taken by **bystander** George Holliday from across the street, the footage shows four officers tazing, kicking, and hitting King with their batons upwards of 53 times.

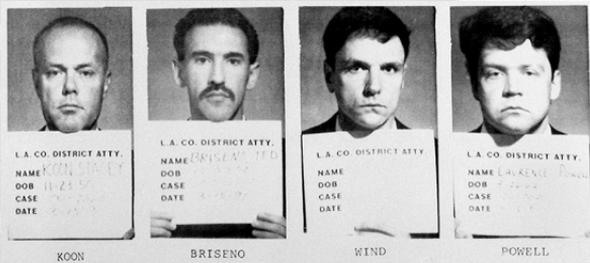
The evening of March 3, Rodney King and two passengers were driving in Los Angeles. When the highway patrol attempted to pull King over, a high-speed chase began with speeds around 115 miles per hour. When King finally came to a stop, officers placed the two passengers in their patrol car. They attempted to subdue King, who came out of the car last. King was tasered, struck with side-handled batons, then tackled to the ground and handcuffed. One officer stated that King resisted arrest, and that he believed King was under the influence of drugs at the time of the arrest, which caused him to be very aggressive and violent toward the officers. Video of the arrest showed that he was attempting to get up each time he was struck, and that the police made no attempt to cuff him until he lay still. Drug tests later showed that Rodney King was not under the influence of drugs at the time of the incident.



In a later interview, King, who was on **parole** for a robbery **conviction** and had past convictions for **assault**, **battery** and robbery, said that he had not **surrendered** earlier because he was driving while under the influence of alcohol.

# RODNEY KING & THE L.A. RIOTS

The officers involved, Stacey Koon, Theodore Briseno, Timothy Wind, and Laurence Powell were put on trial and acquitted by a majority white jury in April of 1992. The following six days were marred by riots, looting, arson, and extreme violence across the city of Los Angeles.



In what became known as the 1992 Los Angeles Riots or the Rodney King Riots, widespread looting, assault, arson, and killings occurred during the riots, and estimates of property damage were over \$1 billion. Order was only restored after members of the California Army, Marines, and National Guard were called in to stop the rioting when local police could not control the situation. In total, 63 people were killed during the riots, 2,383 people were injured, and more than 12,000 were arrested. Rodney King himself held a press conference during the turmoil, begging the public, "Can we all get along?"

King later settled a civil suit with the city of Los Angeles for \$3.8 million. He went on to live a relatively quiet life, but had a number of run-ins with the law as the years went on -- including a DUI in 2011. In 2012, he drowned in his backyard pool.

## VERDICT IN VIDEOTAPED BEATING

# L.A. cops acquitted; fires, violence erupt



## Rioters take streets

Los Angeles rioters were held back by police on Tuesday, but the city was still in flames as rioters looted stores and set fires. The rioting spread to other parts of the city, and the police were overwhelmed. The rioters were seen looting stores and setting fires. The rioting was widespread and the police were unable to control the situation. The rioters were seen looting stores and setting fires. The rioting was widespread and the police were unable to control the situation. The rioters were seen looting stores and setting fires. The rioting was widespread and the police were unable to control the situation.

# WATTS RIOTS OF 1965

The Watts riots, sometimes referred to as the Watts Rebellion, took place in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles from August 11 to 16, 1965.



On August 11, 1965, 21-year-old Marquette Frye, an African American man was pulled over on suspicion of reckless driving. A minor argument broke out, and then escalated into a fight between family members and police. The community reacted in **outrage** to **allegations** of police brutality that soon spread, and six days of looting and arson followed. Los Angeles police needed the support of nearly 4,000 members of the California Army National Guard to end the riots, which resulted in 34 deaths and over \$40 million in property damage. The riots were blamed on police racism.

At the time, Los Angeles' African American residents were excluded from the high-paying jobs, affordable housing, and politics available to white residents. They also faced discrimination by the Los Angeles Police Department. When the new police chief, William Parker, was appointed, he attempted to make the LAPD's relationships better by creating a more professional police force. Despite the changes, William Parker's LAPD faced heavy criticism from the city's Latino and black residents for police brutality.

These racial injustices are cited as reasons why Watts' African-American population exploded on August 11, 1965, in what would become the Watts Riots. Rioters tore up sidewalks and bricks to hurl at Guardsmen and police, and to smash their vehicles.

# DOCUMENT A

## WHAT IS A RIOT ?

There are several types of riots. Review these specific characteristics of the LA riots.

The L.A. riots of 1965 and 1992 could be called **communal riots**, where **collective** violence is directed at an opposing group (defined by race, ethnicity or religion). The goal of collective violence is inflicting harm or destruction for the purpose of producing social change. Collective violence is typically directed at property, people, or authority. Both L.A. riots involved backlash against police and against whites (persons of a particular social group). L.A. rioters also engaged in **significant** property destruction.

Riots are **socially constructed** in that rioters define their behaviors in non-conventional ways that are common only to other rioters. For example, although looting would normally be defined as stealing, during the L.A. riots, participants changed the meaning of this activity to "taking what is owed due to past racial **discrimination** and **mistreatment** by police."

Although a riot may have a specific event that starts it, the violence is really the result of many negative events that have occurred before it.

Riots are usually **spontaneous** and do not involve a significant amount of planning and coordination.

# DOCUMENT B

## WHAT IS NON-VIOLENT ACTION ?

Nonviolent action is a technique of action for applying power or trying to make a change in society by using symbolic protests, noncooperation, and defiance, but not physical violence. The 2 main types of non-violent action are seen below.

### NON-VIOLENT PROTESTS

Protests are symbolic acts of peaceful opposition often used to show **dissent** toward a specific issue or policy. These methods are also used to gain publicity for a cause. Parades, vigils, picketing, and posters are all considered acts of protest.

### NON-COOPERATION

Non-cooperation is intentionally removing oneself from relationships or services offered by the person or group who have harmed you OR purposely not cooperating with those people. Common methods of non-cooperation are **strikes** or **boycotts**.



# DOCUMENT C

## THE SALT MARCH

Watch the following video on the Salt March orchestrated by Mohandas Gandhi. Take notes and begin to make comparisons between the Salt March and the LA Riots of 1965 and 1962.



CLICK ON THE IMAGE ABOVE, SCAN THE QR CODE, OR COPY AND PASTE THE LINK:

<https://tinyurl.com/ybrxpzyl>



# TERMINOLOGY



1. **pursuit:** a chase
2. **brutality :** savage physical violence; great cruelty
3. **bystander:** a person who is present at an event but does not participate
4. **parole:** the release of a prisoner on the promise of good behavior
5. **conviction:** a formal declaration that an individual is guilty of a crime
6. **assault:** a physical attack on another person
7. **battery:** the act of beating or pounding
8. **surrendered:** to give oneself up to the police willingly
9. **marred:** damaged or ruined
10. **looting:** robbing or burglarizing
11. **arson:** the intentional burning of another person's property
12. **outrage:** a powerful feeling of anger

# TERMINOLOGY



13. **allegations:** claims made that a person did something wrong or illegal, usually without proof
14. **communal riots:** destructive or violent action taken by an entire community of people
15. **collective:** done by people acting as a group
16. **significant:** very important or worthy of attention
17. **socially constructed:** created or made by society as a group
18. **discrimination:** the unfair treatment of a particular group of people, usually based on gender, race, or status
19. **mistreatment:** the poor treatment of someone or something
20. **spontaneous:** not planned ahead of time
21. **dissent:** disagreement or argument
22. **strike:** refusal to work for a company as a form of protest
23. **boycott:** when a person or group refuses to buy or use goods from a certain company as a form of protest

# DISCUSSION



1. Compare notes on the 1965 and 1992 L.A. race riots.
  - a. What was similar?
  - b. What was different?
2. Do you believe that these violent protests are *more helpful* to the black community in getting their message of police racism across or *more hurtful*?
  - a. Why? How?
3. What are the *long-term effects* of the Rodney King incident on society today?
  - a. Many officers now must wear video recorders. How do you think this has changed the way police interact with the public?
  - b. Do you think this is necessary?
  - c. How would you feel about having to be recorded throughout your day?
4. The article discusses *looting*-typically seen as stealing-but during riots this act becomes the public taking back money or things they believe they are owed by big businesses, government, and society.
  - a. Do you believe that looting is acceptable for people who feel they have been discriminated against?
  - b. How should people claim what they feel they deserve if they haven't been able to do so due to discrimination?
4. What are the main differences between violent protests like riots and non-violent protests such as the Salt March?
  - a. Which method do you think is the most effective?
  - b. Why?
5. Do you believe the Watts community was *justified in beginning a riot*?
  - a. Do you think the L.A. community was justified in their riot?
  - b. Do you think Gandhi was justified in marching through India?

# PERFORMANCE TASK



PROMPT:

Based on your reading of the anchor texts as well as the supplemental texts and your own research, please respond to the prompt below:

**1. Create a timeline of Civil Rights events from 1948 to present. Include events that shaped the lives of African Americans.**

**2. In 2-4 sentences, describe each event and explain how it affected African Americans at the time.**

Use the sources provided as well as your own research to analyze the treatment of African Americans throughout history and events that have shaped our country today. Cite quotations, specific events, and facts you have learned.

**Extension Activity:** Choose 3 events from the Civil Rights timeline and explain what effect you believe they still have today. How have those events changed laws, policies, behaviors, and opinions or beliefs. How have those events affected YOU?

# TIMELINE GRADING RUBRIC

Introduce at least 10 dates from the African American Civil Rights Movement

Exceeds standard 15  
Meets standard 12  
Approaching Standard 10  
Below Standard 8

Choose events that demonstrate an understanding of impactful moments on the lives of the African American community

Exceeds standard 15  
Meets standard 12  
Approaching Standard 10  
Below Standard 8

Organize all dates chronologically

Exceeds standard 15  
Meets standard 12  
Approaching Standard 10  
Below Standard 8

# EVENT EXPLANATIONS GRADING RUBRIC

W.S. 2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information

Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions	Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8	
Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts.	Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8	
Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify concepts	Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8	
Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.	Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8	
Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone.	Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8	
Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented	Exceeds standard 15 Meets standard 12 Approaching Standard 10 Below Standard 8	

## CONVENTIONS OF ENGLISH STANDARD 1-2

Correct Punctuation	Exceeds standard 10 Meets standard 8 Approaching Standard 6 Below Standard 4	
Correct Grammar & punctuation	Exceeds standard 10 Meets standard 8 Approaching Standard 6 Below Standard 4	

# STANDARDS ALIGNMENT



## READING (ANCHOR TEXT & SUPPLEMENTAL TEXTS)

### READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS 9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

### READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS 9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

### READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS 9-10.3

Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

### READING INFORMATIONAL TEXTS 9-10.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### SPEAKING AND LISTENING 9-10.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

#### SPEAKING AND LISTENING 9-10.1.A

Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

#### SPEAKING AND LISTENING 9-10.1.C

Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

#### SPEAKING AND LISTENING 9-10.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

# STANDARDS ALIGNMENT



## PERFORMANCE TASK

### WRITING 9-10.2

Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

### WRITING 9-10.2A

Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

### WRITING 9-10.2B

Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

### WRITING 9-10.2C

Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

### WRITING 9-10.2D

Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

### WRITING 9-10.2E

Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

### WRITING 9-10.2F

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

### WRITING (RESEARCH) 9-10.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

### WRITING (RESEARCH) 9-10.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

# SOCIAL JUSTICE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Identity	Anchor Text(s)	Supplemental texts/videos	Discussion	Performance Task
Develop positive social identities			X	X
Develop language & historical/cultural knowledge to affirm and describe membership in multiple identity groups	X	X		
Recognize that people's multiple identities interact and create complex individuals	X	X	X	X
Express pride, confidence, self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of others			X	X
Recognize traits of cultures and how they negotiate their own identities in multiple spaces	X	X	X	X

Diversity	Anchor Text(s)	Supplemental texts/videos	Discussion	Performance Task
Express comfort with people who are similar and different-engage respectfully			X	
Develop language & knowledge to describe how people are similar and different	X	X	X	X
Respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others with an open mind			X	X
Respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding, and connection	X	X	X	X
Examine diversity in social, cultural, political, and historical contexts	X	X	X	X

# SOCIAL JUSTICE STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

Justice	Anchor Text(s)	Supplemental texts/videos	Discussion	Performance Task
Recognize stereotypes and relate to people as individuals	X	X	X	
Recognize unfairness on the individual level and injustice at the institutional level	X	X	X	
Analyze the harmful impact of bias and injustice on the world	X	X	X	X
Recognize that power and privilege influence relationships and consider how they have been affected by those dynamics	X	X	X	X
Identify figures, groups, events, strategies, philosophies relevant to the history of social justice around the world	X	X	X	X

Action	Anchor Text(s)	Supplemental texts/videos	Discussion	Performance Task
Express empathy when people are excluded or mistreated because of their identities and concern when they, themselves, experience bias	X	X	X	X
Recognize their own responsibility to stand up to exclusion, prejudice, and injustice			X	X
Speak up with courage and respect when they or someone else has been hurt or wronged by bias			X	X
Make principled decisions about when and how to take a stand against bias and injustice			X	X
Plan and carry out collective action against bias and injustice in the world and evaluate what strategies are most effective				X