

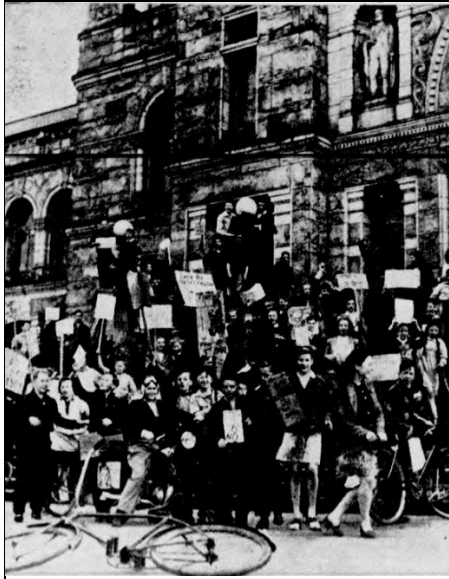


Historical Thinking Concepts:

Ethical Judgment (Grades 4-7)

Historians make ethical judgments about events that consider the conditions of a particular time and place.

Use the article to answer the questions. Then, flip over this sheet for another activity.



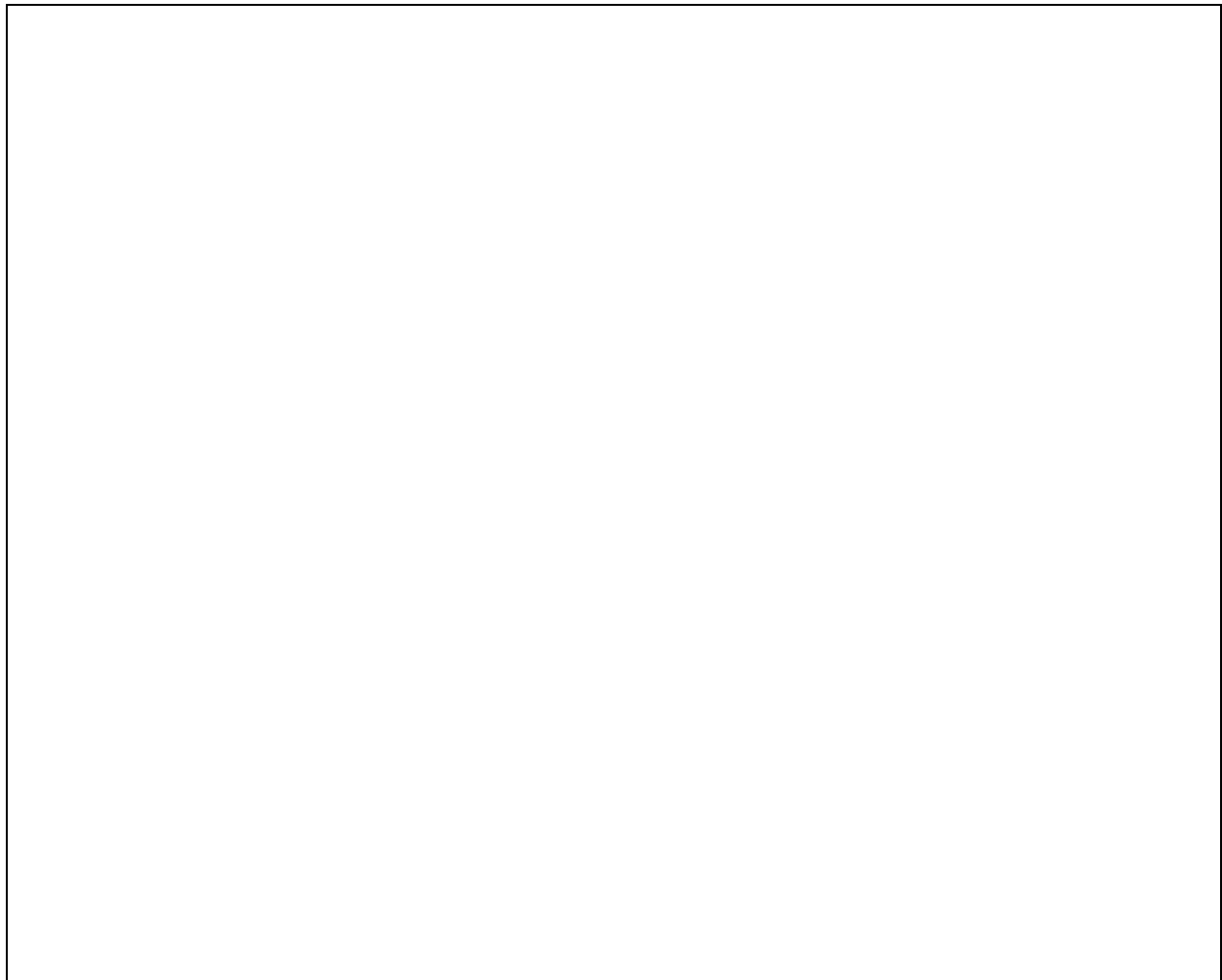
Children Invade Legislative Building

Chanting “we want five cent bars,” 200 school children yesterday invaded the Legislative Buildings and cornered all adults there to [ask] what they were going to do about the price of chocolate bars. Many of the children [carried placards] through the corridors in defiance of the rule which requires such signs to be left outside. [They] are shown in this picture on the steps outside the main entrance, reserved for state occasions, but used by the main body of the invaders.

—*Times Colonist*, April 30, 1947

1. Why did the children “invade” the Parliament Buildings?
2. List two important rules of the Buildings that the children broke:
 - a.
 - b.
3. Do you think the children had a good reason for entering the Buildings and breaking the rules? Why or why not?

The children that invaded the Parliament Buildings designed their own placards, or signs, to share their message. Take inspiration from the example posters and draw your own protest sign in the box!



Posters designed by Short Creative.



The Five Cent Fight

A Legislative Lesson Plan
for Elementary and Middle School Students

Historical Thinking Concepts: Ethical Judgment

Use this lesson plan to teach students about the chocolate bar protests and to ask questions about right and wrong in the past.

1. Introduce the chocolate bar protests

Ask students what they remember about the chocolate bar protests from the Play and Tour for Schools. Use the teacher background information below to answer student questions and fill in gaps.

2. Complete the first page of the worksheet

Once students have learned about the chocolate bar protests, encourage them to fill out the front page of the worksheet, either individually or in groups.

3. Class discussion

Ask students what they think about what they have learned:

- a) Were the children right or wrong to protest against the price of chocolate bars? Why?
- b) What other causes might justify actions like the chocolate bar protest?
- c) Is there anything in the world right now that makes you want to protest?

4. Complete the second page of the worksheet

Invite students to complete the second page of the worksheet. They can choose to either make a sign for the chocolate bar protest or for a cause that is important to them in the world today.

5. Empathizing with the past

As an extension activity, ask students to pretend they can call a chocolate bar protester on the telephone. Have them list five facts they would want to tell the protester about the future and five questions they have about the past.



The Five Cent Fight

Additional Information for Teachers

Background

During the Second World War, thousands of Canadians went overseas to fight. For Canadians that were left behind, including children, this meant that they had to step up. Children took on jobs like collecting recyclable materials, working on farms, or looking after younger children.

During the war, the Canadian government passed laws to keep the prices of essential goods low. This made sure that people could afford the food they needed. Working children often spent the money they earned on chocolate. During the war, the government set the price of this treat at five cents a bar.

When the war ended, children lost these jobs. To add insult to injury, the candy industry lobbied the government to lift price caps, and in April 1947 the price of chocolate bars rose from five cents to eight cents nationwide.

The Strike Begins

The chocolate bar strike began in Ladysmith, on Vancouver Island. When local children discovered the price hike, they asked a teenager called Parker Williams if they could use his car for a protest. In an interview with the *Globe and Mail*, Williams said:

"I had this old car and the kids talked me into chalking it up with slogans. [...] That night, I drove it back to the [candy store.] We made a couple of passes up and down the street with kids marching behind and hanging all over the car."

Children made signs with slogans like "DONT BUY 8¢ BARS. LOWER PRICES TO 5¢. WE ARE SMART" and "Don't Be a Sucker" and posed with them in front of the local candy store, where they were photographed by a visiting journalist. Soon, the idea spread. A bicycle blockade stopped traffic in Burnaby. In Manitoba, children surrounded police cars. Protest songs were composed in Prince Edward Island. New Brunswick teens made and sold five-cent batches of chocolate fudge. In Ottawa, ten trumpeters led 60 schoolchildren on a march to Parliament Hill. In Toronto, 500 teens marched through the streets.

It seemed to be working, too. Children picketed candy stores that refused to reduce their rates. Worried about losing customers, some candy stores lowered prices for children (while still charging adults full price) or left a jar for adults to leave a few cents to help children buy chocolate at the old prices.



The Five Cent Fight

Additional Information for Teachers

The Strike Ends

Support for the strike did not last. Chocolate companies took out advertisements in newspapers defending their prices. Then, on May 2, the *Toronto Evening Telegram* wrote that the strikes were backed by communists. The May 3 front page read:

“Chocolate bars and a world revolution may seem poles apart, but to the devious, Communist mind, there is a close relationship. They don’t realize it, but the indignant students parading with their placards demanding a 5 cent candy bar have become another instrument in the Communist grand strategy of the creation of chaos.”

Adults, who had previously supported children by helping them make signs and driving them to protests, became worried. After the Second World War, people in Canada and the United States were very concerned about spies from communist countries like the United Soviet Socialist Republic damaging their societies. People often lost their jobs after being accused of being a communist. Although there was never any evidence that chocolate bar strikers met with communists, children and adults were scared to keep striking. Slowly, the five cent protests came to an end.

Although chocolate prices did eventually rise, the chocolate bar protests brought children together and showed them how strong they could be if they protested. In the years to come, youth protests became more and more common. The fight for a five cent bar captures a snapshot of the evolving role of children in a time when candy bar prices could launch a national movement... or even a communist plot!

Answer Key

1. The children invaded the Legislative Buildings to ask for five cent bars.
2. The children broke rules against:
 - a. Using the main entrance; and
 - b. Bringing signs into the Buildings.
3. Teachers can encourage students to share their thoughts on this question. Students may believe that rules should never be broken, while others may agree that the cause of a cheaper candy bar justifies the children’s actions.

