

PROTEST!

GENEVA: MAISON TAVEL, THE INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM
OF REFORMATION AND SAINT PETER'S CATHEDRAL

The historical centre of Geneva is not only an old town but, it also hosts museums and landmarks that invite you to reflect on your impact on today's life. In this teaching sequence, students learn about Geneva's historical and cultural heritage through the lens of the word 'Protest'. They examine how people have expressed their opinion in the past and today in order to change the world. These activities were elaborated for a vocational training class in Geneva (upper secondary). It can be used with confident beginners to advanced levels of English (A2-B2).

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These lessons are created from Magdalena Mager's and Lilli Sallantaus' idea who had developed a learning sequence for their students of German as a Foreign Language (general upper secondary). Many thanks for the inspiration!

Level

A2 – B2

Grades

Upper secondary, general or vocational education

Languages

English

Curricular connections with the Plan d'études romand (PER)

- Literature and arts
- Humanities and social sciences

Skills trained

- Searching and sharing precise information
- Taking notes for presentations
- Presenting information orally
- Expressing one's choice and explaining it
- Communicating information in a professional way (memo, e-mail) and in more creative ways (quizzes, visuals or videos)

General content

In this learning sequence, students discover Geneva's historical and cultural heritage through a visit to places linked to the theme of 'Protest'. They find out about famous places in Geneva and show their historical importance. They investigate how people protested in the past and how they do it today. They develop their own critical thinking while reflecting on actions, emotions and purposes of protest.

Adaptations

Most of the material is appropriate for relatively advanced lower secondary students. It can easily be adapted to other foreign languages.

Padlet

On the Padlet, you will find links to museum websites and descriptions.

Before the visit

Activity 1 – Mood

Content: Negative and positive emotions and why

Material: List of emoticons or emotions (Word cloud below)

Step 1, in pairs

Ask students to talk about how they feel using the word cloud below, a list of adjectives, or some emojis. Model this with one of the learners or write a simple frame on the board, e.g. “Hi! How are you today? I’m feeling so..... because..... and you?”

Step 2

Frown and have students ask about teacher’s own feelings, eliciting the word ‘angry’. Ask students what makes them angry and reflect on it: Is what makes them angry something they want to protest about? On the board, if necessary, write “I’m angry about..... because there’s too much.....”!



Created with <https://wordclouds.ethz.ch>

Activity 2 – Protest

Content: Vocabulary search

Material: Dictionary, thesaurus (paper, virtual)

Step 1, in small groups

Ask students to search for and select a synonym and antonym for the word “protest” in its noun and verb. For each form, ask students to produce sentences which make the meaning clear. Students can create a glossary.

Example with <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/thesaurus> (30.07.2025):

- **Synonym:** a disapproval (n.) – disapprove (v.).
Hunters often disapprove of hunting restrictions. They stated their disapproval to the Minister.
- **Antonym:** an agreement (n.) – agree (v.).
I agree with free speech, but I disagree with insults.

Step 2, in small groups

Ask students to remember some protests: protests they heard of or read about, protests they observed or protests they participated in.

With the help from the previous vocabulary, they describe the situation.

Example: “When you [students] asked me to bring your small tests back after two days, I protested. I explained that I needed more time. You insisted and, in the end, we agreed on five days.”

The protest for the protection of the environment was a success.

I marched to protest for girls' education.

The protest against the president's decision was a catastrophe.

I made a blog to protest against smoking in public places.

Activity 3 – Places in Geneva

Content: Selection of specific places linked to the act of protesting

Material: Computers

Step 1, individually, in pairs or small groups

Students search for information about famous places in Geneva related to protests today and in the past. They fill in the table below and find a picture.

Students may consult websites in any language, but they complete the table in English.

Step 2

Students share the picture and the information with their classmates and fill in the table.

In Geneva

- Bastions
- Mont-Blanc bridge
- Nations
- Place Neuve
- Shopping district
- Saint-Gervais district (1918)
- ...

Where?	Who?	How?	Why?
Bastions			
Mont-Blanc bridge			
Nations			
Place Neuve			
Shopping district			
Saint-Gervais district (1918)			

Answers

Where?	Who?	How?	Why?
Bastions	Locals, politicians, feminists Minorities (first nations, students...)	Strike Poetry reading Music Workshops	Women strike, salary, pensions, care, domestic violence, sustainable economy, peace tree Minority rights
Mont-Blanc bridge	Activists for political rights and ecology	March Sticking hands on the ground Stopping the traffic	Climate change, feminism, Swiss and local issues
Nations	People from different countries	March Silent protest	International political issues International issues of human rights: peace, political prisoners...
Place Neuve	Canton employees (teachers, hospital workers, police) Students	March 1 st May	Working conditions, education, health care Public services, salary, pension
Shopping district	People of Geneva	Slow-up March	All current topics: ecology, wars, historical events, etc.
Saint-Gervais district (1918)	Clock makers	Strike March	48 hours of work / week Retirement pensions

Step 3

During the following lesson, students have a small quiz, e.g. learners have to fill in a table that has some gaps to recall reasons for protest or they have to read someone else's table out loud and make mistakes for a partner to correct.

Activity 4 – Description of the urban environment

Content: Describing specific elements in Geneva

Material: Computers

Step 1, individual

Students list landmarks and attractions of Geneva. They look for pictures of at least three different places, save them and name the files after the landmarks/attractions. With the help of (online) dictionaries, they prepare their description of the landmarks and list useful chunks for such descriptions.

Step 2, in pairs

Both students open the pictures on their screen for the other to look at. In turn, they describe a picture to their neighbour without naming the attraction/landmark. The neighbour tries to guess which place is described.

Step 3

Students complete sentences related to places, education, landmarks and attractions in Geneva. They find out which word is not used.

Teachers can cater for students' needs and customise own multiple-choice examples or gamify this activity into an app or matching exercise according to their level and interest.

Geneva in short

Fill in the gaps with the following words:

- chime
- concrete
- downstairs
- education
- floors
- gothic
- Jet d'Eau
- made of
- tramways
- organ
- paved
- printmaking
- public transport
- Reformation Wall
- staircase
- travel by
- upstairs
- watchmaking

Geneva is a beautiful city in Switzerland with a rich history and culture.

One of its most famous landmarks is the (1) _____, a large fountain on Lake Geneva. The (2) _____ is a monument that honours important people from history.

The Old Town has (3) _____ streets and many historical buildings.

Some of these buildings are (4) _____ stone, while others are more modern. Saint Peter's Cathedral is a (5) _____ church with a large (6) _____ inside. You can climb a (7) _____ to see the view from the top. If you listen carefully, you can hear the church bells (16) _____ in the evening.

Geneva is famous for (11) _____ and (12) _____, which are important industries.

Some modern buildings in Geneva are built with (15) _____ instead of stone.

Many houses have several (8) _____, with the kitchen (9) _____ and the bedrooms (10) _____. Many people (13) _____ tram, bus, or boat, as the (14) _____ system is well-organized. Geneva is also a centre for (17) _____, with many international schools and universities.

Unused word: _____

Answers:

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One of its most famous landmarks is the (1) Jet d'Eau, a large fountain on Lake Geneva. The (2) Reformation Wall is a monument that honours important people from history.

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Some of these buildings are (4) made of stone, while others are more modern. Saint Peter's Cathedral is a (5) gothic church with a large (6) organ inside. You can climb a (7) staircase to see the view from the top. If you listen carefully, you can hear the church bells (16) chime in the evening.

Geneva is famous for (11) watchmaking and (12) printmaking, which are important industries.

Some modern buildings in Geneva are built with (15) concrete instead of stone.

Many houses have several (8) floors, with the kitchen (9) downstairs and the bedrooms (10) upstairs. Many people (13) travel by tram, bus, or boat, as the (14) public transport system is well-organized. Geneva is also a centre for (17) education, with many international schools and universities.

Unused word: tramways

Step 4

Students add sentences related to the places of Geneva they had picked in Step 1. This can occur orally in plenary, or individually in the written text.

Students complete their list of useful chunks with expressions from the text.

Activity 5 – Itinerary

Content: Identification of places to visit linked to the act of protesting

Material: Computers, map of the Old Town of Geneva

Step 1

Students guess the places they are going to visit related to protest. The only clue is the Old Town.

Solutions: Reformation Wall, Maison Tavel, Saint Peter's Cathedral, International Museum of the Reformation.

Step 2

Students select the places to visit on a virtual map and find the best route from the station or from the school to Reformation Wall and then to Maison Tavel, Saint Peter's Cathedral and Museum of the Reformation. They draft a clear and accessible itinerary to the point of interest with information on duration and transport in the form of SMS, email or memo for classmates and accompanying teachers or visitors. In their message, they refer to a virtual map and indicate the link.

Activity 6 – Role play

Content: Telephone conversation with different locations

Material: Expressions for telephoning

Step 1

Students prepare a phone call with three specific chunks and questions for the different locations such as price, guide, number of students, possibility to walk around freely, best moment to visit...

Examples of specific chunks: *Would you mind telling me.... Do you know if... Can you tell me... (asking for information)... Could you spell that for me, please?... Just to make sure, you said... (confirming information)... Thank you for the information! (thanking) etc.* according to the expressions already trained.

Step 2

Students act out the conversation out in pairs and give feedback to one another. One pair can listen to another pair and give feedback on their intelligibility and accuracy.

Activity 7 – Memo

Content: Presentation of the visit

Material: Expressions for writing a memo

Step 1

Students write a memo with important information for the visit such as date, time of departure and return, expected behaviour, material, and other points they find relevant. This memo will be used as a checklist by the students.

Step 2

Students display their memo on the wall of the classroom for a gallery walk. Students walk around and have three removal stickers to stick next to their favorites. The favorite one will be sent to the school board and the teachers of the class.

Memo

To: _____

From: _____

Date: _____

Subject: _____

Message:

Action Required

- No action needed
- Please respond by: _____
- Follow-up required on: _____
- Other: _____

During the visit of Maison Tavel

Observation of objects and artefacts

Material: QR code Maison Tavel and map materials from the museum (see the [Visitor Guide](#), 20.10.2025), notebook and pen

Students observe Maison Tavel from outside and say what they find special about its architecture like towers, sculpture, colour. They can guess or imagine people protesting to save the building.

The teacher gives students pictures of a few objects from the museum that they will have to locate and focus on: a guillotine, an ancient helm, a painting of Saint Peter's Cathedral, a tower.

Inside Maison Tavel, the students walk around to find out where their objects are located. They record information about them (name, description, date, interesting feature, link with the topic "protest" if any).

During the visit, the students also find out where students used to be celebrated at the end of school year (promotions). This is the clue for the next visit.

Solution: Saint Peter's Cathedral (Painting on the ground floor)

During the visit of Saint Peter's Cathedral

Paying attention to sounds and silence

Material: Notebook and pen

Students choose three places or objects inside and outside Saint Peter's Cathedral. They focus on sounds and silence.

Does the place or the object they are looking at inspire silence? Does it inspire sounds? Which part of the cathedral or which object inspires silence, and which one inspires noise?

They make a short list with three places or objects. They note the noises or silence and write short comments so that they can share their findings with other students after the visit.

Examples of places for sound: painting of angels playing music, microphones, altar, organ...

Examples for silence: bench, chapel, gallery, corner...

During the visit, the students also find out where they can learn about the people who gather in Saint Peter's Cathedral. This is the clue for the next visit.

Solution: The International Museum of the Reformation (indication on the left of the entrance stairs of Saint Peter's Cathedral)

During the visit of the International Museum of Reformation

Activity 1 – Famous protesters

Material: Table to fill in, at least one phone with an Internet connexion for two students, notebook and pen.

In the Room *Engagements “Penser, Résister, Partager, Discuter...”*, students in pairs choose 3 famous protesters and write down their names, revendication and means of protest according to the example below.

Famous protesters	Revendication	Means of protest
Emilie Gourd	Women’s right to vote	Foundation of a newspaper, activism in women organizations
Mahatma Gandhi	Independence, Civil Rights	Nonviolent resistance, Hunger strikes, Boycott of English products

Some solutions

Famous protesters	Revendication	Means of protest
Emilie Gourd	Women's right to vote	Foundation of a newspaper, activism in women organizations
Mahatma Gandhi	Independence, Civil Rights	Nonviolent resistance, Hunger strikes, Boycott of English products
Martin Luther King Jr.	Racial equality, Civil Rights	Peaceful marches, Letters, sermons and speeches (e.g., "I Have a Dream")
Greta Thunberg	Climate change	School strikes, Public speeches
Malala Yousafzai	Girls' education	Writing, Public speaking
Rosa Parks	Racial segregation	Bus boycott, Civil disobedience
Nelson Mandela	Anti-apartheid	Activism Imprisonment Letters, speeches

Later, they will prepare a quiz with at least 6 questions in the following styles: multiple-choice, true or false. They can use [LearningApps](#) for example.

Activity 2 – Means of protesting

In the museum, various objects and means used for protesting are displayed: jewellery, letters, etc.

In pairs or small groups, they find out how people used one of these objects or means to protest. They take notes to present their findings later.

Means Of Protesting	How	Who/What
Jewellery		
Letters		
Music		
Education		
Care		
Literature and poetry		
Languages		
Painting		

Some solutions

Means Of Protesting	How	Who/What
Jewellery	Hiding religious symbols and objects inside jewellery (watches, rings, etc.)	Jean Rousseau turned a cross into a watch.
Letters	Complaints, placards, etc.	Luther: Luther's letters
Music	Gospel, Pop and Folk music, etc.	Aretha Franklin, Johnny Cash, Jerusalem challenge , etc.
Education	Promoting reading and writing	Calvin encouraged schooling and created the Academy now Collège Calvin and University.
Care	Humanitarian work	Henry Dunant co-founded the Red Cross.
Literature and poetry	Writing and printing about religious and social topics	Ronsard, Clément Marot, Théodore Agrippa d'Aubigné, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Mme Germaine de Staël
Languages	Print and translation into vernacular languages	Luther and many others translated the Bible into their languages
Painting	Showing protests Caricatures, etc.	Hodler, Albert Henker

For more detail, please consult the museum's [pedagogical guide](#) (in French; last viewed: 31.10.2025).

After the visit

On the way home: Comparing notes

On the way home, the students may share their impressions of the visit and complete their grid and quizzes.

Saint Peter's Cathedral

Which objects or places did they focus on in Saint Peter's Cathedral? What did they note about them?

International Museum of the Reformation

Activity 1: The students share their quizzes and grid with at least 5 different students. Each student answers at least 3 quizzes. The teacher asks the students if the quizzes and grid were easy to complete and if they were fun.

Activity 2, in pairs or small groups: The students compare their notes. They say which way to protest they like the most and why.

Back in class

Activity 1: Promotional visual or video

Content: Protest content

Material: Computers

Step 1

In small groups students choose their favourite way of protesting or their favourite protester. They can choose from the whole visit and personal knowledge, or from a list given by the teacher. They prepare a leaflet, a visual or a video to present that person or way in a creative way. They reflect on the mood, positive and negative aspects from the introductory sessions.

Step 2

Students present their protester / way of protesting to the class. The class votes for the most creative example. It will be sent to the direction, the other teachers and/or the museums as a thank you message.

Alternative (Activity 1)

Material: Computers, an empty blog or interactive board ready to access

Step 1

In small groups students agree on their favourite protest, according to the claim and the way of protesting. They can choose from the whole visit and personal knowledge, or from a list given by the teacher. They write down their arguments for and against the topic they have chosen (see step 3).

I like this movement for/against....

I like this person/activist because....

...I agree with her/his/their claim.

...it is a very important issue for everybody today.

...I find that civil rights are part of democracy.

...it's peaceful.

...

...

For me, this movement / person is more important than that one, because...

I find this movement / person

...not very successful... peaceful

...too violent

...questionable

...peaceful

...

...

Step 2

They prepare a leaflet, a visual or a video to present that protest in a creative way. They reflect on the mood, positive and negative aspects from the introductory sessions.

The leaflet, visual or video is uploaded to an interactive board (Padlet or alike).

Step 3, in plenary

Students present their leaflet, visual or video to the class.

During each presentation, listening students write down feedback, comments, positive and negative aspects including use of the second language, and justify their answer shortly. They can use the vocabulary and chunks from step 1.

They briefly communicate their comments orally. The presenting group writes down the comments, but does not respond to them.

Step 4

On an interactive board or on a blog, students present a short descriptive answer to each other's comments (blog entry) talking about what was difficult, easy, before and during the presentation, how they prepared for the presentation and what they could improve.

With their list of comments, students prepare two entries for a padlet: a list of comments, and a short argumentative answer (blog entry).

