

Week Eighteen: Art as Protest and Subject-Verb Agreement

Weekly Focus: Analysis
Weekly Skill: Identifying Claims in Political Poetry

Lesson Summary: This lesson will explore ways in which art, including poetry, can be used as a form of protest. Students will practice writing an evidence-based response on this topic using two texts. Finally, the grammar section will address subject and verb agreement.

Materials Needed: Projector, Computer, and Internet Access, highlighters, note-cards, NPR Javier Sicilia Radio Story, Sicilia Article, Sicilia Activity handout, Art for Protest and Persuasion, Grammar Jeopardy, Subject/Verb Agreement Video, S/V agreement action verbs, Grammar Exercise, Action Verbs, Copy of Today's Paper (online or physical)

Objectives: Students will be able to...

- Critically analyze a political poem
- Identify a claim in a piece of political poetry
- Consider the role of art in argument
- Write an evidence-based response using two texts
- Identify main subjects and verbs in a sentence
- Practice correcting subject/verb agreement errors

Common Core Standards Addressed: L.6.2a, W.11-12.3, RI.11-12.6

Notes: Remind students that this week we will be focusing on the Analyze step on the CARE model. This means that we will not just work to understand the poem that we are reading, we will also work to break it down into its smaller parts. Because this is a protest poem, it will also have a message, or claim. By analyzing the poem in its political context, we will work to identify its claim.

Even though poetry is not on the RLA test, the critical thinking required to analyze the claim of the poem is a necessary skill.

Activities:

Warm-Up/Review: Creative Writing

Time: 20 minutes

What is one tradition that you would like to see changed in this world?

Reading and Writing Activity:

Time: 90 minutes

- **Grammar Warm-Up:** Pull out a sentence from the news article. Write it on the board and, with students' help, examine its structure. Note where the subject, verb, and simple sentence are.
- **Art as Protest:**
 - 1) Hand out article for students to follow along with
 - 2) Play NPR news article about protest art in Mexico
 - 3) Have students work with a partner to complete Part I of the worksheet activity for the Javier Sicilia story. Go over the answers as a class.
 - 4) Hand out Art for Protest and Persuasion and read aloud as a large group
 - 5) Hand out Part II and go over the instructions. Have students work individually to complete this part. Circle around the room as students are writing to make sure everyone understands and is completing the assignment.
 - 6) Ask for a few students to volunteer to share their responses with the class.

Break: 10 minutes

Grammar Activity: Subject/Verb Agreement

Time: 60 minutes

Review: Review what a verb is. Hand out a page from today's newspaper. Again, explain that while there are several kinds of verbs, this unit we will be focusing specifically on action verbs. In pairs, have students find and highlight as many action verbs as they can from a page of the newspaper. Share out as a class, making a list of action verbs on the board.

Introduction: 1) Now that you have reviewed action verbs, explain to students that today you will be introducing a new aspect concerning how to correctly use verbs in their own writing: Subject/Verb agreement. Show the video as an introduction. 2) Hand out Subject/Verb agreement sheet and go over rules together.

Practice: 1) Write each of the following personal pronouns on a note-card (I, you, he, she, it, we, they). Place one of these note-cards at a different table. Break students up evenly so that there is a group at each table. Have each student take out a piece of notebook paper and number it from 1-7. 2) Use the list of action verbs that students listed on the board during their newspaper hunt. Call out a word. Each group member must come up with a sentence that correctly uses the verb with the pronoun at his or her table. Have the student write her sentence on her sheet of paper. 3) Have members compare their sentences with others in the group. Make any changes needed. 4) Repeat this 7 times, switching note-cards between tables. 5) Have students complete the grammar from the reading section individually (model the first one as a class). Go over together.

Assessment: Break students into as many teams as you wish and then play the Jeopardy Subject/Verb game.

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Extra Work/Homework:

Time:

Differentiated Instruction/ELL Accommodation Suggestions	Activity
For Beginning students who feel uncomfortable with poetry, pair them with an Advanced student.	Reading
Have Advanced students also write an example of a time when they've seen or used art as a protest	Writing

Online Resources:

- 1) [OWL at Purdue: Subject/Verb Agreement](#)

Suggested Teacher Readings: TBA

Artists React To Mexico's Drug War with Music and Poetry

(taken from NPR Music News, Jan. 21, 2012)

by Betto Arcos



Javier Sicilia speaks at a rally in Los Angeles.

January 21, 2012

Javier Sicilia is a novelist and a poet. In 2009, he was awarded Mexico's prestigious Aguascalientes National Poetry Prize. This September, he read a poem dedicated to his son, Juan Francisco, at a rally:

*There is nothing else to say
 The world is not worthy of the word
 They drowned it, deep inside of us
 As they asphyxiated you
 As they ripped your lungs apart
 And the pain does not leave me
 All we have is a world
 For the silence of the just
 Only for your silence and my silence, Juanelo.*

This was the last poem Sicilia wrote. His son was murdered in the central state of Morelos in March, along with six other people, by members of a drug cartel.

Javier Sicilia renounced poetry and became the leader of a national protest against the drug war. Yet he says poetry has been an integral part of the "Peace with Justice and Dignity" movement.

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"Poetry has been present, the poets have been part of it," Sicilia says. "The problem is that the mass media don't like to cover it and don't understand that this movement was born out of poetry, and the reason why it's important is because it's filled with a poetic content that has transformed the language. And behind all of this is a profound ethics, as with all poetry."

Sicilia says the poet has a moral responsibility to tell these stories.

Other artists are also reacting to the violent realities in Mexico today. Singer Lila Downs addresses the violence in a song that deals directly with the consequences, called "La Reina del Inframundo" — Queen of the Underworld. The lyrics read:

"Six feet underground, it's for a certain kind of weed, for which the bosses up north are making us kill each other off, and now I'm the queen of the underworld, and my crown is a tombstone ..."



"Well, this is a song that's more explicitly about what we're going through," Downs says. "It's something that I'm very afraid of. I've seen a lot of papers, a lot of women involved in the business, and a lot of women die."

Downs' whole album was inspired by her feelings about what's happening in Mexico today.

"We're going through a very violent period where it's inevitable, you're always seeing these things on the news that are very sad and depressing," she says, "and you wish that you could do something about it. And I think, as an artist and as a human being, you're sensitive to what is happening."

Writer and performer Ruben Martinez is a professor of literature and writing at Loyola Marymount University, as well as the producer of a performance in Los Angeles about the drug war. He says that, in terms of artistic resistance to the drug war, the importance of Javier Sicilia cannot be understated.

"As a writer, the only tools I have are language and representation to render a portrait of what is happening today. And Javier Sicilia was the first voice, artistically I think, to approach this," Martinez says. "[His final poem] moved a whole nation, and now it's moved us on this side of the border too, because ultimately, the war is on both sides."

Martinez says that we may not see mutilated bodies hanging from bridges in this country, but that, according to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 22,000 people die every year in the U.S. as a result of drug overdoses.

"That number of deaths should be added to the number of deaths every year in Mexico," Martinez says. "It's all part of the same conflict."

Singer and performance artist Astrid Hadad has addressed the current situation in Mexico from a different perspective. Hadad sees the roots of the current violence in a number of problems facing Mexico. She names a few of them in the song "Tierra Misteriosa" (Mysterious Land):

*Poor motherland, over you fly vultures
 Army men, transnational corporations, presidents, hit men, businessmen
 Yesterday they were called viceroys, today they're dignitaries
 Five hundred years have passed, only the names have changed
 Now the pillagers are called politicians*

"And if that's not saying something against what's happening today, I don't know what is," Hadad says. "All of us who are fighting say that only a good education and the redistribution of wealth, called justice, will solve this. Otherwise, the current violence will never end."

But Downs offers some hope. In her song "Paloma del Comalito," she cites a popular Mexican expression: *No hay mal que dure cien años* — "No evil can last a hundred years." Her hope is that it won't take that long.

Javier Sicilia Poem Activity

*There is nothing else to say
The world is not worthy of the word
They drowned it, deep inside of us
As they asphyxiated you
As they ripped your lungs apart
And the pain does not leave me
All we have is a world
For the silence of the just
Only for your silence and my silence, Juanelo.*

Part I: Poetry Questions

- 1) Javier Sicilia wrote this poem just after his son died and said this would be his last poem. Why do you think he stopped writing poetry?
- 2) In the last three lines of the poem, Sicilia says “All we have is a world/For the silence of the just/Only for your silence and my silence, Juanelo.” In what way could Sicilia’s silence be a kind of protest?
- 3) In your own words, what do you believe is the **claim**, or major argument, of Javier Sicilia’s poem?

Part II: Based on the texts, **explain how Javier Sicilia's art acts as a form of protest.** Use evidence from both readings to support your claim. Remember to explain HOW each piece of evidence supports your claim, as well as to address at least one counter argument.

Step 1: Write your claim

Step 2: Choose your evidence

Once you have chosen your claim, provide evidence from the text to support your argument. You may choose to paraphrase or use short quotes from the reading(s).

Step 3: Write your evidence-based response

Incorporate your claim and your evidence into a written response to the prompt. Remember to explain HOW each piece of evidence supports your claim, as well as to address at least one counter argument.

Art for Protest and Persuasion



We all choose which traditions to follow and which to challenge.

When people are not satisfied with things the way they are, they sometimes protest or try to persuade others to change their ideas. They work to change things by criticizing or protesting the old ways and replacing them with new ways. Some protests lead to revolutions. There are various kinds of revolutions. In political revolutions the old powers are overthrown and new people take over the government. In social revolutions the relationships between social classes change, or the population experiences the rise of new social classes or the expansion of existing classes. In economic revolutions wealth changes hands. There are also scientific, industrial, agricultural, artistic, and religious revolutions when old ideas are replaced by new ideas.

In many cultures, artists use their artworks to protest or to bring attention to their ideas. Sometimes a painting, sculpture, or building can persuade just as well or better, than words can.

Art can protest, propose, and provoke ideas.

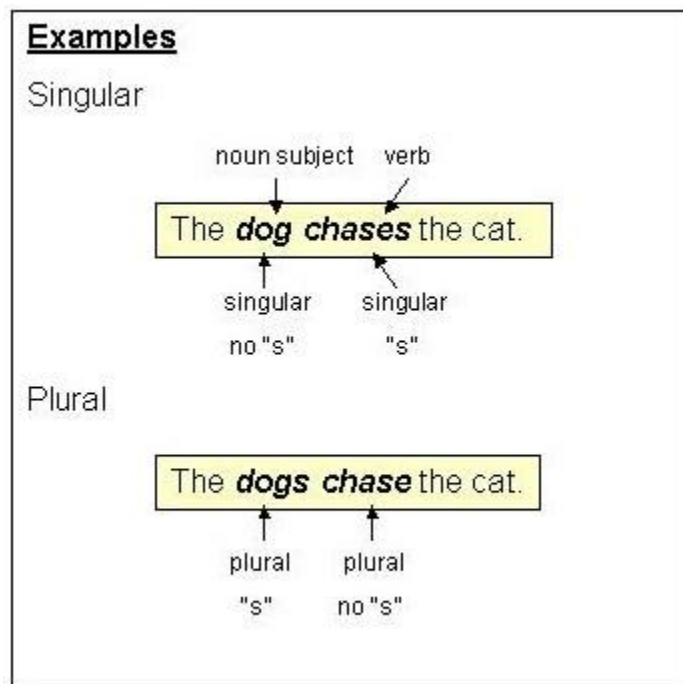
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(Taken from http://mati.eas.asu.edu/ChicanArte/html_pages/Protest.ArtP&P.html)

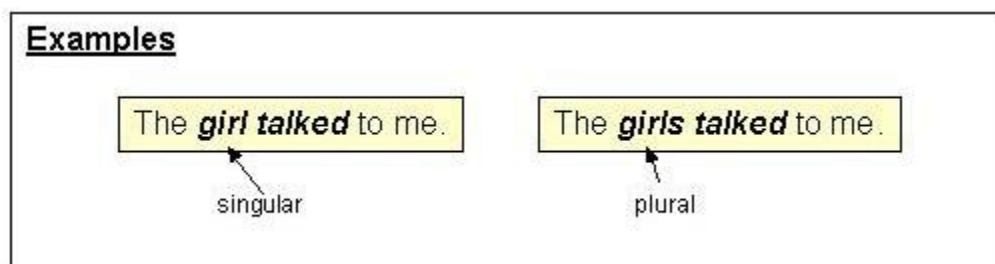
SUBJECT/VERB AGREEMENT RULES FOR ACTION VERBS

Subjects and **verbs** must AGREE with one another in **number** (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural.

In the present tense, nouns and verbs form plurals in opposite ways: **nouns** ADD an **s** to the singular form; **verbs** REMOVE the **s** from the singular form.



These agreement rules do not apply to verbs used in the simple past tense without any helping verbs.



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The subject-verb agreement rules apply to all personal pronouns except *I* and *you*, which, although SINGULAR, require PLURAL forms of verbs.

Examples

Handout adapted from Towson University Online Writing Support:
<http://www.towson.edu/ows/moduleSVAGR.htm>

Grammar Exercise

Directions: Read each sentence below. Underline the main subject and circle the main verb. Then, label each one as Singular or Plural by placing an “S” or a “P” above it.

- 1) Javier Sicilia read a poem dedicated to his son.
- 2) Sicilia says the poet has a moral responsibility to tell these stories.
- 3) He renounced poetry and became the leader of a national protest against the drug war.
- 4) According to the Centers for Disease Control, more than 22,000 people die every year in the U.S. as a result of drug overdoses.
- 5) Astrid Hadad sees the roots of the current violence in a number of problems facing Mexico.

Action Verbs

Ask yourself, "Can I _____?"

Definition : Action Verbs

(taken from <http://www.englishlanguageterminology.org/parts-of-speech/action-verbs.htm>)

- Action verbs are something that a person or thing **can do**; they may be used alone as the main verb of a sentence e.g. run, jump, reach, swim, walked, fell etc.
- Action verbs can also be actions you can't see such as 'thought' or 'wanted.'
- Action verbs can be time-telling verbs. They tell when something takes place - in the present, in the future or in the past.

Transitive and Intransitive Action Verbs

There are two types of action verbs: transitive and intransitive.

A transitive verb conveys an action and is followed by an object that receives the action of the verb.

Examples of transitive action verbs: I **cleaned** the *windows* yesterday. I **took** my *baby* to the clinic. We **hunt** *rabbits*.

An intransitive verb conveys an action but is *not* followed by an object.

Examples of intransitive action verbs: The girl **cried** quietly.' 'He runs.' 'It falls.'

Examples of Action Verbs:

Abolish	Diagnose	Serve
Accuse	Edit	Study
Achieve	Encourage	Stimulate
Act	Fall	Teach
Clap	Graduate	Test
Climb	Investigate	Think
Collect	Listen	Translate
Collide	Perceive	Visualize
Command	Program	Utilize
Dance	Purchase	Write
Decide	Receive	Yell

