

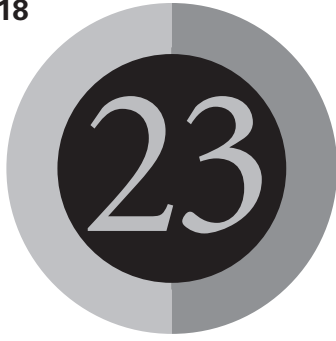
# 23

SESSION

## Vandalism

### What You Can Do

Overview of Lesson	National Standards for Civics and Government	National Standards for English	National Standards for Health
<p>Students assess vandalism in their community, examine its personal and financial cost, and consider ways to reduce this crime.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Civic responsibilities (NSCG V.C.2)</li><li>• The role of organized groups in political life (NSCG II.B.3)</li><li>• Forming and carrying out public policy (NSCG III.E.6)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use a variety of technological and information resources . . . to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. (ELA 8)</li></ul>	<p>None</p>



## SESSION

### VANDALISM

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

In this session, teens will define vandalism, investigate the reasons people do it, and consider its impact on individuals and the community. They will focus on graffiti, a major vandalism problem, and explore its connections to gangs and hate crime. Finally, teens will discuss strategies to prevent vandalism.

#### TEENS WILL LEARN

- What vandalism and graffiti are
- Why people vandalize
- What vandalism costs both financially and in terms of its impact on individuals and the community
- What they can do as individuals and as members of their community to prevent vandalism

### TEACHING STRATEGIES

These teaching strategies are included in this session:

- Whole-group Discussion
- Brainstorming
- Paired Discussion
- Small-group Discussion
- Journal Writing

### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Newsprint and markers
- Four *Impact of Vandalism* signs
- Pens or pencils for each teen
- Three- by five-inch cards
- Handout 1: *Vandalism Scavenger Hunt Checklist*
- Handout 2: *Solutions to Vandalism*
- Journal for Session 23



Many communities have organized efforts to combat graffiti; check with your local police department or community organization to see if there is an active anti-graffiti initiative in your area. Ask whether someone from the group would be willing to talk with your teens about the issue and what is being done about it.

### SUMMARY OF STEPS

#### PART 1

- Step A. Warm-up
- Step B. What Do You Think?
- Step C. What Is the Problem?



60 Minutes

#### PART 2

- Step D. What Can We Do About Vandalism?
- Step E. Reflection



50 Minutes

### BEFORE THE SESSION

1. Read the session plan.
2. Decide whether you will do the optional Vandalism Scavenger Hunt. (See the following page for materials needed.)
3. Decide how you will involve teens in the session as helpers, leaders, or readers. For more information about facilitating teen involvement, consult the Introduction in Volume One.
4. Write “How Would You Feel If Someone . . .” on the top of a piece of newsprint. Beneath this heading, copy the statements found in Step B, #1.
5. Copy and hang the four *Impact of Vandalism* signs around the room.
6. On a piece of newsprint, write “How Is Vandalism a Problem in Our Community?”



### Optional Idea

#### The Vandalism Scavenger Hunt

could be used as a warm-up activity to introduce the topic. The information gathered could be used in Step D: What Can We Do About Vandalism? Allow an additional 40 minutes if you use this activity.

7. For Step C, write (or have a teen volunteer write) the six statements on three-by-five-inch cards.
8. Make copies for all teens of Handout 2: *Solutions to Vandalism*.
9. Make one copy of the journal for each teen.
10. Post the teen-created guidelines from Session 1 in the room.
11. Gather the materials you will need.

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

### Vandalism Scavenger Hunt

Note: Allow an extra 40 minutes if you use this activity.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

- A camera that produces instant photographs for each team (or digital cameras if available)
- A copy of Handout 1: *Vandalism Scavenger Hunt Checklist* for each team
- Pen or pencil for each teen

### Instructions

Use this scavenger hunt to introduce the vandalism session.

1. Divide teens into teams. Tell the teams how far they can travel. (Three to five blocks in any direction should be enough.) They will have 30 minutes to find examples of vandalism in the neighborhood.
2. Pass out the *Vandalism Scavenger Hunt Checklist* or create your own list if the checklist is not appropriate for the neighborhood.
3. Give each team a camera. If cameras are not available, ask teens to write down a brief description of what they find.
4. Each team should try to find as many of the following as possible:
  - An example of graffiti spray-painted on a building
  - Statements written on a wall in a rest room or on furniture
  - Broken playground equipment
  - A mural
  - Someone in uniform or a police officer. Teens should ask for the officer's opinion concerning vandalism. How would he or she reduce vandalism?
  - Someone teens interview concerning vandalism. They should ask
    - Have you ever been a victim of vandalism? If yes, what happened?
    - How did it make you feel? What would you do to reduce vandalism in the neighborhood
  - A missing or broken sign
  - A broken window in an abandoned building
  - Statements or drawings carved into a wall or piece of furniture
  - Another example of their choice

- After the 30 minutes are up, gather the group together and ask each team to present its findings. Teens can place their photos on the community map (used in Sessions 5 and 6). You may want to ask them to create cartoon-type conversation bubbles describing their interviews.

## P A R T

## 1

## STEP A



10 MINUTES

## Warm-up

- Review the purpose of *Community Works*.
  - Ask teens to think about the purpose of the *Community Works* program. Ask them to tell what they remember.
  - Ask the group members to update newcomers and those who missed earlier sessions. Assign this task to teens on a rotating basis. Explain that it helps build their public speaking skills.
  - Remind teens that these sessions will help them get information and develop skills to avoid being the victims of crime and to develop leadership skills to help others and their communities become safer.
  - Return their journals with your comments from the last session.
- Explain the purpose of this session. Tell teens that in this session they will define vandalism, consider what makes people do it, and examine its impact. They will focus on graffiti and note its connections to gangs and hate crime. Teens will discuss strategies to prevent vandalism from happening.
- Remind teens of the guidelines they developed for these sessions. Be sure their list is posted on the wall. One way to increase teens' involvement and give them ownership of the session is to have them volunteer to go over the group guidelines at the start and recap the activities from the last session.

## STEP B

## TEACHING STRATEGY

- Whole-group Discussion



10 MINUTES

## What Do You Think?

- Use what you wrote on newsprint to ask teens "How Would You Feel If Someone . . . ."
  - Broke the basketball backstop at the playground where you shoot hoops?
  - Dumped chocolate pudding in your backpack, ruining all your books and papers?
  - Slashed the tires of your bike?
  - Spray-painted obscenities or gang insignia on your house or apartment building?
  - Stomped on your mother's garden plot in the community garden?

2. Use these questions to encourage teens to think and talk about vandalism in personal rather than abstract terms.
  - Get as many teens as possible to tell how they would feel. Write their feelings on the same piece of newsprint.
  - Tell teens that vandalism is sometimes referred to as a *victimless* crime—an illegal act that does not injure an individual. Ask teens to think about why that is a false notion. What are the consequences of vandalism? Who gets hurt and in what ways?
  - Point out that there are many negative results of vandalism. The individual whose property is damaged must deal with emotional costs (anger, fear, and a sense of helplessness). He or she must also pay in time, money, and trouble to repair, clean up, or replace vandalized property. Vandalism makes insurance rates go up and causes businesses to leave or avoid certain neighborhoods. Residents of neighborhoods riddled with graffiti live with a sense of community instability, and their feelings of safety are compromised. Neighborhoods with high rates of vandalism are perceived as dangerous to visitors, so people are less likely to visit friends or frequent businesses in these areas.

## STEP C

### TEACHING STRATEGY

- Brainstorming
- Paired Discussion



40 MINUTES

### What Is the Problem?

1. Define vandalism and present teens with some basic facts about vandalism. Have teen volunteers read the following statements from three- by five-inch cards:
  - *Vandalism is the willful destruction or defacing of property.*
  - National estimates of damage from graffiti alone are more than \$8 billion per year (*Grffiti Is Everyone's Problem*, 2003–2004 Crime Prevention Month Kit, NCPC).
  - About 5 percent of households had at least one incident of vandalism in 2004. Over 5.6 million households were vandalized during this period (*National Criminal Victimization Survey*, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics).
  - When schools must pay thousands of dollars each year to repair vandalism (damage to bathrooms, hallways, classrooms, and grounds), there is less money available to purchase new sports equipment, art supplies, and library books.
  - Vandalism is a hate crime when it is aimed directly at a person or group from a particular ethnic group, gender, sexual orientation, or faith background.
  - Computer-related vandalism (hacking) is a growing problem and is connected to identity theft, which costs individuals and businesses millions of dollars each year.
2. Ask teens to brainstorm why they think so many teens are involved in vandalism.
  - Write their comments on newsprint.
  - Be sure to refer to this list in Step D when considering viable methods to prevent vandalism.
  - Possible answers might include the following:

- For fun
  - On a dare
  - As an outlet for creativity
  - To make people notice the vandal (his or her name, group name, tag, etc.) and take him or her seriously
  - As an act of rebellion
  - As an expression of anger against certain groups or situations
3. Have teens work in pairs to read and respond to the four *Impact of Vandalism* signs, which are posted in the room. Ask them to focus on the questions at the bottom of each sign.
- Give each pair a pencil.
  - Direct them to walk around, read, and respond to each of the *Impact of Vandalism* signs by writing their comments on the signs.
  - If they did the optional scavenger hunt, remind them to think about what they observed.
  - Bring teens back together as a group.
  - Take the signs down and bring them to the front of the room. As you read the comments teens have written, have a volunteer write the main points on the newsprint under the question “How Is Vandalism a Problem in Our Community?”

## Wrap-up for Part 1

“*Vandalism is a victimless crime.*”

Ask teens if they agree with this statement. Does it accurately reflect the public attitude toward losses from vandalism?

Part 2 will continue the discussion about vandalism with a focus on what could be done in teens’ school or community.

P A R T

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## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

Begin this part by reviewing the previous session. Be sure to remind participants about the objectives for Session 23 and give them an overview of what will be accomplished during this part of the session (use the objectives set out at the beginning of the session).

### STEP D

#### TEACHING STRATEGY

- Small-group Discussion



40 MINUTES

### What Can We Do About Vandalism?

1. Tell teens to imagine that they have been asked to serve as special advisors. They must recommend solutions to the problem of vandalism in their community.
  - They are to work in small groups, each with a reporter and a recorder.
  - Each group will consider a range of proposed solutions and/or case studies.



### Optional Idea

If teens' energy seems low, try this strategy instead of 1 and 2 of Step D. Divide teens into small groups and challenge them to come up with as many solutions to vandalism as they can. After all groups have generated a list, bring them together. Toss a ball to one group and ask for one of their solutions. That group then throws the ball to another group, which provides one solution and passes the ball on. Each group must offer a suggestion that has not yet been given. Write all the solutions down. As each team runs out of solutions, those teens must sit down, and the last group standing wins. Then continue with Step D, #3.

- They should decide which solutions to recommend for their community. Remind teens to use what they know about the problem of vandalism.
  - Tell teens they will have about ten minutes.
  - Distribute copies of Handout 2: *Solutions to Vandalism* to all teens.
  - Be sure they know that they can provide recommendations that are not on the handout.
  - Circulate among teens to help keep them on track.
2. Bring teens back together as a group and have each group report its findings.
    - As they report the solutions they think would be the most effective, write their ideas on newsprint.
    - If more than one group recommends a particular solution, put a checkmark next to it.
    - As each reporter tells what his or her group selected, ask why the group members think a particular solution will work in their community.
  3. Have teens decide which are the best solutions.
    - When all have reported, ask each group to come to agreement on the three or five best solutions.
    - Put stars next to the solutions the groups think are the most likely to work.
    - When this process is finished, you should have a list of solutions your teens think will help address the problem of vandalism in their community.

## STEP E

### TEACHING STRATEGY

- Journal Writing



10 MINUTES

### Reflection

1. Relate the session to teens' lives.
  - Ask teens what people should learn about vandalism.
  - Ask teens if any of the service-learning examples in the session would be possible in their community?
2. Turn learning into action.
  - To get teen thinking about possible service-learning projects related to this session, ask what they think would be the most effective ways to share this information. Possible suggestions might include holding a panel discussion, writing and presenting skits, designing and exhibiting posters, and writing and distributing a brochure about property crime.
  - Have teens think about what community groups or organizations they might work with on this issue.
 

**Note:** Consult Session 10: *Designing a Project* for more information about service-learning projects.
  - If this session has sparked special interest with your teens and they are interested in doing a short service-learning project (approximately two hours or less) related to this session, consult "Easy Steps to a Service-learning Project" in the Introduction in Volume One.
  - Ask for volunteers for the next session's tasks, such as making posters, contacting community resource people, and setting up the room.

3. Distribute the journal for Session 23.
  - Explain, remind, or ask teens the purpose of the journal. Be sure they know it is to help them reflect on what they learned and for you to read and respond to what they write. Be clear that you will not be correcting what they write—just reading and responding.
  - Ask teens to write their answers to the journal questions.
  - Ask teens if they are willing to share their thoughts with the group.
  - Collect their journals to review them after the session and write short comments. Tell them you will return their journals with your comments at the next session. This gives teens something tangible and provides them with a connection to previous sessions.



**H A N D O U T 1****Vandalism Scavenger Hunt Checklist**

- Graffiti spray-painted on a building
- Statements written on a wall in a rest room or on furniture
- Broken playground equipment
- Someone in uniform or a police officer with two of your team members. Ask for the officer's opinion concerning vandalism. How would he or she reduce vandalism?
- Someone you interviewed concerning vandalism. Ask:
  - Have you ever been a victim of vandalism? If yes, what happened?
  - How did it make you feel? What would you do to reduce vandalism in the neighborhood?
- A missing or broken sign
- A broken window in an abandoned building
- Statements or drawings carved into a wall or piece of furniture
- Another example of your choice



## IMPACT OF VANDALISM

### Vandalism

*Vandalism is the willful destruction or defacing of property.  
Vandalism is a crime.*

#### What's the problem with vandalism?

It's expensive to repair. It makes our schools and communities unattractive and unsafe.

#### Vandalism is a problem in schools and communities:

- In 2003, 12 percent of students ages 12-18 reported that someone at school had used hate-related words against them, and more than one-third (36 percent) of students ages 12-18 had seen hate-related graffiti at school. (*Indicators of School Safety*, U.S. Department of Education, 2005)
- Types of school vandalism include doing graffiti, breaking bathroom fixtures, and causing other destruction to the school building or property by starting fires, causing water damage, or tampering with computer files.
- Who gets hurt by school vandalism? When schools are damaged by vandalism, students, teachers, and staff suffer emotional harm and feel unsafe.
- Time, energy, and money that could go toward helping students learn must be redirected to deal with acts of vandalism—finding out who committed the crime, dealing with consequences, and getting the damage repaired.
- In 2004, 175,621 arrests were made for vandalism of these 67,511 were under 18 years of age. (Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States 2004*)

→ Is vandalism a problem in your school or community? If so, how? If not, why not?

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## Graffiti

*Graffiti is the intentional damage of another's property by writing words or drawing pictures. Graffiti is a form of vandalism.*

- Graffiti can be done with any marking substance, including felt pens, spray-paint, ballpoint pens, and knives for carving or scratching.
- Graffiti can be found on any surface, including walls, bus shelters, mailboxes, and sidewalks. It is often one of the most costly and difficult types of vandalism to prevent.
- Graffiti affects everyone living in the community.
- If graffiti isn't removed quickly, graffiti writers may work their way through the neighborhood.
- Graffiti leaves the impression that the residents cannot deal with the problem, and this may encourage other types of criminal activity.
- Graffiti may be obscene or hateful.
- Graffiti can make buildings deteriorate more quickly.

→ Is graffiti a problem in your school or community? If so, how? If not, why not?

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**IMPACT OF VANDALISM**

**Graffiti and Gangs**

Gangs use graffiti to identify themselves and their territory.

- The graffiti may be the gang’s name, a gang member’s nickname, a declaration of loyalty, threats against rival gangs, or a description of criminal acts in which the gang has been involved.
- Gang-related graffiti can increase fear in the neighborhood and make families flee to neighborhoods that look and feel safer.

→ Is gang-related graffiti a problem in your school or community? If so, how? If not, why not?

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## Graffiti and Hate Groups

- Swastikas (the symbol used by the Nazis) were scratched into the door of a Jewish teacher's classroom.
- Racial slurs and death threats were spray-painted on the door of an African American woman's residence.
- The words "White Power" were written on the apartment building where a white mother lived with her biracial child.
- Anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish) remarks, racial slurs, and belittling remarks targeting Latinos and homosexuals were written on the walls of a middle school.
- An Arab-American family's store was vandalized. Merchandise was destroyed, windows were broken, and thousands of dollars of damage were caused.

→ Is hate-related graffiti a problem in your school or community? If so, how? If not, why not?

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## HANDOUT 2

### Solutions to Vandalism

#### Basic Rules

- Don't be a vandal yourself! Don't destroy or deface someone else's property or public places.
- Report any acts of vandalism that you see. Quick repairs and cleanups discourage further damage.
- Volunteer to help clean up a park, vacant lot, or school campus. Plant trees, bushes, and flowers.
- Clean graffiti off the walls in schools, libraries, or other public facilities. Make it a group project.
- Work with police and school officials to start a hotline to report vandalism.
- Work with your Neighborhood Watch to start a Square Mile or Block-by-Block program in which teens and others take responsibility for the cleanliness of the area and work with residents to maintain it.
- When graffiti writers are caught, they should be sentenced to remove the graffiti.

#### Gang Graffiti

- Working with others in your community, start a graffiti removal project to eliminate graffiti and gang notation in neighborhoods. This provides work experience and in-depth employment training to young men and women.

## Two Case Studies

- *Catalina Ventura School, Phoenix, AZ*

TCC students decided to address the problem of graffiti for their service-learning project. Working with local police, they offered a reward for the reporting of graffiti. The students worked with the city parks department to get supplies to help them clean up graffiti. They surveyed the neighborhood for graffiti and started cleaning and painting over the vandalism. Since the students have become involved in the graffiti problem, graffiti offenses have dropped dramatically.

- *Garside Jr. High School, Las Vegas, NV*

Students created an “Imprint Wall” of tiles made by students, teachers, parents, and community members. The students hoped the wall would help resolve problems of graffiti and fighting in their school. They held a schoolwide contest to choose a crime prevention-related theme for the wall. Once the theme was chosen, everyone was invited to come to a community night at the school to paint tiles illustrating the theme. A professional tile installer helped mount the tiles, and the result is a beautiful wall filled with crime prevention messages.

What ideas do you have?

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**JOURNAL**

**Session 23**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

One thing I learned about vandalism is

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The next time I see an example of vandalism in my school or community, I will

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To help prevent vandalism in my school and community, I will

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Two ideas I have for service-learning projects on vandalism are

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