

Using NewsHour Extra Feature Stories

STORY

"Red Shirts" Spill 60 Gallons of Blood to Protest Thailand's Government, 03/19/2010

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/jan-june10/thailand_03-19.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.]

INITIATING QUESTIONS

- 1. What are some ways that Americans have protested their government in the past?**
- 2. What is civil disobedience?**
- 3. Where is Thailand?**

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

- 1. What has been happening in Thailand this month?**

ANSWER

Thousands of Red Shirt anti-government protesters took to the streets and spilled 60 gallons of their own blood in part curse, part ceremony, part civil disobedience against the sitting government.

- 2. Who are the Red Shirts? What do they want?**

ANSWER

The protesters are farmers, taxi drivers and other working class Thais who believe the class system is unfair and corrupt. The Red Shirts want Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to step down, dissolve parliament and call a new election.

- 3. Why are the Red Shirts using blood? What does blood symbolize to them?**

ANSWER

The group launched a needle drive to collect blood from tens of thousands of protesters, stored in plastic jugs and then emptied onto the prime minister's compound, ruling party headquarters and personal residence.

"The Red Shirts say it symbolizes the toll that's been extracted from them via double-standards in Thailand, being pushed around.... They're saying 'we're bleeding instead of others,'" Winn explained.

4. Why are colors important in Thailand?

ANSWER

Colors play a big part in Thailand's public life, often representing days of the week, religious deities or even political rivals.

5. From what places in the country do Red Shirts get a lot of support? What politician do Red Shirts support? How about the Yellow Shirts? Who do they support?

ANSWER

Red Shirts enjoy wide support in the rural and mostly poor north and northeast of the country and are predicted to win any new election. Their political opponents are the Yellow Shirts, mostly city-dwellers who support Vejjajiva.

Mr. Vejjajiva came to power in 2006 after a military coup deposed then sitting Prime Minister Shinawatra Thaksin.

The Red Shirts support Thaksin, who has been charged and convicted of corruption charges. He is living abroad to avoid the sentence.

6. How common are coups in Thailand?

ANSWER

Coups are not new to Thailand-- the military has stepped into governmental affairs 18 times since 1932.

7. What kind of government does Thailand have?

ANSWER

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy with King Bhumibol Adulyadej as the supreme head of state. He has reigned over Thailand since 1946 making him both the longest serving monarch of Thailand and the longest serving head of state in the world.

8. How many gallons of blood has the group collected? How will they use it for blood?

ANSWER

The group has used up most of the 80 gallons of blood collected earlier in the week on government buildings in protest, but leaders say that they have 15 gallons remaining and plan a massive public art project over the weekend.

9. Under what conditions will the current prime minister meet with the Red Shirts? How did they respond to these conditions?

ANSWER

The current prime minister said he is prepared to meet with leaders from the Red Shirts if the protests remain peaceful and "if the demands of the Red Shirts are in the best interests of the general public."

Jatuporn Prompan, responded saying, "The Red Shirts are not refusing to negotiate but the prime minister has to dissolve the House first and all parties have to sign a pact saying they will respect the result of elections so the country can move ahead."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. What did you learn from this story? Did any information surprise you?

2. How do you feel about the way that the Red Shirts use blood? What does this symbolize to you? What do you think it does for the image of the red shirts?

3. The Thai military has stepped into governmental affairs 18 times since 1932. Why do you think that might be? How would you feel about the military stepping into U.S. government affairs?

4. Can you imagine protests like this occurring in the United States? Why or why not?

5. In this story, the Red Shirts use blood as a symbolic gesture. Can you think of political groups in the U.S. that use symbols to help convey their message? What are they?

6. Would you ever become involved in a protest? Why or why not? In what instance would you support a protest?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.