

COMPARING TWO ARTICLES ABOUT #BLACKLIVESMATTER

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

In 2021, no thoughtful study of the Black freedom struggle of the 1950s and 1960s can fail to draw connections between that historic period and the ongoing fight to fully value and consistently protect Black lives. This activity -- informed by students' prior reading and discussion on *Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story* -- gives students the opportunity to examine and place in dialogue two very different texts on a related topic using an adaptation of the "Comparing Two Texts" strategy outlined by The New York Times's Learning Network. The version of the approach presented here is broken down, reformatted, and simplified to provide more scaffolding and clarity for students. (Note that both texts provided here as student handouts have been excerpted for brevity and reader accessibility; if you and your students have the time and space to work with the full texts, by all means do so).

Alicia Garza's piece from 2014 explains the origin of #BlackLivesMatter in her collaboration with Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi. She reiterates what the call and the movement are and are not, and she calls out and rejects efforts to dilute or appropriate it. She insists on the accurate centering of their work as queer Black women and reminds the reader of the movement's expansive and intersectional political and social aims, as well as why and how it's important to be explicit about how the struggle for Black liberation, specifically, has informed other liberation movements. The text lends itself to helping students trace a direct line from Montgomery to BLM. (It may be worth clarifying for your students that the BLM movement co-founded by Garza, Cullors, and Tometi is different from the Movement 4 Black Lives (M4BL) coalition that also formed in 2014. While these two broad movements share many goals, they are distinct organizations.)

Jim Daley's article from 2021 focuses on what is but one of the demands of BLM: that law enforcement officials stop killing Black men and women. This piece summarizes and gets activist reaction to a study by a University of Massachusetts, Amherst economist that finds a significant correlation between BLM protests in a city and a decrease in police killings. It calls attention to the importance and the impact of protesting, as well as how far we have yet to go.

In terms of procedure, make sure to check in with students as or after they complete question 1 on the handout. Even in a brief whole-class discussion, you can clarify any comprehension issues about the content in the articles. Then let students continue to work through the analysis and reflection. Once students have worked independently to compare, contrast, and reflect on the articles, give them the opportunity to discuss with their peers, either in small groups or as a class. Besides using any of the summary/reflection questions from the handout to guide that conversation, you can encourage further inquiry by asking them to share what questions they still have.

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DIRECTIONS: Use the questions below to help you think about the relationship between the two excerpted articles you read: “A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement” by Alicia Garza and “Killings by Police Declined after Black Lives Matter Protests” by Jim Daley.

1. CONTENT – In your own words, summarize the main idea of each article. What is each text saying?

A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement	Killings by Police Declined after Black Lives Matter Protests (about research by Travis Campbell)

2. SIMILARITIES – How are these articles similar or related?

Note any similarities in the following areas. (Use specific quotes to illustrate/give examples).

Subject matter <i>(What the article is about)</i>	
Theme <i>(A unifying idea the author keeps coming back to)</i>	
Purpose <i>(What the author is trying to do)</i>	

<p>Tone <i>(The attitude or feeling of the article)</i></p>	
<p>Audience <i>(Who the author or article is talking to)</i></p>	
<p>Anything else you notice?</p>	

3. DIFFERENCES – How are the two articles different? Where/how do they “disagree”?

Note any differences in the following areas. (Again, use specific quotes to illustrate/give examples).

<p>Subject matter <i>(What the article is about)</i></p>	
<p>Theme <i>(A unifying idea the author keeps coming back to)</i></p>	
<p>Purpose <i>(What the author is trying to do)</i></p>	

<p>Tone <i>(The attitude or feeling of the article)</i></p>	
<p>Audience <i>(Who the author or article is talking to)</i></p>	
<p>Anything else you notice?</p>	

4. THE TWO ARTICLES TOGETHER

- a) Did reading the two articles *together* help you see or understand things better or differently? (Do you think you noticed things you wouldn't have if you had just read them separately?)

- b) If Alicia Garza and Travis Campbell (the author of the study featured in Daley's article) were to have a conversation, what do you think they might say to each other?

5. REACTION

What reaction do you have to these articles, either individually or together?