

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT – 2009-2012

Lesson Title – Forming a New Government From Marisa Haralson

Grade – High School

Length of class period – 60 minutes

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

- ✓ What is the power of a speech?
- ✓ Can language change the understanding or meaning?

Objectives – (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

- ✓ Students will be able to interpret and evaluate a speech from a different time period.
- ✓ Students will be able to retell in his/her own words the message of a primary source.

Materials – (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?)

George Washington – Farewell Address

Version A - http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp

Version B - <http://blog.xkcd.com/2007/01/29/washingtons-farewell-address-translated-into-the-vernacular/>

Activities – (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

1. Review the historical events (formation of the United States, fight for independence, creation of government, separation of powers) that pertain to the speech – brainstorm on the board prior knowledge and create a fact base to build from. Discuss other forms of speeches that Presidents give, what is the message that the President wants to convey, who is the audience, etc.
2. Read the speech independently completing the questions.
3. Each student will discuss and explain their answers, as a class discuss the message of the speech, and have students examine the difference that language makes.
4. Larger discussion on why language is influential.

Assessment – (How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?)

They will answer questions on a worksheet that will be handed in at the end of class.

Questions

1. What is the message in the speech?
2. Which version is easier to understand? Why?
3. Why did Washington write this speech?
4. Do you agree or disagree with the speech? Explain.
5. Do you think that people still feel this way about America?

Connecticut Grade Level Expectations

Ask relevant questions related to social studies/history to initiate, extend, or debate a point of view.

Use evidence to develop an interpretation of a historical event.

Forming a New Government

Read the two versions of George Washington's farewell speech (1796) and then respond to the questions.

Speech A – Original Version

“The unity of Government, which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence, the support of your tranquility at home, your peace abroad; of your safety; of your prosperity; of that very Liberty, which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee, that, from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, it is of infinite moment, that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national Union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the Palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion, that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens, by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to you, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of

difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together; the Independence and Liberty you possess are the work of joint counsels, and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those, which apply more immediately to your interest. Here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the Union of the whole.”

Speech B – Modern Version

“You’re all happy that the government’s so together and unified on everything (and you should be — it’s why everything’s so good), but it ain’t always gonna be this way. All sorts of folks from both here and elsewhere are gonna try to divide it, make you lose faith in it, so please don’t sell this whole America thing short. Make it your top priority and don’t ever get in a mindset where you can let ANYTHING divide you.

You’ve gotta be Americans before all else. You’re for the most part the same religion and culture, and you’ve got the same goals, and you’ve only got what you do because you all worked together.

But even though this sounds good, when it comes to crunch time it’s easy to forget that in favor of stuff that seems more immediately important than sticking together.”

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