

THREADS THROUGH HISTORY: AN AVOCATION FOR THE CHANGING OF THE STATUS QUO SEMINAR PROJECT

**A 6 PART UNIT TO ALLOW STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND
THAT CONTEMPORARY ISSUES HAVE RELEVANCE TO THE
HISTORIC RECORD**

**A FIVE-DAY UNIT WITH SEMINAR
CREATED BY GEORGE CAMPNELL**

❖ Introduction Goals and Aims:

According to Clarence Darrow, “History repeats itself and that’s one of the things that’s wrong with history.” In order to see the importance of this statement in terms of bringing curriculum to students, I offer this quote from Bring History Alive! “It is, and ought to be, complex and controversial.” Thus, this unit is intended to help students find connections between themselves through the contemporary issues of their own choosing-- issues that have inherent controversy-- and the historic record. When students are able to bridge the issues in similarity from past to present to future, the student will be able to build a framework which allows him or her to analyze his or her own emerging understanding, voice, place in the world, informed opinion, and realization that history is truly a mirror with reflective quality for those willing to look into it. As Joseph Addison states, “Tradition is an important help to history, but its statements should be carefully scrutinized before we rely on them.” Thus the historic mirror allows one to examine the lessons from history and apply them to the contemporary experience. The aim of this unit is to allow students to develop an understanding that history is living because the enduring issues from the past have not died.

❖ Rational

As students develop the ability to apply lessons from the past, through analysis and close examination, to the issues that face them in a capricious and challenging present, they will have a greater understanding in shaping their own opinions. With this ability, one can understand that although history is ever changing many of history’s greatest struggles are repeated.

❖ Alaska Standards:

1. The student will realize that history is a record of experiences with links to past, present, and future.

2. The student will be able to integrate historical knowledge with historical skill to participate as a life long learner and make historic connections to contemporary social issues.

❖ Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand that they are connected to history individually and as a member of a unique culture in finding connections between contemporary issues of individual concern and past episodes in history.

❖ Essential Questions:

Students will examine through the following concept questions: what are the similarities between historic episodes and contemporary beliefs, mores, attitudes, and opinions?

❖ Key Knowledge and Skills and Outcomes:

The student will make connections between diverse episodes in American history.

The student will analyze historic documents while searching for connections to the present.

The student will articulate their findings cooperatively in both small coaching groups and while presenting to combined classes as part of a panel discussion.

The student will write journal entries describing their connections.

The student will write speeches that connect with and relate to their peer group.

The student will gather primary source material relating to a social issue of his or her own choice.

The student will apply thinking skills while using research techniques.

The student will use technologies in appropriate and efficient ways.

❖ Activities:

Part 1

Establishing a Knowledge Base

- ◆ Students will have one week to close read the following primary documents as homework.

Red Jacket's "Letter to a Missionary"

Patrick Henry's "Speech to the Virginia Convention"

Cady Stanton's "Seneca Falls Declaration (1848)"

Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream"

- ◆ Each document must show highlights and side comments, which shows the students involvement in the close, analytical reading of each document.

See attached primary source documents and associated web pages for resources.

Part 2

COACHING GROUPS

- ◆ Students will be placed in coaching groups of four to six individuals.
- ◆ Students will share their findings, questions and enduring understandings from their set of close read documents.
- ◆ Students will examine each author's call to change the status quo and pull out the rational and justification given by each.
- ◆ Students will brainstorm contemporary issues with a potential for a change in the status quo.
- ◆ Students will have two class periods to complete the task.

Part 3

Pre-write Preparation

- ◆ Each student will pick a specific contemporary social issue that they feel needs reform.
- ◆ Students will have two days of library or computer lab research time to find 3 articles: One which shows the statistical largeness of the issue; one that shows the human side of the issue; one that offers the opposing side of the issue to your own point of view. Students will use appropriate library technology to retrieve, organize and document sources.
- ◆ Each student will close read all of their research articles with highlights and side notes.

Part 4

Pre-write

- ◆ Each student will write a pre-write paper in preparation for the seminar. The pre-write must demonstrate a connection between the primary source documents used, research, and the student's position on the contemporary social issue of their choice. The following prompt will be given in class, and the students will have the entire class period to complete the writing: You have 90 minutes to write a pre-write that ties your contemporary issue to past, present, and future—in other words, the American experience. You must include quotes, concepts, themes, or ideals to specific coached pieces.
- ◆ This writing will be evaluated primarily on the student's ability to link past episodes with contemporary issues.

Part 5 **Seminar**

- ◆ Over a two--hour block period, the class will begin the seminar by brainstorming a single seminar question, which is universal and encompasses all of their contemporary issues concerning a change in the status quo.
- ◆ During the seminar each student will be required to track the main points presented during the duration of the seminar in writings.
- ◆ Students will use their close reading notes from both their contemporary research and primary source documents to illustrate through specific lines the connections between past and present. Students will examine the language of reform used by the authors of the primary source documents.

Part 6 **Post-write**

- ◆ Students will write a speech that advocates for a change in the status quo concerning a contemporary issue. The paper will be written in first person and must be of a sufficient length as to state the problem, and justify a change in social attitudes. Students must include a minimum of four quotes to highlight or justify their position from their contemporary research. Students will word process and hold to the six trait standards of writing.

Assessment:

- ✓ Pre-writes will be graded on ability of the student to incorporate quotes from primary source, research to the themes and ideals of the student's contemporary issues.
- ✓ Seminar grades will be based on the following: Students who actively participate with comments which connect contemporary issues with the primary source documents used and ability to link to other student's issues and comments will receive 80% to 90%. Students who participate as active listeners will receive 70% to 75%. In all cases students will be encouraged to compare and contrast ideas through debate and dialogue.
- ✓ Close read notes would be graded on a check for completion and the student's interaction with the text through highlights and side comments.

- ✓ The post-write will be graded on the student's effectiveness in highlighting and advocating for a change in the status quo. The student may use any of the primary source document author's style as a model.