

# **ASSEMBLY PLAN: PROTEST IN THE UK**

Assembly Plan: Protest in the UK	
Purpose	To explore, as a learning tool, protest in the UK: rights, responsibilities, social change, and respectful debate. Linked themes: political participation, online mobilisation, misinformation about protests, respectful disagreement, identity and belonging, youth voice.
Time	15-20 minutes
Materials	Two contrasting protest images, slide with three myth-busting prompts, basic data statistic, Optional: QR codes to reputable sources (UK Parliament, BBC Bitesize Citizenship, trusted explainers), scenario cards if used in print.

## 1. Learning Outcome

By the end of the assembly, students will:

- Understand why people protest and how protest works in a democratic society.
- Identify different perspectives on protests, including why some people support them and others feel uncomfortable or unsafe.  
Know how misinformation can spread around protests, especially through social media.
- Reflect on respectful behaviour when discussing highly emotive political issues.
- Know where to seek help if they feel pressured, distressed, or confused about protest-related content or events.

## 2. Starter Activity (5 minutes)

**Image prompt:**

Show two contrasting images:

- A peaceful march with banners.
- A chaotic or violent protest scene with police presence.

**Ask:**

- “What do you see?”
- “What might others see differently?”
- “Who do these protests impact?”
- “Can both images reflect protest, and why do they lead to different interpretations?”

This highlights perspective, emotion, and media framing.

### **3. Core Message (1–2 clear ideas)**

1. Protest is a recognised part of democratic life in the UK, but it comes with responsibilities and boundaries.
2. How we discuss and understand protests matters — rights, safety, emotions, and facts all play a role.

### **4. Main Content (5–10 minutes)**

**Real-life case study + two contrasting viewpoints + myth-busting**

**Short case study (2 minutes):**

“In recent years, young people have taken part in protests on issues ranging from climate change to racial justice to the conflict in Gaza. Some feel empowered and heard, while others feel anxious or unsure about the risks. In one UK city last year, a peaceful protest grew rapidly after a viral post. Most people attended to show solidarity, but rumours about violence spread online, causing fear even though the event ended calmly.”

Pause for 20 seconds:

“What might this show about how information spreads during protests?”

**Two contrasting viewpoints (3 minutes)**

Present neutrally:

**Viewpoint A:**

“Protests give people - including young people - a voice. They draw attention to issues that might otherwise be ignored. Many positive social changes in history, including women’s rights and improved working conditions, involved protest.”

**Viewpoint B:**

“Some people worry about disruption, confusion, or the potential for things to escalate. They feel uncertain about large crowds or about the intentions of people who join online at the last minute. They want protest to be safe, respectful, and well organised.”

Explain: “**Both of these viewpoints can exist at the same time.**”

**Myth-busting segment: ‘Three common misconceptions about protest’ (2 minutes)**

1. **Myth:** “All protests turn violent.”  
**Reality:** The vast majority of UK protests are peaceful. A small minority might involve disorder, but this is not typical.
2. **Myth:** “Protesting is illegal.”  
**Reality:** Peaceful protest is protected in UK law. There are rules about routes, safety, and notifying the police depending on the type of protest.
3. **Myth:** “If you see a protest online, you have the full picture.”  
**Reality:** Images and clips often show only a moment. Context, timing, editing, and rumours can be misleading.

**Data snapshot (1 minute)**

A slide shows:

‘According to the Metropolitan Police and selected other forces, hundreds of protests and rallies were recorded in 2023, most of which did not involve disruption.’

*Teacher can contextualise: “This shows how common protest is as a democratic tool.”*

**Facilitated question (1 minute)**

“Why might people feel strong emotions - pride, anger, fear, excitement -when thinking about or taking part in protests?”

**5. Student Interaction/Reflection (5–10 minutes)****Scenario choices:**

“Imagine a friend is encouraging you to join a protest they’ve seen advertised on social media. What is the most responsible first step?”

Options (students vote):

- A. Go straight away because lots of people are attending.
- B. Share the protest post widely to help the cause.
- C. Check the details: who organised it, what the aims are, whether it is safe and legal, and whether you understand the issue.
- D. Ask an adult you trust for advice or express your questions/concerns.

Discuss briefly why **C** and **D** represent informed and safe approaches.

**If time allows:**

Students write one question they still have about protest or something they found interesting.

## 6. Safeguarding Notes

- **Potential sensitivities:** Students with personal or family experiences of political conflict, police contact, or community tensions may react strongly. SEND students may need extra clarity about safety and boundaries.
- **Staff script:**

“We’re talking about protest in a calm and safe way. You may have strong feelings about issues connected to recent demonstrations. If you feel worried, pressured, upset, or confused by anything, please speak to your Head of Year, tutor, or the DSL.”

**Remind students** about reporting any concerning content seen online - including calls for violence, hateful speech, or pressure to attend events.

## 7. Follow-up Opportunities

- Tutor-time activities:
  - “What makes a protest peaceful, safe, and effective?”
  - “How do rights and responsibilities work together in a democracy?”
- PSHE lessons on citizenship, activism, and media literacy.
- Small-group support for students showing anxiety around recent protests.
- Research project: “Create a media timeline showing how a single UK protest was portrayed across different platforms.”

## 8. Suggested Closing Reflection (1 minute)

Ask:

*“What is one way you can approach discussions about protest more respectfully or thoughtfully this week?”*