

WHY DO PEOPLE PROTEST?

Lesson One



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand why people protest
- To understand what happened at [the Peterloo Massacre](#)

WHAT IS PROTEST?



Reclaim The Power, Heathrow Airport campaign, 2018.
Photo © Reclaimthepower

A protest is a statement or action expressing disapproval of, or objection to, something.

Here are three examples:

- Boycotting a product due to how it is made or how people making it are treated
- Signing a petition in opposition to government policy
- A direct action, for instance, the die-in protest in the image here

Can you think of any other examples of protests?

WHY DO PEOPLE PROTEST?



Protester with London's Black Lives Matter March in Oxford Street, 8 July 2016 © Alisdare Hickson

People normally protest to make change on an issue that they care about or is affecting their lives.

Here are three examples:

- [Youth climate strikes](#)
- [Black Lives Matter protest](#)
- [Anti/pro Brexit demonstrations](#)

Teacher Notes: Click on links for further info on each campaign.

What would you want to change?
Why would you protest?

THE ROAD TO REFORM

One of the key reasons that people have protested over the last 200 years has been to have the right to vote.

Activity: Complete the Road to Reform worksheet and work out when key reform milestones and events occurred.

Teacher Notes: Click on image for link to an expansion video explaining who can vote in the UK today.



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IT ALL STARTED WITH THE PETERLOO MASSACRE

On 16 August 1819, an estimated 60,000 people from across Greater Manchester walked to St Peter's Field to protest for the right to vote. At the time around 2% of the population could vote as you had to be a wealthy landowner to do so.

Many walked especially to see the famous Henry Hunt speak on the need for electoral reform.

Teacher Notes: Visit the Peterloo1819 website via clicking on the image.



WHY DID THEY WANT CHANGE?

For a lot of people life was hard. Wages had halved since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and rising food prices left many unable to afford basic foods like bread.

People felt that their lack of representation was preventing them from having a say on important issues. Many started to ask for change and demand a voice in Parliament.



WHY DID THEY WANT CHANGE?

MPs represent groups of people who vote for them, allowing everyone to have a say in the process of law-making and decision-making, which happens in parliament.

As Manchester was a new industrial city and the system for choosing MPs was very old, Manchester did not have its own MP despite having a large population.



THE JOURNEY



© Polyp Schlunke Poole,
Peterloo - Witness to a massacre, 2019

Men, women and children walked wearing their best clothes, singing songs and carrying banners from towns and villages across and beyond today's Greater Manchester to attend a meeting at St Peter's Field, some walking nearly 30 miles.

The march was practiced on local moors in the weeks before the meeting to ensure that everybody could arrive in an organised manner.

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WHERE WAS ST PETER'S FIELD?



© Peterloo 2019 courtesy of TripleDotMakers

Today St Peter's Field is near to where St Peter's Square is in Manchester.

The speeches would have been just outside Manchester Central.

Activity: Use [google maps](#) to work out how long would it take you to get there from where you live.

Teacher Notes: Click on image for GIF of St Peters Field today.

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THE PETERLOO MASSACRE



Teacher Notes: Click on the image for a 6 minute video that explains what happened.

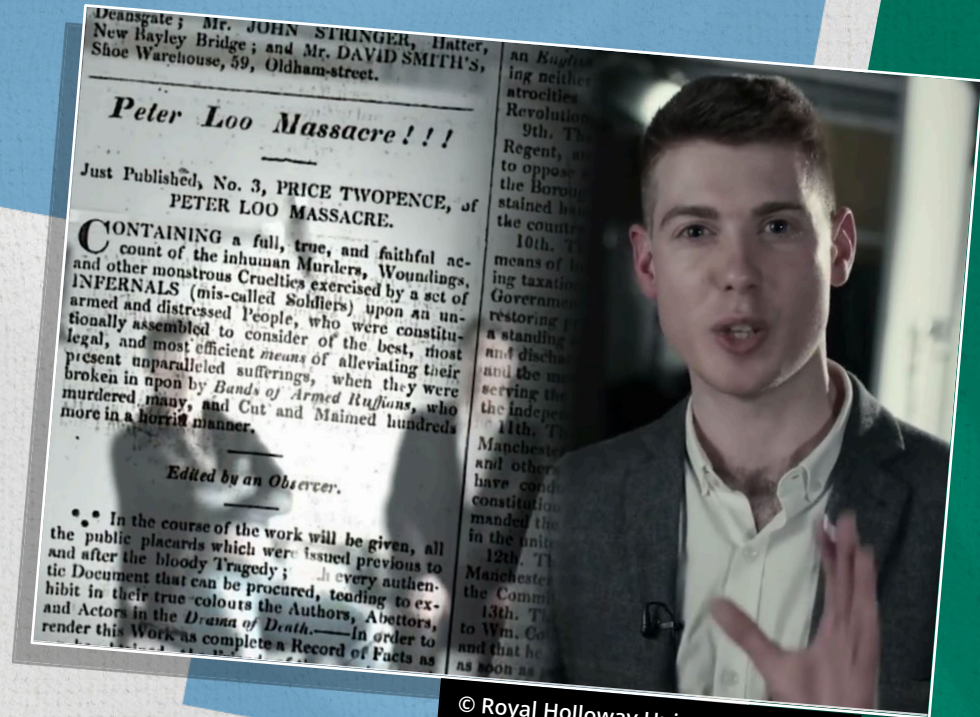
© Polyp Schlunke Poole, Peterloo - Witness to a massacre, 2019

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FILM REFLECTION

While you are watching the film consider the following questions:

- How would you have felt at the start of the day?
- How would you have felt when the speeches were taking place?
- How might you have felt when the authorities arrived armed on horseback?
- How would you have felt when you had to then walk home?



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Teacher Notes: Optional Kahoot Quiz extension - Play via this link-
<https://create.kahoot.it/share/peterloo-quiz/4bc8f08-2bcd-48bf-b997-b9e4283a4c84>

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DO YOU THINK IT WAS WORTH IT?

Given everything you know about Peterloo, do you think that it was worth it?

- If you knew everything you know now about Peterloo would you still go?
- What is happening in the world today that you care about, and would you campaign for it?

Activity: Write down on a post-it note one thing you would campaign about today.

Manchester Heroes print, by George Cruikshank, September 1819
© People's History Museum



#MYPETERLOO CAMPAIGN

- Write a postcard or shoot a 30 second video outlining an issue that you would like to change.
- Look up the name of your local MP or councillor by going to writetothem.com and putting in your postcode.



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#MYPETERLOO CAMPAIGN

- Remember: MPs play a role in making or changing laws and councillors are responsible for local service management (for instance, recycling and potholes). Which one is best to write to about your issue?
- Share your message with them via post, email or social media.
- Share it on social media via #MyPeterloo #Peterloo2019.



People's Protest, 15 August 2014
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