

Title: Defining America's Form of Democracy

Possible Subject Areas: US History; US Civics

Overview:

This unit is the first part of a two unit course called "Testing American Democracy." It focuses on the creation of the ideals and characteristics of American democracy that have made it unique in the world.

Essential Understanding (Big Idea):

America has a unique form of democracy. (The outcomes of events that have tested whether or not we have lived up to those ideals, have significance to how we live as American citizens today - Unit 2)

Essential Questions:

- 1 How did colonists want their relationship with England to change?
- 2 How did the American Revolution try to change American life?
3. What are the ideals and principles of American democracy?
4. How did we create this form of democracy?
5. What makes the ideals and principles of American democracy unique?

CT. Social Studies Standards:

- 1.1 - Demonstrate an understanding of significant events and themes in US history
- 1.9 – Understand the rights and responsibilities of citizens
- 2.1 – Access and gather (2.2 and interpret) information from a variety of primary and secondary sources (maps, charts, graphs, images and print materials.)
- 2.3 – Create various forms of written work to demonstrate an understanding of history and social studies issues.
- 2.4 – Demonstrate ability to participate in social studies discourse through informed discussion, debate and effective oral presentation.
- 3.2 Analyze and evaluate human action in historical and/or contemporary contexts from alternate points of view.

Objectives: Students will be able to

- Trace the evolving nature of citizens' rights
- Evaluate the role and impact of the individual on historical events (eg. Susan B Anthony, George Washington, Martin Luther King)
- Give examples of how individuals or groups have worked to expand or limit citizens' rights in the US
- Analyze historical and contemporary examples of the need to ensure human rights.
- Ask relevant questions related to social studies/history to initiate, extend or debate a point of view during a discussion
- Use (and create) a variety of writing formats to portray attitudes in a historical time period

Day 1

Objective: Students will list and discuss their associations with concepts of democracy in order to construct shared working definition of this key vocabulary concept.

Materials Needed:

- blank association/definition placemats with instructions on them
- blank association/definition placemats on chart sized paper to be filled in
- chart paper for front of the room
- markers

Opener:

Democracy is "government of, by and for the people."

Abraham Lincoln

What do you think Lincoln meant by this quote? Explain why you believe that we do or do not live in a democracy in America?

Agenda:

- 1 Opener
- 2 Teacher introduction to activity
 - Elicit some (only 2-3) responses to opener.
 - Probably several different answers, which one is the correct one?
 - There can be lots of different angles or perspectives on what democracy means
 - We're going to take a look at different ideas about democracy and then try to come up with some shared working definitions.
- 3 Anticipatory "placemat" Activity
 - Divide the class into four teams of four students. For fun, each team can choose a name.
 - Distribute one instructional placemat small size and one blank placemat chart paper size to each group.
 - Have students write their names on the back. On the front, each student is responsible for one section.
 - The middle section, labeled AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IS will be filled in later together by group.
 - ***Each side section of the diagram should be labeled with one topic: people, events, places, ideas and symbols***
 - Students should then fill in at their desks the different sections of their placemats surrounding the middle by ***listing all the people, places, events, and ideas and symbols they associate with the word democracy***
 - Students can draw pictures related to the topic if they prefer
 - Students who can't think of anything, should be given prompts

- Students can each take responsibility for a particular area (events, people, etc) or they can add their ideas to each section – in which case everyone can put their initials next to what they contribute)
 - Allow 10 minutes for the brainstorming and to fill in the diagram. Once each student has filled in his/her section, have them read and explain their entries to the other group members
 - Have each group then develop a group definition of democracy that includes some aspect of each person's viewpoint. This definition should then be written in the center square of the placemat
 - Each group chooses a spokesperson to bring up their group's placemat to the front of the room, tape it to the board, and explain their definition of American democracy to the class.
 - After each group has done this, go around the class room and discuss the definitions,
 - Are there particular key concepts that come up multiple times?
 - On a separate chart paper, have a student keep a list of these words.
 - Are there any concepts that seem way off? Explain
 - Create shared class definition of democracy
 - Individual student's transfer shared definition to vocabulary graphic organizer (some teachers prefer using vocabulary flash cards). Brief lesson on how to fill out vocabulary chart, and how it works.
- 4 Wrap up discussion – focusing on what students learned about democracy that they did not know or think about before today's class

Exit Ticket/Assessment:

- Turn in group association/definition placemats
- Write down two things about democracy that you did not know or think about before today's class.
- Explain why you think these examples are good representations of what a democracy is.

Homework/Assessment:

Write two (or more) paragraphs:

- How is the class definition of democracy similar and/or different from your original thoughts on American democracy as expressed in your opener?
- Elaborate on a specific example of how you experience living in a democracy in your personal life.

Day 2

Objective: Students will examine associations and meanings of the vocabulary words **colonial** and **revolution** in order to explain their historical connections to the development of American democracy.

Materials:

- Two blank association/definition diagrams for each student
- Chart paper with blank association/definition diagrams on them
- Chart paper and markers

Opener:

- Distribute to each student 2 blank association/definition diagrams (like the democracy one done the day before).
 - In the middle of one should be the word **colonies** and in the other should be **revolution**
 - In the other four side boxes should be the words: **people, events, places, ideas and symbols**
- Put on the board two association/definition diagrams like the ones passed out
- Have students make an association/definition diagram for the vocabulary words **colonies** and **revolution** like they did the day before with the word democracy.

Agenda:

- Making connections: before collecting homework, have two volunteers read what they wrote. Use this to transition to today's lesson.
- **Activity: Opener follow-up**
 - **Chalk Talk** – give a few minutes to have students come up to the association/definition diagrams on the front board and fill in the blank sections for each diagram
 - Then each student at his/her table writes down his/her own definition of the two words, based on what they see on the board.
 - Mini-assessment: Teacher should walk around and check off what each student has done individually up to this point (point system?)
 - Choose 2-3 students to come up and write their definitions on two pieces of chart paper up front, one with **colonies** underlined at top, and the other with **revolution** underlined at top
 - Students should come to understand colonial relationship similar to parent/child
 - More time should be spent on understanding concept of revolution as major change effecting every part of society
 - Understand different kinds of revolution (government overthrow, technological, cultural, etc) but always with societal consequences
 - Understanding different kinds of revolution helps understand different ways revolution occur
 - Short discussion if everyone agrees, and teacher then synthesizes ideas to come up with final shared definitions written on sheets

- Think/Pair Share: Ask students to work in pairs to come up with examples to clarify definitions
 - Assign some pairs to come up with context sentences
 - Assign some pairs to come up with pictures
 - Assign some pairs to come up with short skit showing meanings
- Students take out their vocabulary charts from yesterday and fill in new words, definitions, pictures, and context sentence examples
- **Homework/assessment:**

Write a two - three paragraph short story using, and underlining the words *colonial* and *revolution*. Illustrate your story with a picture for each word. (Students can draw stick figures, or even do a cut up from a magazine. The purpose of this homework is to see if they understand and can express their understanding with their own context sentences.)

Day 3 (and probably 4)

Objective: Students will examine conflicts and events that led to the American Revolution in order to identify what the colonists initially hoped to gain from winning the American Revolution.

Materials:

- Overhead projector and overheads/markers
- Blank web graphic organizers
- note taking graphic organizer
- WHAT LED TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION charts for each student (4 pages)
- **leveled readings packets, prepared ahead of class, on pre-American Revolution events**
 - **each packet should cover some of the same material as the others, and some information that is different**
 - **each packet should also have the same WHAT LED TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION chart to be filled in by end of activity**
 - **each packet should include readings and some pictures in it**

Opener: List three things (or more) that you know about the American Revolution.

Agenda:

1. American Revolution web
 - Distribute “web” graphic organizers to each student.
 - Using blank overhead of “web” graphic organizer and write “American Revolution” in the middle circle. Students should do the same with theirs at their desks.
 - In round robin have each student share one thing they put in their webs. Both teacher and students write this down on their webs graphic organizer.
 - Teacher summarizes this as transition to mini-lesson

2. Teacher Mini- Lesson of overview of American Revolution

- Distribute note taking graphic organizer for students to use
 - Explain relationship of America – as colonies- to England
 - Explain revolution in this case meaning a war with total societal changes as a result
 - Make sure in lecture that definitions and ideas from opener from previous lesson are incorporated
 - After this SHORT lecture, teacher should refer to posted **Essential Questions** that are to be the focus of the guiding questions they'll have in their jigsaw activity.
 - **How did colonists want their relationship with England to change?**
 - **How did the American Revolution try to change American life?**

3. Jigsaw activity:

** This jigsaw purposely does not follow the usual jigsaw idea of distributing different topic materials for groups to teach each other. I am using this to incorporate reading level diversity with cooperative teaching. My belief is that the areas of reading overlap will reinforce the content learning goal in the teaching exercise.*

***It is important that groupings are decided by the teacher. Later students can use this grouping process as an example of an undemocratic – even if divinely wise – way of choosing teams.*

- Each student is going to be assigned to two groups – a **“home”** group and an **“expert”** group.
 - Prepare ahead of time tags with different colors (red, yellow, green, blue, etc) that will be assigned to different students. Each color represents a different “expert” group who will use a different set of leveled reading packets. The teacher should decide ahead of time the composition of the “expert” groups based on knowledge of individual students reading levels. (Shapes or animal pictures, or movie star faces, etc. can be used in place of colors)
 - Teacher should assign the “home” groups ahead of time, making sure that there is as diversified as possible a distribution of the colored tags (i.e. students at different reading levels). There should be from 3-5 in a group, depending on the plan for the color grouping. The home group should choose a name.
- Students should get into their **“home”** groups first to make sure they each know who is in the group and where they meet. Tell them that this is where they will return after they have gone through their **“expert”** training.
- Tell students to move to their color groups where they will become “experts” on events that led up to the American Revolution.
 - Assign or have them choose the following roles: facilitator, timer, reader, and questioner, “extra notes” taker
 - Give out the packets of information
 - Students should read and discuss the information in the packet. As the material is read, students should fill in the appropriate boxes on the WHAT LED...charts.
 - Students should be urged to take margin notes, particularly making notes of questions they have and connections they make with the reading. These are points the “extra notes” taker can write down also.
 - Questioner should make sure that everyone understands the material, by periodically asking if everyone understands or has questions?

- Facilitator should make sure that everyone agrees on important points that each student will teach their home groups. Sometimes questions students have can bring up important points not on chart. "Extra notes" person can write these down
 - Facilitator should make sure that everyone is filling in their graphic organizers as the material is being discussed.
 - Timer should make sure that everyone keeps to time frame, stays on task
 - After all of the materials have been read and discussed, the facilitator should make sure in a small group round robin, that each expert will be able to report back to their home group.
4. **Have students return "home"** to the place in the room designated for each home group in the beginning of this exercise. There should be one person from each expert group in the home group.
- Before they begin teaching their respective materials to each other, make sure that everyone understands **THERE WILL BE OVERLAP/REPETITION**. Nevertheless, **EACH PERSON MUST REPORT WHAT THEY PLANNED ON REPORTING**. Point out that even though there will be overlap of topic, each group had a little different way of approaching or understanding material, and each group had some information others did not.
 - Students will then take turns teaching their materials to the rest of the group.
 - Students should take notes on what they learn on the graphic organizers
5. **Wrap up sharing of what was learned -**
- Go back to objective and essential questions

During this activity, teacher should be circulating groups to make sure they understand materials, and how to work with graphic organizers.

Homework/Assessment:

Answer the questions below in complete sentences, short paragraphs.

- Choose two events or facts that you found especially interesting in what you learned, and explain why?
- What do you think were the colonists' main gripes (grievances)?
- What did the colonists want from England?

Day 4 (or 5)

Objective: Students will describe how the initial goals of the American Revolution changed in order to identify how the American Revolution (especially the Declaration of Independence) helped define American democracy.

Materials: Copies of Olive Branch petition to King George
Chart paper and marker
Copies Declaration of Independence

Opener: How would you describe yourself as an independent person? List specific things you do that show your independence.

Agenda:

- Short discussion of opener questions. Have 2 students come to the front to write down on chart paper what people say about what actions and attitudes demonstrate independence.

*Joanne – I need to continue this later. My idea is to next go into how the goals changed from redressing grievances to declaring independence. Was this necessary? Independence for what purpose? This is where the concepts of **equality and liberty (freedom)**, are also introduced. I want to look at primary documents (Olive Branch petition), excerpt from Common Sense, and various quotes from famous founding fathers (liberty or death, rather die than live like slaves, etc). I'm looking at "Road to the Declaration of Independence" seminar notes.*

After that I want to go into the creating of the constitution using Carol Berkin notes and sections from her book, as well as other primary documents from convention. All of this is to set up examination of original ideals and principles of democracy as foundation for Unit 2 that looks at how our practices have lived up to or contradicted these "founding fathers' intentions" (slavery, civil war, civil rights, women's rights, etc).

Worksheets: