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Lessons in Drama: Learning about American Political Thought

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An important part of my teaching experience has dealt with integrating drama with the core academic areas of the school curriculum. The collaboration with teachers of music, art, reading, and English has been a worthwhile and positive undertaking. Now I will add Social Studies to the list, with a unit focusing on history, civics and sociology in a theatrical setting. While studying American political thought in their drama classes, students will also have a chance to perform what they have studied in school assemblies throughout the months of January (Martin Luther King Day), February (President's Day and Black History Month Celebrations), and March (Women in the Arts Month Celebrations).

Introduction of the Course

I hope that my unit will be an interesting way to teach political thought through drama classes, that my students will welcome the American thinking that will be studied, and that it will encourage my students to think about things that are important to their understanding of the world in which they live.

To augment students' understanding of politics, American history, and a thought process which permits them to create their own opinions and perspectives, a plethora of multi-media data ranging from pieces of art, music and photo journalism will be used to clarify the themes this unit will explore. Responses to each presentation of the varied art forms will be a necessary assignment for the course participants, for one of the unit's main objectives is to develop critical thinking skills so that they may produce their own written plays or music from their thoughts and feelings. It will be important for students to express their thoughts based on what has been presented to them over the duration of the course.

An Overview of the Course

As a drama class, students will study these plays: *To Kill a Mockingbird* , *Citizen Tom Paine , 1776* , and *The Civil War* . Though only one play will be read, the others will be screened (films) or viewed as a live performance. There will be a writing component as well, as students create a collage play based on biographical content and famous speeches in American history. Finally, students will have an opportunity to

perform what they have studied and created, in smaller classroom settings and in larger, full-scale productions at the end of the school year.

This curriculum unit is written to provide teachers with ideas that focus on American political thought. It acts as a useful guide to the many wonderful places on the World Wide Web, and explores a number of these sites so that teachers may feel comfortable using the internet as a supreme resource for finding exciting media to supplement their lesson plans.

Students will be excited and curious when given a chance to explore the great depths of information on the internet, and they will be amazed to find different approaches and styles on the computers they use. With any luck, students may learn more about topics than any classroom setting could possibly imagine to accomplish.

While a large part of this unit deals with political thought throughout this country's history, it will be very important for students to develop a process of thinking so that they may also have thoughts and feelings towards the content they study. A student who lets information slip by without any opinion or feeling for it loses interest in learning and develops slower than those who digest information, savor it, and speak out about it one way or another.

It will be a major objective throughout the course to spark students' perceptions on what they see and hear, prod them into asking questions about controversial topics, challenge their abilities to gather facts, and then allow them to criticize intellectually what they have perceived in well-prepared oral and written work.

Reading, Writing and Critical Thinking

While all students have feelings toward a subject, most of them rarely think critically enough. The combination of thoughts and feelings will need to be emphasized, and as stated in a recent study on critical thought and prejudice, the two go hand in hand:

“Although it is common to separate thought and feeling as though they were independent, opposing forces in the human mind, the truth is that virtually all human feelings are based on some level of thought and virtually all thought generative of some level of feeling”.¹

This passage was taken from a teaching project by the Center and Foundation For Critical Thinking at Sonoma College in Santa Rosa California. Written by Richard Paul, PhD, and Linda Elder, PhD, the authors have composed some fascinating ideas on processes of critical thinking and explanations of egocentricity and prejudicial thinking.

All of these findings were taken from research that was found on the internet, and they have helped to shape a strategy towards teaching this drama course. The experts continue to write about critical thinking in their essay: “Critical thinkers realize that their feelings are their response (but not the only possible, or even necessarily the most reasonable response) to a situation. They know that their feelings would be different if they had a different understanding or interpretation of the situation. They recognize that thoughts and feelings, far from being different kinds of “things”, are two aspects of their responses”.² The ability then, to pair thoughts with feelings, is the crux of critical thinking, and as young people develop both of these “things”(as they call it), they may be able to work in a more productive manner, using their imaginations as well as their analytical minds to express themselves.

Shifting the focus to the non-critical thinker, these writers observe: “Uncritical thinkers see little or no relationship between their feelings and their thoughts, and so escape responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and actions. Their own feelings often seem unintelligible to them”.³ This description of the non critical thinker sheds a great deal of light on the young student who, when asked about his response towards anything says “I don’t really care” or has difficulty putting feelings and thoughts together in expressing a well worded answer.

It will be this unit’s objective to develop students thoughts as well as feelings, and with the proper combination of the two, produce a qualitative statement or response toward a given presentation. The expressions of the combination of thoughts and feelings will result in the production of writings dramatic or poetic, musical compositions, art drawings or paintings, and/or oral interpretations. The student will be able to choose from an array of media to express aptly thoughts and ideas based on the data presented in class.

Critical Thought and Prejudice

Once development in the area of critical thought has been introduced, the main study of our course work may proceed, focusing on how people’s views have shaped our world. The Sonoma study provides for an introduction to this course on American political thought, for it addresses one’s ability to separate personal bias when attempting to be critical:

To think critically, we must be able to consider the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view; to imaginatively put ourselves in the place of others in order to genuinely understand them; to overcome our egocentric tendency to identify truth with our immediate perceptions or long-standing thought or belief. This trait is linked to the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than our own.⁴

An understanding of other points of view will be an important skill needed for a student’s ability to write objectively. In many young people, as witnessed in the classroom, we see a one-sided viewpoint while taking on a controversial or disturbing piece of literature. Such early prejudice and egocentricity hamper one’s ability to appreciate a work of art by viewing it at many levels of understanding other than our own preferred way of looking at it. Paul and Elder have interesting views on this subject, and all of this leads towards a preparedness for studying the plays of American political thought in the course work: “Egocentricity means confusing what we see and think with reality. When under the influence of egocentricity, we think that the way we see things is exactly the way things are. Egocentricity manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others’ points of view, a refusal to accept ideas or facts which would prevent us from getting what we want (or think we want)”.⁵

In exercising the ability to see both sides of a story, the lessons on political thought, prejudice and race can be learned in a manner that steers away from injurious and malicious response, and instead lead towards more intellectual and constructive thought. Students need to learn how single egocentric beliefs can lead to a whole group’s feelings, and be able to separate this tendency towards socialization when it comes to their own work:

As people are socialized, egocentricity partly evolves into sociocentricity. Egocentric tendencies extend to their groups. The individual goes from ‘I am right!’ to ‘We are right!’ To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

‘Group think’ results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. Uncritical thinkers often confuse loyalty with always supporting and agreeing, even when the other person or the group is wrong.⁶

Once a student is aware of the tendency to group one's thoughts and feelings from a shared belief with others to think more independently, the process of critical thinking may take place. It will also be possible to cover the themes and plots of the selections of the course without prejudice and condemnation.

In a final passage taken from the Center's report, a positive result emerges: "We can change egocentric tendencies when we see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. The development of children's awareness of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in critical thinking. This development will be modest at first but can grow considerably over time". 7

The development from social thinking to individual thinking mentioned in the study is a major objective of this unit. Once students feel comfortable with expressing how they feel without being influenced unduly by outside sources, critical thinking can flourish and students will learn much more than before.

The First Lesson in Critical Thought:

Confronting Prejudice, Hatred and Racial Tension with Self Reliance

By introducing the notion of prejudicial thought, students will get a chance to understand that the way people feel in general about certain things should not interfere with one's objectivity when learning is concerned. While students will be trained to become self reliant in their thoughts and feelings, they will also be taught how groups of people have altered our country's independence with bias, prejudice and bigotry.

Students will be able to discern traditional "group thinking" which established racial tension and hate in this country. They will learn to appreciate why the individual deeds of great American men and women were brave acts of courage, for if these bold people were not to act alone and speak out about what they truly believed in, America would be a much different country today.

Perhaps by facing these historically troubling problems, students will be able to answer their own queries as to why people hate. Once that is accomplished, maybe then they can begin to overcome their desire to follow popular thought and start carrying out the ideas that they have felt are truly their own, independent thoughts about things that are important to them.

Items that should be mentioned in this class should also involve:

- the creation of an unbiased thought.
- self-esteem and the premise of self-reliance in one's thoughts.
- the idea to create something original that comes from internal thoughts and not external influences.
- the ability to justify and explain an originally composed opinion.

Lesson Plan #1

An Open Discussion: Students' views on a controversial topic

An opening topic which will allow students to offer their thoughts and express their feelings will be on the subject of the proposed “national apology” for slavery. Taken from a fascinating webpage on this subject (<http://douglass.speech.nwu.edu/>), students will first read excerpts from various publications that debate this issue, then compile strong arguments and finally prepare articles to back up their personal opinions regarding this controversial proposal.

In order to discuss the issue of a national apology for slavery, students must be able to back up their responses and remarks with documented articles that they have researched. The following paragraphs preview the amount of information that is available to students who wish to use the internet to gather data. This starting point gives students the beginning pages of their in-depth research, and the following pieces should be required reading before they continue to search for more documentation to strengthen their arguments for their in-class presentation.

A worksheet designed by the National Archives Records Administration to help students properly document sources and record observations they have made has been entered into this unit in the Appendix. It can be shortened or altered as the instructor seems fit, but is a good way for students to organize and classify their readings.

Apologetic Rhetoric:

Is it too late for a national apology for slavery? Should one be given at all?

Tony P. Hall, congressman from Ohio, offered a simple resolution last summer apologizing to the ancestors of the enslaved:

“Resolved by the House of Representatives, the Senate concurring, that the Congress apologizes to African-Americans whose ancestors suffered as slaves under the Constitution and laws of the United States until 1865.”

In a letter to his House colleagues, Hall wrote that “it is never too late to confess that we were wrong as a Nation and ask for forgiveness.” (Text of a House colloquy on race relations.)

Similar thoughts were expressed in a June 1997 interview on the Democracy Now! radio program, but the representative demurred on reparations, what some in favor of an apology consider a logical second step. To see how far Hall’s resolution got, visit this [Washington Post](#) link and another from [Capitol Hill Blue](#).

President Clinton’s recent trip to Africa gave him what many thought to be an opportunity to offer a national apology for slavery. Some thought he actually did. Here is an excerpt from the speech in question:

[G]oing back to the time before we were even a nation, European Americans received the fruits of the slave trade. And we were wrong in that, as well although, I must say, if you look at the remarkable delegation we have here from Congress, from our Cabinet and administration, and from the citizens of America, there are many distinguished African Americans who are in that delegation who are making America a better place today. (Full text of the speech at [Kisowera School](#).)

Collected below are links to some slavery-apology debate on the Web:

“Clinton finally hits racism”

There is talk of Clinton giving a public apology for slavery. There is also a bill pending in Congress to apologize to the descendants of African slaves. This is a reasonable first step toward healing the damage and repairing the scars left by slavery and its cancerous friend, racism. (Las Vegas Review-Journal)

“Apology, even if sincere, would now be meaningless”

Would an apology end the institutional racism which results in the disproportionate number of Blacks on death row? Would it provide better access to education, housing and jobs for the hundreds of thousands of poor Black children in urban areas? Would it improve the image of African Americans in the nation’s media? Would it have any direct impact on any of our lives? (Philadelphia Tribune)

Apology for slavery will perpetuate racism, Robert W. Tracinski

Racism will be eradicated, President Clinton and Congress have said, only if white America apologizes to blacks whose ancestors were slaves. This advocacy of collective responsibility advances the very same idea that lies at the root of slavery itself: racial collectivism, which posits that any injustice committed against any member of your racial group entitles you to retaliate against any member of the perpetrator’s racial group. The result: more racial warfare. To eradicate racism it is necessary to strive for the ideal of a color-blind society, based on racism’s opposite principle: individual rights. (MediaLink, Ayn Rand Institute)

Forty acres and a mule, Bernice Powell Jackson

Words alone are too easy. Words must be accompanied by repentance by empathizing with the people who were hurt and acknowledging the wrong that has been done. Words alone, without wrestling with the pain of the broken relationship, are not true apology, they are only words. Many cultures of people of color around the world are based on relationship and include a formal or informal process for reconciliation. Native Hawaiians, for instance, call this process ho’oponopono, which means setting to right. It is based on the word and concept of pono or righteousness which is always connected to right relationship and requires one to keep working at relationship until it is right. Ho’oponopono includes prayer and a conversation among those whose relationship has been broken. Confession is made; restitution is offered. Forgiveness follows. (Civil Rights Journal)

Don’t cry for me, Bill Clinton,

Pedra DeLann Chaffers(<http://www.africanhistory.com/pcclinton.htm>)

In my view, an attempt to apologize for the atrocity of slavery trivializes the experiences of our ancestors. Can an apology be made for the physical and psychological trauma suffered by those who survived the Middle Passage? Can an apology be made for the multitudes who never made it to these shores, their bones strewn across the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean and their spirits never able to find peace? Can an apology be made for the daily stress of living at the mercy of some slave owner’s whim? I think not. (AfricanHistory.com)

National Public Radio reports and commentary on an apology for slavery:

Apology for Slavery?

“President Clinton says he’s looking at the idea of apologizing to black Americans for slavery. The idea has come up before, and many blacks think it’s long overdue. But, as NPR’s Cheryl Corley reports, just as many feel it’s a meaningless symbol, and if the government is going to apologize, it ought to go all the way and pay reparations for the harm it caused.” (All Things Considered, 27 June 1997, 7:36)

“Commentator Patt Morrison is disturbed by the recent rash of public apologies.” (Morning Edition, 20 June 1997, 3:31)

Government Apologies

“Join Ray Suarez for a look at the nature of official apologies and the purpose they serve.” Guests: Eliot Sorel, Michel-Rolph Trouillot. (Talk of the Nation, 20 June 1997, 49:30)

“We have already apologized for slavery” Mackubin Thomas Owens

Slavery is indeed a stain on America and many Americans see no harm in issuing such an apology. But an apology now would either trivialize an important issue or cause Americans to misunderstand the principles upon which their nation was founded. More importantly, no apology today could match the eloquence of 600,000 honored dead, North and South, who “gave the last full measure of devotion,” or of the democratic rhetoric of Abraham Lincoln who, in essence, already apologized for the national sin of slavery.

(Claremont Institute, Providence Journal)

Lesson Plan #2

*Teaching Prejudice: A Film Presentation and Discussion of **To Kill a Mockingbird***

One of the first presentations of the course will be a screening of the film version of Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* . It is an adequate first look at the Depression Era South and shows the existence of prejudice and racial tension in our country. Through the eyes of “Scout,” a feisty six-year-old tomboy, the film carries us on an odyssey through the prejudice and injustice in 1932 Alabama.

Presenting her tale first as a reminiscence of events from her childhood, the narrator draws us near with stories of neighborhood exploits by she, her brother Jem, and their friend Dill. Peopled with a cast of eccentrics, Macomb (“a tired and sleepy town”) finds itself the venue of the trial of Tom Robinson, a young black man falsely accused of raping a white woman. Atticus Finch, Scout and Jem’s widowed father and a deeply principled man, is appointed to defend Tom, for whom a guilty verdict from an all-white jury is a foregone conclusion.

Juxtaposed against the story of the trial is the children’s hit-and-run relationship with Boo Radley, a shut-in who the children and Dill’s Aunt Stephanie suspect of insanity and whom no one has seen in recent history. But fear keeps them at a distance until, one night, the children confront an evil born of ignorance and blind hatred and must somehow find their way home. Finch similarly takes on the white courtroom, and working against all odds, proceeds to fight for equality and justice.

Post Film Activities

Students are to bring to class a definition and an example of stereotype. Then, in small self-selected groups, students identify the social groups at Fair Haven Middle School. They list several characteristics and several values of each group. Students discuss the following questions:

- To which group do you belong?
- Which other groups do you or would you associate with?
- Which groups would you never associate with and why?
- What characteristics or values do these groups have that conflict with yours?
- Do those groups feel the same way about your group? Explain.
- Why does each group hold these views of the other?
- Why do you have these feelings about different groups?

A representative from each group shares the group's observations and conclusions with the entire class. The class discusses the implications of these observations and conclusions. Some additional questions the instructor may pose:

- What happens when people make these kinds of assumptions about others?
- What are the positive and negative consequences of identifying yourself with a particular group and excluding yourself from other groups?
- What forms of group identification are legitimate?
- Which are unjustified?
- Why do people make such unjustified distinctions?
- Why is it hard to express attitudes that conflict with those of your group?
- How do group members respond to dissent? Why?
- How do you feel about those who disagree with the rest of the group?
- How does the group members' response make the dissenters feel? Why?

After this discussion concerning group vs. individual thinking, the instructor should ask a number of questions that pertain to the film they watched:

- What groups of people are covered in this book? (Townspersons, Blacks, people like the Cunninghams, the Ewells.)
- What are Aunt Stephanie's attitudes about others?
- Why did she feel this way about each group?
- Was she fair? Why or why not?
- What were Jem and Scout's theories on class distinctions? What stereotypes do people have of poor people, and to go even further, of wealthy people?
- Why did they come up with these theories?
- Why did the theories make some sense to them?
- How reasonable were they?
- Where did they miss the mark?
- Where does Boo fit in?
- Would he have been treated differently if he had been from another class?

It is suggested that the film be presented in two class periods so that plenty of discussion time is available after the screening of the film. One of the most important objectives of this unit is to promote and develop students' ability to respond critically. After each presentation that is offered in class, ample time must be provided for either a group discussion or individual written response time.

By the end of the course a culmination of the students' responses toward each presentation should supply the teacher with plenty of data to evaluate the progress each person has made towards critical expression.

Beginning the course with a visual presentation like a film could be a good way of getting the needed attention in class. It is suggested that the class not read either the novel or play version of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, for there will be plenty of reading involved with other parts of the course. By alternately presenting the class with visual and acoustic data, reading and writing may be accepted more freely than a course which requires a strictly "read and write" demand on them.

Turning From Drama to Theater: Live Presentations

A few ideas deal with studying a variety of American plays written about famous American statesmen. I would

like to give students a taste of live theatre by possibly scheduling a field trip to see the Broadway production of 1776, or perhaps it will come to New Haven as a national tour. The premiere of *The Civil War* at New Haven's Shubert Theater in February 1999 seems like a field trip possibility, and with some advanced planning, perhaps special rehearsal viewing or class demonstrations may be arranged.

Another play, *Citizen Tom Paine*, by Howard Fast, can also be studied. In the play, students may be able to understand the events which led up to the idea of a Declaration of Independence, learn about the time period of early America, and understand what type of person the writer of *Common Sense* was like. An Act One performance from an ambitious drama class may be able to perform it as their marking period-long project.

Lesson Plan #3

A Collage Play: Biographies of Famous American Political Thinkers

Another idea is to teach a class in which students write a "collage play" using famous speeches made in the course of history that represent the seminar's theme on political thought. The students can study what events took place which warranted the speech, as well as have an opportunity to explore acting techniques of characterization of the individual speech makers.

Upon completion of these plays, students may decide to perform their work as part of the traditional school assemblies that are presented for Black History Month, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, or Memorial Day. Even if not done as a large scale school assembly, smaller performances done in the classroom or at remote settings in libraries or parks may shed new light on the biographies of these famous people in a unique setting.

Included below are brief summaries on biographical data of famous Americans known for influencing American political thought. Parts of speeches are also included, and when pieced together will comprise a type of script, a collage play, if you will, which can be added or subtracted to depending on the theme of the production. These are just a few elements of the script, giving teachers an idea of the kind of content that can be reproduced via the internet and are available by public domain. Students will be challenged to find more data on other famous men and women and can achieve great success in finding the work of these Americans in an attractive setting online.

Creating a Collage Script: Examples of Content from the Internet

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave Chapter 1

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvest-time, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time.

What to the Slave is the Fourth of July? (http://douglass.speech.nwu.edu/doug_a10.htm)

Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of

millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them. If I do forget, if I do not faithfully remember those bleeding children of sorrow this day, "may my right hand forget her cunning, and may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!" To forget them, to pass lightly over their wrongs, and to chime in with the popular theme, would be treason most scandalous and shocking, and would make me a reproach before God and the world. My subject, then fellow-citizens, is AMERICAN SLAVERY. I shall see, this day, and its popular characteristics, from the slave's point of view. Standing, there, identified with the American bondman, making his wrongs mine, I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. Standing with God and the crushed and bleeding slave on this occasion, I will, in the name of humanity which is outraged, in the name of liberty which is fettered, in the name of the constitution and the Bible, which are disregarded and trampled upon, dare to call in question and to denounce, with all the emphasis I can command, everything that serves to perpetuate slavery-the great sin and shame of America! "I will not equivocate; I will not excuse;" I will use the severest language I can command; and yet not one word shall escape me that any man, whose judgement is not blinded by prejudice, or who is not at heart a slaveholder, shall not confess to be fight and just.

Second Inaugural Address, Abraham Lincoln

(http://douglass.speech.nwu.edu/linc_a74.htm)

If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." (1865)

U. S. Government's Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States: from George Washington 1789 to George Bush 1989

(Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1989).

Opening of the Declaration of Independence

(http://douglass.speech.nwu.edu/inde_a44.htm)

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and

equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...

@3H(after2H):Martin Luther King "I Have A Dream" Speech (http://douglass.speech.nwu.edu/king_b12.htm)

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our modern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed.

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

So in though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream.

It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the context of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; that one day right down in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be engulfed, every hill shall be exalted and every mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plains and the crooked places will be made straight and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I will go back to the South with.

With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.

With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.

With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to

climb up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning

"My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my father's died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!" And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire.

Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.

Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that; let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi and every mountainside.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual,

"Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

Sojourner Truth

(<http://www.brightmoments.com/blackhistory/nsotrue.html>)

It is rarely discussed, but Sojourner Truth fought for the desegregation of public transportation in Washington, DC during the Civil War. She refused to face the indignities of Jim Crow segregation on street cars and had the Jim Crow car removed from the Washington D. C. system. Sojourner Truth brought a local street to a standstill when a driver refused her passage. With the support of the crowd she forced the driver to carry her. During her legendary life, she challenged injustice wherever she saw it. She was an abolitionist, women's rights activist and preacher.

Born into slavery (as Isabella Baumfree) in upstate New York, Sojourner Truth obtained her freedom and moved to New York City. There she began to work with organizations designed to assist women. She later became a traveling preacher and quickly developed a reputation as a powerful speaker. A turning point in her life occurred when she visited the Northampton Association in Massachusetts. The members of this association included many of the leading abolitionists and women's rights activists of her time. Among these people Sojourner Truth discussed issues of the day and as a result of these discussions became one of the first people in the country to link the oppression of black slaves with the oppression of women.

As a speaker, Sojourner Truth became known for her quick wit and powerful presence. She would never be intimidated. Because of her powerful speaking ability, independent spirit and her six foot frame, she was often

accused of being a man. She ended that in Silver Lake, Indiana when she exposed her breast to the audience that accused her.

Sojourner Truth lived a long and productive life. She spoke before Congress and two

presidents. Sojourner Truth is best remembered for a speech she gave at a women's rights conference where she noticed that no one was addressing the rights of Black women. Her address reads in part: "Dat man ober dar say dat womin needs to be helped over carriages, and lifted ober ditches and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody eber helps me into carriages, or ober muddpuddles, or bigs me any best place. And ain't I a woman? Look at me Looka at me arm. I have ploughes and planted and gathered into barns, and no mand could head me! And ain't I a woman."

Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman was born a slave in 1821 near the eastern shore of Maryland. When she heard that her deceased master's property would be sold she escaped to freedom in Pennsylvania. When she discovered what it was to be free, she wanted to help other people to freedom. Her reputation for freeing slaves was known throughout the slave community. She was often compared to Moses who led the Israelites of the Bible to freedom. Her contemporaries referred to her as a heroine, saying "her likes it is probable was never known before or since."

Throughout her life Harriet Tubman maintained an interest in the welfare of others. She raised money for schools, former slaves, destitute children and assisted the sick and the disabled. Toward the end of her life Harriet Tubman worked to establish a home for the elderly. She passed away in 1913 in the "Harriet Tubman Home for Aged and Indigent Colored People."

The singer Paul Robeson would sing the spiritual "Go Down Moses" and explain that it was a protest song of slaves who had Harriet Tubman in mind. "Go down Moses, Way down in Egypt land, Tell ole pharaoh, Let my people go." A choral rendition of this song would be a most welcome addition to any public presentation done on the history of famous African Americans.

Teachers' Bibliography

Section A: Internet Resource Guide for Teachers

While this curriculum unit contains several ideas for classes to be covered that pertain to American political thought, it is also to serve as a teachers' guide to the Internet. I have found a large amount of curricula that teachers may want to look at, edit and use for their own classrooms. This section on World Wide Web resources will help teachers find a huge amount of information and will allow them to pick and choose certain lesson plans which they feel comfortable teaching.

Lesson Plans for Dear Mrs. Roosevelt

The following lessons came from a webpage devoted to the New Deal, and this particular one focuses on the letters sent to Eleanor Roosevelt by a wide range of suffering citizens. In each lesson there lies a link to the types of letters that were written. On the WWW, the underlined words written in blue are actually links to

these sites. It can be found at the following URL: <http://newdeal.feri.org/classrm/classdmr.htm>

Contributed by: Rachel Yarnell Thompson, an Adjunct Professor of Education at George Washington University, Washington, D.C., and a freelance educational writer.

Until her retirement, she was a social studies teacher for 31 years in Fairfax County, Virginia.

Lesson 1: Analyzing the Letters

Estimated class time: One to two periods

Description: This lesson includes eleven tasks or questions to help students analyze the letters included at the New Deal Network. Each part of the lesson stands alone, so teachers can mix and match the elements to suit their curriculum needs. Each can be used with typical middle school and high school academic ranges and are appropriate for a U.S. History or American Civilization class.

Lesson 2: Hometown Children and the Depression

Estimated class time: Five to six class periods, plus out-of-school tasks.

Description: This lesson is greater in scope than Lesson 1, although teachers can easily pare it down by implementing only one of the resource ideas or by simplifying the culminating activities. The lesson helps students use local resources to learn the connections between their own community and the topics in this feature. If the teacher uses the entire concept, it is suitable for gifted or advanced-placement students at middle school or high school levels. By offering lots of instruction and guidance, teachers can also challenge students of lower ability to discover the rewards that come from this kind of primary information gathering. This lesson is suitable for a U.S. History or American Civilization class.

Lesson 3: A Comparison With Children in Modern Times

Estimated class time: One to two periods, some intervening time to accomplish certain tasks, and one to two follow-up periods.

Description: Individual students are assigned the task of finding out how things have changed for young people since the days of the Depression. Through an interviewing process, each student gathers information that allows comparisons between the two periods in history. If time is limited, the teacher may shorten the steps and scope of this project. Because a fair amount of independent information gathering is required for this lesson, it is probably more suitable for gifted or above-average students; however, with added guidance and instruction from the teacher, all ranges of students could do this. Although the lesson is certainly appropriate for U.S. History and American Civilization classes, it can also be used in a U.S. Government class.

Lesson 4: A Potpourri of Ideas

Estimated class time: Varies with the activity chosen; some take only a class period, others can take a week. Some tasks can be assigned for independent study or enrichment.

Description: This section provides a potpourri of activities designed to extend students' thinking about the content of the Web site. Each activity is different in scope and level of difficulty, but among the suggested

lessons there is something for everybody. All of these activities can be used in a U.S. History or American Civilization class, and several are suitable for a U.S. Government class.

Section B: Curriculum Development Projects

As previously stated, this curriculum unit acts to serve as a guide for teachers. While several lesson plans have been included that are original ideas, many of the following plans come from other teachers all over the United States. They are included in this unit to promote creative unit composition and increase flexibility when teachers pattern their curriculum by age groups and academic levels.

The New Deal Network is assisting the following projects by providing materials development, technical support, and curriculum support from educators at the Institute for Learning Technologies, and by fostering a nationwide community of teachers, scholars and students. Some projects are already online and well underway. Others are just beginning to be developed. If you have a New Deal-era project that you wish to include in this group, or if you can offer assistance to any of these projects, contact the NDN Project Director at thurstonilt.columbia.edu.

The Bland County History Archives Project (<http://www.teci.net/bland/rocky/archives.html>)

Students in John Dodson's US History classes in Rocky Gap High School, located in southwestern Virginia, will be documenting the impact of the Great Depression in their community, using oral histories, photographs and other primary documents.

We Made Do: Recalling the Great Depression (<http://www.mcsc.k12.in.us/mhs/social/madedo/>)

An oral history of the Depression era developed by Don Adams' 11th grade U.S. History classes at Mooresville High School. Don and his students are interested in obtaining more primary documents about New Deal programs and politics in the Mooresville, Indiana area (near Indianapolis) and they are committed to documenting the experiences of the people who lived through this critical period in our country's history. We Made Do has a forms-based interviewing system built into its homepage.

FDR Cartoon Archive

(http://www.wizvax.net/nisk_hs/departments/social/fdr_html/FDRmain.html)

This award-winning site contains political cartoons from the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt. This preservation project is a cooperative venture of the AP Computer Math class and the AP United States History classes at Niskayuna High School, in upstate New York. Paul Bachorz, a Niskayuna High School US History Teacher and the project coordinator, looks forward to developing more lesson plans to accompany the cartoon archive and to make these editorial cartoons available for alternative educational uses.

Jersey Homesteads (<http://scc01.rutgers.edu/newjerseyhistory/welcome.htm>)

A web site on the New Deal planned community of Jersey Homesteads (now Roosevelt, NJ), produced by Spotswood High School and Hunterdon Central Regional High School in collaboration with Rutgers University and the New Jersey Historical Commission. William Marshall, Tom Fruciano, and Bill Fernekes are the project leaders.

Documenting Depression-era Murals in Upstate New York

Matt Fidler's US History class at Rome Free Academy will be documenting and creating a gallery of New Deal murals in upstate New York. Art historians and educators at Syracuse University will be assisting in the development of this Living Schoolbook Project (<http://lsb.syr.edu/>).

The Civilian Conservation Corps in Utah

Students in Joel K. Briscoe's US History and AP Government classes at Bountiful High School, in Bountiful, Utah, will be creating a Web site about the work of the CCC in Utah. The CCC brought young men from predominantly urban areas to Utah, where they were involved in land reclamation projects, created recreational facilities, and built roads through remote mountain and desert areas. Joel is especially interested in hearing from anyone who may have worked on these Utah CCC projects.

A Teaching Guide to *The Grapes of Wrath*

A team of two English teachers and one US History teacher at J. F. Kennedy High School in Fremont, California, will be developing online curriculum materials to accompany an interdisciplinary American Studies course on John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Carrollton, Texas During the Great Depression

An online essay project in which students from April Adams' social studies classroom at R.L. Turner High School will be investigating and reporting on the impact of the Great Depression on their community, which is located near Dallas, Texas. April would like to include oral histories and essays dealing with the New Deal building projects and fine art projects in their area.

South Baton Rouge During the Great Depression

The T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, at Louisiana State University, is working with classes at McKinley High School in documenting the history of the African-American community in Baton Rouge during the Great Depression. Students will be conducting oral histories and working with primary documents.

Poverty During the Great Depression: Williamsburg and the Caribbean

Students in John Galvin's eighth grade social studies class at the Eugenio Maria de Hostos Intermediate School, located in the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn, New York, will be documenting the Williamsburg community's responses to poverty during the Great Depression. Using oral histories, students will compare and contrast the impact of the Great Depression in the United States and in the Caribbean.

From Isolationism to Internationalism: Roosevelt's Impact on US Foreign Policy

Charlotte Gillam, an educator in Rutland, Vermont, will be designing an online feature and curriculum materials on Roosevelt's efforts to move the nation from isolationism to internationalism, based in part on primary documents from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

Highland Park's Edgar Britton Murals: Using Public Art for Interdisciplinary Study

Connie Kieffer, Fine and Applied Arts Department Chair at Highland Park (Illinois) High School, will be developing a curriculum centered on public art in interdisciplinary study, using Highland Park's Edgar Britton mural as her model.

The New Deal in Eastern Kentucky

History teacher Kevin Simon and his students at Sayre School, in Lexington, Kentucky, will study the impact of New Deal programs and projects in the mountain regions of eastern Kentucky.

Envisioning Technology in the 1930s

Students in Philip Weinberg's American Studies classes at the High School of Telecommunication Arts and Technology in Brooklyn, New York, will study representations of technology during the 1930s, using advertising materials, photographs and articles.

@Text: Making a Mural of Memories In this interdisciplinary project, history students at Rome Academy, in upstate New York, will conduct oral history interviews with survivors of the Great Depression. Art students will then construct a mural drawing from these accounts. Judi Mullin is directing the project.

Teaching with Evergood's "The Story of Richmond Hill"

Mah-Bobe Ghods, a graduate student in Art Education at Teachers College in New York City, will be developing curriculum around the Philip Evergood painting, "The Story of Richmond Hill," a mural in the Richmond Hill Branch of the Queens Borough Library.

Work Relief in Fort Wayne

Sholom Gold, a graduate student at Teachers College, will be developing a curriculum piece on work relief in Fort Wayne, Indiana, using newspaper articles and documentary photographs from the Works Progress Administration.

Section C: Archives Form

National Archives and Records Administration Written Document Analysis Worksheet

1. TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):

- Newspaper Map Letter
 Telegram Advertisement Congressional record
 Census report Report Press release
 Patent Memorandum Other

2. UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

- Interesting letterhead Notations Seals
 Handwritten "RECEIVED" stamp
 Typed Other

3. DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT: _____

4. AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT: _____

POSITION (TITLE): _____

5. FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN? _____

6. DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

B. Why do you think this document was written?

C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

Section D: Joining an Online Discussion List

Another great opportunity that is available on the internet for teachers are the e-mail discussion lists. Lists are available on many different topics and they allow people to collaborate on projects, research, techniques, scheduling, and many other activities. The following list is one for theatre professionals. Largely used by academics, this list often has answers and suggestions to questions that most books and other reference types can't possibly supply. Here are a few suggestions from list members on the topic of plays written on the theme of American political thought:

I'd suggest looking back at the Living Newspapers produced by the Federal Theatre Project, particularly "One-Third of a Nation". This play deals with poverty in America and traces the development of slums in New York. It was originally designed by Howard Bay and culminated in a tenement fire. There's nothing like fire onstage to catch the attention of high schoolers and adults alike! While it does not deal with individuals in depth (addressing the issues rather than the personalities), it is worthy of consideration in relation to "American Political Thought" and took its title from FDR's second inaugural address.

If you are looking for plays addressing issues pertinent to inner city students, I attended a high school matinee of August Wilson's "Fences" at Syracuse Stage some years ago which was absolutely electric. The kids responded very well to the subjects and the actors were very fired up by the audience response. And there's always "Hair" for a diversion. Best of luck! I'd be very interested to hear what you end up with.

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One thing most Am. Political Plays have in common is that they have a preponderance of men in them. If you'd like to consider a play that looks at the process for the other half of the citizenry, may I suggest my "Spirit and Flesh"? It's about Victoria Woodhull, who ran for President in 1872 on a platform of Equal Rights and Free Love. I understand the New Yorker has a piece about the lady this week although my copy of the current issue has yet to arrive, so I can't swear to it. Last week's New York Times Book Review's cover feature, complete with photo, was a review of two new biographies of the Woodhull: Goldsmith's "Other Powers" and Gabriel's "Notorious Victoria". The week before, PARADE, the Sunday Supplement that comes in most papers that aren't the Times, had an interview with Goldsmith about Victoria's political and sexual career. I assume the authors will do the talk show circuit, and soon the nation will have at least heard the name of this scandalous 19th century celebrity. There will be material for students to look up and compare to the play.

I began S&F during a previous flurry of interest in Woodhull, in the early 1970's, when the Second Wave of the Woman's Movement was searching the recent past for heroines. Vicky proved to be almost as controversial in 1970 as she was a hundred years earlier, and women who wanted to celebrate her life as an Heroic Foremother found they had a lot to censor out or explain away. "Spirit and Flesh" is an epic account of Victoria's life, warts and all. The script has had a number of readings, including one in London earlier this year. The readings are always followed by lively audience discussions, because the issues that made Woodhull controversial in 1870 sexual freedom, occult spirituality, politics as the manipulation of opinion by whatever means necessary, including the Big Lie are alive and taken personally today. You can find a big chunk of "Spirit and Flesh" on my Web Page, (though I'm currently doing yet one more re-write, in response to the recent reading)If the subject interests you, please take a look at the play. If you like it enough to want to read the rest, I can email or snail the script to you.

G.L.Horton <http://www.tiac.net/users/ghorton>>

“The Patriots” by Sidney Kingsley (1943) about the conflict between Jefferson and Hamilton.

“Tom Paine” by Paul Foster (1968).

A few years ago (while Reagan was in the White House) I produced OF THEE I SING at my school. Non-theatre friends accused me of writing a modern political commentary and trying to pass it off as a Gershwin musical. (I didn't change a word!) you might also want to check out Gary Trudeau's RAP MASTER RONNIE.

Billy Houck

You could create a whole curriculum just around Lincoln plays. Two of interest are Norman Corwin's “The Rivalry” which uses transcripts from the Lincoln-Douglas debates and Suzan-Lori Parks' “The America Play,” a fantastical, surreal work featuring a black man masquerading as Lincoln, making a living by getting repeatedly assassinated by whomever pays a ticket. Both use Lincoln to talk about race, which would neatly branch out into other disciplines and areas of interest, from the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement.

Two Lawrence & Lee plays, Inherit the Wind and The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail, come to mind: neither “political” in the narrow sense, but certainly so in a more general way. If the plays don't have to be based on specific characters or events, there's lots more: I was thinking about Waiting for Lefty in another context just yesterday, for example... There are also a number of monodramas about famous political figures: trouble is, most of them aren't in print.

Rick Jones I would suggest looking into the Federal Theatre Project and the Living Newspaper. I think your students would be surprised at the innovative form and documentary style harking back to the thirties. Gwen

Section E: Library Resources

Fast, Howard. Citizen Tom Paine. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986

Lee, Harper. To Kill a Mockingbird. New York: Popular Library, 1960

Paul, Richard W, PhD, and Elder, Linda, PhD. Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts, Sonoma College, Santa Rosa California: Center and Foundation For Critical Thinking, 1995 URL: <http://www.sonoma.edu/cthink/>

Key, Janis. “To Kill a Mockingbird” a teacher's project at Vintage High School, Napa, CA <http://www.sonoma.edu/cthink/K12/k12class/9-12/mock.nclk>

Student's Bibliography:

Fast, Howard. Citizen Tom Paine. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986

Classroom Materials:

@Ref:Videotape of: "To Kill a Mockingbird" and "1776". TV and VCR Computers with Internet Connections (Media Center)

Notes

1. Paul, Richard PhD, Elder, Linda PhD. Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts, Sonoma College, Santa Rosa California: Center and Foundation For Critical Thinking, 1995 2. Paul and Elder 3. Paul and Elder 4. Paul and Elder 5. Paul and Elder 6. Paul and Elder 7. Paul and Elder

Websites Used in the Making of this Unit:

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<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

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