

## „Black Lives Matter!“ – Die Rassenunruhen in den USA anhand unterschiedlicher Textsorten erschließen (Klasse 9–11)

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### M 1 What happened in Ferguson? – Approaching the text

*The USA's society still has to deal with prejudice and racism towards African Americans because of the country's history of slavery and segregation. Find out which event caused a new discussion about racism.*



Peaceful protest in New York City on December 1, 2014. Demonstrators are lying on the floor of Grand Central Terminal to protest the death of Michael Brown.

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#### The shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri

On 9 August, 2014 Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, was shot at least six times by Darren Wilson, a white police officer, after stealing cigarillos at a supermarket. Brown died from the injuries. Before the shooting, Brown and Wilson had a violent conflict at Wilson's car. Eyewitnesses don't agree on how exactly the shooting happened. Nevertheless, many people argued that Wilson would not have shot if Brown had been white instead of black.

A nationwide debate about the police's treatment of African Americans started. When on 24 November a grand jury decided not to indict Officer Wilson, protests and demonstrations broke out in Ferguson and in many other cities in the USA. News reports showed images from the streets which included looting, cars set on fire and police using riot gear firing gunshots and using tear gas. Though there were also many peaceful protesters demonstrating in Ferguson's streets, Governor Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency.

Although the United States has made great progress to protect civil rights, some Americans say that the nation has not yet completely succeeded.

#### Task

1. Read the text and note down aspects you find especially tragic or worrying.
2. Discuss the aspects you chose with a partner.

**prejudice:** das Vorurteil – **segregation:** die Rassentrennung – 1 **unarmed:** unbewaffnet – 8 **grand jury:** part of the legal system in some states of the US: a group of citizens decides if a case should be given a trial in court – 8 **to indict so.:** jmdn. anklagen – 10 **to loot:** plündern – 11 **riot gear:** die Schutzausrüstung – 13 **to declare a state of emergency:** den Notstand erklären – 14 **civil rights:** die Bürgerrechte



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3. a) The photo was taken at a demonstration after the shooting of Michael Brown. You only see the key element; the background is blurred. In groups of three, imagine you are the person in the photo. Describe the situation and take notes. Answer these questions:
- What can you see that is not in the photo?
  - What do you hear/smell/feel?
- b) Describe how you experience the situation to two other groups.
4. Write a short report about the events with the heading *Clashes with police in Ferguson*.

### How to write a report

A report describes an incident or event. Usually, the details in a report are described in chronological order. To write a report, use the following guidelines:



#### 1. State important facts

Begin your report by identifying all important elements of the incident, such as time, location, people involved, cause of the incident and so on.

#### 2. Describe what happened

Describe the events in the order they happened.

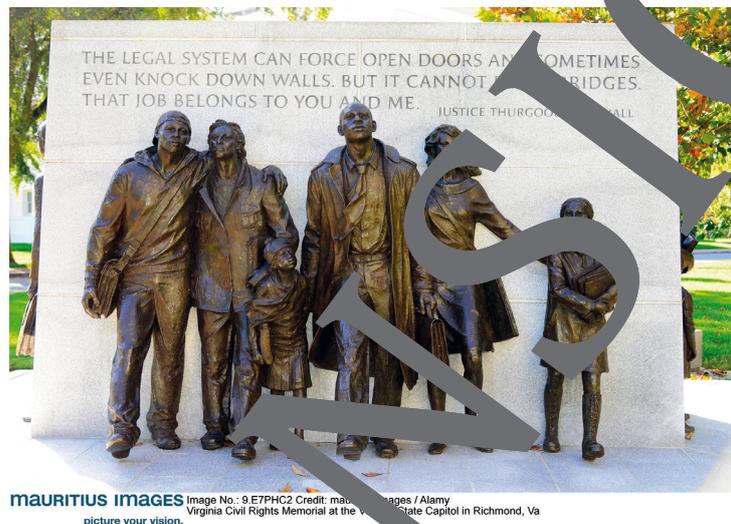
#### 3. Write a brief summary

Conclude your report by giving a brief summary of the events.

### M 3 The Civil Rights Movement – the black fight for equal treatment

Civil rights leader Dr Martin Luther King Jr. said in his famous speech about ending racism in 1963, “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal ...’” Find out more about African Americans’ fight for equal treatment in the Civil Rights Movement.

#### A. Approaching the text



The photo shows the Civil Rights Memorial in Richmond, Virginia. Describe and interpret the sculpture.

#### Excerpt from *An Illustrated History of the USA* (1990) by Bryan O’Callaghan

The black struggle for equal treatment became known as the Civil Rights Movement. An important legal turning point came in 1954. In a case called *Brown v. Topeka* the Supreme Court declared that segregated schools were illegal and ordered that black children should be allowed to attend any school as pupils. In September 1957, black children tried to enrol at the previously all white high school in Little Rock, Arkansas. An angry mob gathered to prevent them. [...] So began a long struggle for equal rights in education. It was still going on more than thirty years later.

Another landmark of the black struggle came on December 1, 1955. A black woman named Rosa Parks got on a bus in the strictly segregated southern city of Montgomery, Alabama. She took a seat towards the back of the bus, as blacks were supposed to do. But then white workers and shoppers filled the front section of the bus and the driver ordered her to give up her seat. Mrs. Parks decided that she would not be treated in that way. She refused to move.

Mrs. Parks was arrested. But the black people of Montgomery supported her. [...] They started a campaign to end segregation on buses. Led by a young clergyman named Martin Luther King, they began to stop using, or “boycott”, the city’s bus services. The boycott went on for a year. Finally, in November 1956, the Supreme Court declared that segregation on public buses was unconstitutional. Montgomery’s public transport system was desegregated [...].

A climax of the Civil Rights Movement came in 1963. On a hot August day 200,000 people, black and white, took part in a mass demonstration in Washington to demand full racial equality. In a moving and dramatic speech, Martin Luther King told millions of Americans watching their televisions all over the country: “I have a dream [...]”

## Awareness – What do you know?

M 1

People of all ethnicities and ages in every part of the USA have hit their limit. They will not sit on the sidelines after the Minneapolis police killing of George Floyd on 25 May 2020.

### A. Approaching the topic – a KWL chart

#### Tasks

What do you know about racial relationships in the USA? Think of what you see, hear and read in the media.

1. Work in small groups. Use a KWL chart to fill in the column "What I know" (K).
2. Individually, write questions on what you want to know (W) about the situation in the USA into the chart.

KWL Chart - Black Lives Matter		
What I know	What I want to learn	What I have learned

### B. Protests across the country

#### Tasks

3. Here is a picture taken during a demonstration against racial injustice in Portland, Oregon.



- a) Working in small groups, study the picture for what it shows and what not. Make notes. Consider these things:
    - What do you see/hear/smell/feel?
    - What was there, *Photo: ap/dpa* when the photograph was taken, but is not in the photograph?
  - b) Use your notes and describe your mental image of the scene to a partner. Change partners several times.
4. **Twitter challenge:** Tweets are limited to 280 characters; thus, they are a creative challenge. Reports, fiction, poetry, and political comments are common on the platform. – Write a tweet using your notes as a basis.

#### Here are some tips to guide you.

- Find out something in the picture that has a meaning for you. Even though it may be a simple thing, it should represent something larger (symbolic).
- In all references, describe the situation. It could be serious, angry, but also hopeful and optimistic.

## M 2

## #BlackLivesMatter

This is what a Portland resident said about the killing of George Floyd: "Every time I open my Facebook page, each new post about the unjust death of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and now George Floyd further dims my hope of a just and humane world. The cycle of grief kicks in. George Floyd's last words, "I can't breathe," have been haunting me. Those words have been sitting in my heart, making it harder to breath."

## Tasks

1. Read the list below. What does it say and what does it want to say?

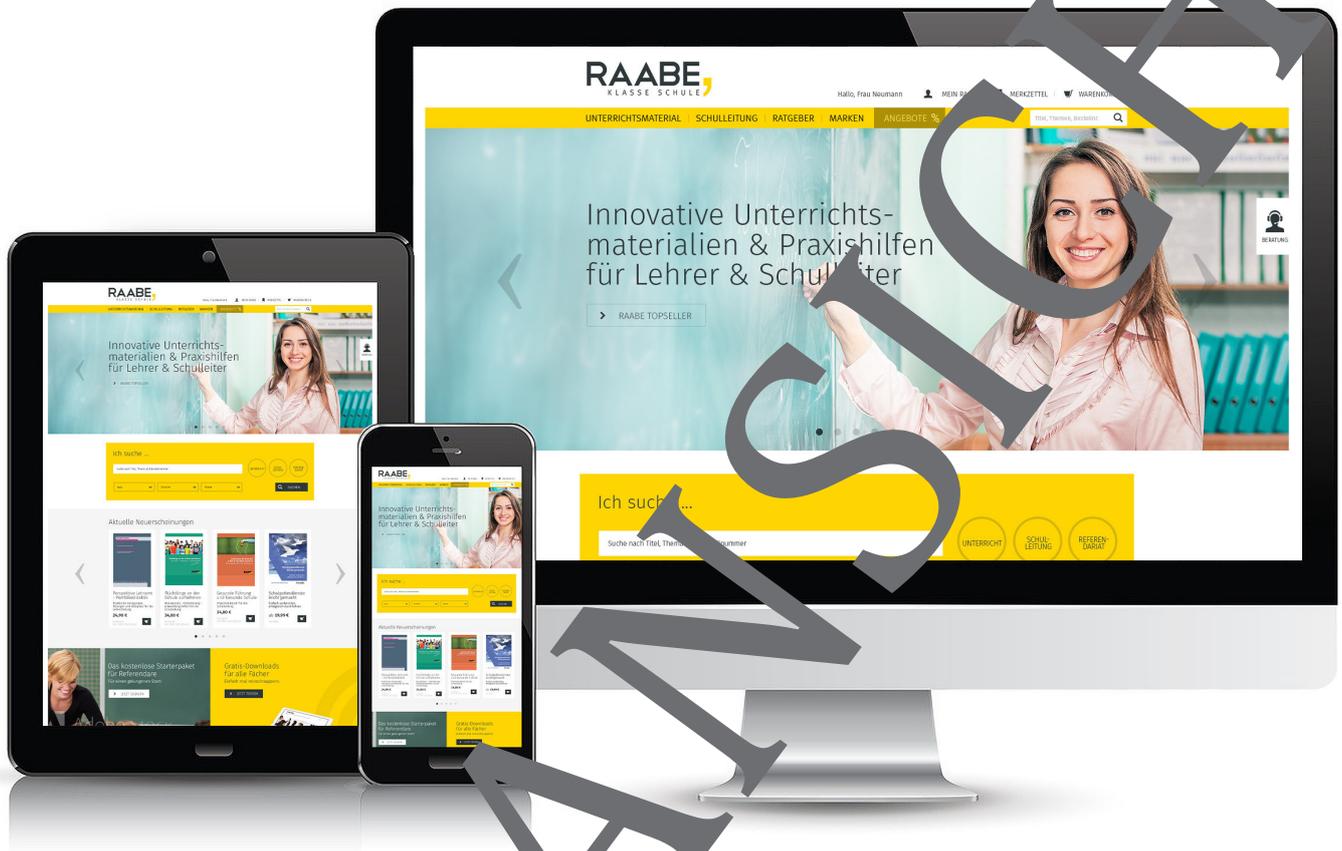
**I have privileges as a white person because I can do all of these things without thinking twice:**

I can go jogging (#AmaudArbery)  
 I can relax in the comfort of my own home (#BothemSean and #AiyanaJefferson)  
 I can ask for help after being in a car crash (#JonathanFell and #RebeccaMcBride)  
 I can have a cellphone (#StephonClark)  
 I can leave a party to get to safety (#JordanEdwards)  
 I can sell CDs (#AltonSterling)  
 I can sleep (#AiyanaJones and #breonataylor)  
 I can walk from the corner store (#MikeBrown)  
 I can play cops and robbers (#TamirRice)  
 I can walk home with Skittles (#TrayvonMartin)  
 I can hold a hairbrush while leaving my own bachelor party (#SeanBell)  
 I can party on New Years (#OscarDeLaRoa)  
 I can get a normal traffic ticket (#AndraBland)  
 I can lawfully carry a weapon (#PhilandoCastile)  
 I can break down on a public road with car problems (#CoreyJones)  
 I can shop at Walmart (#Crawford)  
 I can have a disabled vehicle (#TerrenceCrotcher)  
 I can be a 10yr old walking with my grandfather (#CliffordGlover)  
 I can decorate for a party (#ClaudeReese)  
 I can carry a gun in peace (#YvonneSmallwood)  
 I can take out my wallet (#AmadouDiallo)  
 I can get the flu (#ElijahGrey)  
 I can live (#DodieGrey)  
 I CAN BE ARRESTED WITHOUT THE FEAR OF BEING MURDERED (#GeorgeFloyd)

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/DSEMagazine/posts/1138215909881318> [last access: 06/07/2020].

2. Work in small groups.
  - a) Choose three of the hashtags from the list above and research the story behind the names. Takes notes.
  - b) Prepare a presentation of your research results. It is important to have a clear objective for your presentation. Do you want to inform, influence behaviour, or provoke feelings? What is your take-home message?
3. Take a minute to reflect a black person's experience today. Share your thoughts with someone else in the class.

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