

ASSESSMENT TASK

COURSE TITLE: Twentieth Century American History

GRADE LEVEL: Ninth or Tenth Grade

UNIT: The Progressive Era

Abstract

This task has students create an original political cartoon characteristic of the Progressive era to demonstrate their understanding of this period in American history. Students consider symbols of the era, discuss events of the time period associated with the symbols, seek out contemporary political cartoons containing symbols, and then draw their own political cartoon incorporating one of the symbols from the Progressive era. A small number of cartoons drawn by students are selected by the class and submitted to the school newspaper to be considered for publication.

Prompt

Following a lesson on symbols of the Progressive Era (e.g., a gold bar, picket sign, or dollar bill with wings and "income tax" inscribed on it), students choose their four favorites, one each, respectively, for organized labor, anti-trust, health and safety, and political equality. These four symbols are posted on a large poster board in the classroom. The teacher leads a discussion linking the selected symbols to events of the Progressive era. While identifying a major event of the era associated with each symbol, the following questions are posed by the teacher during the discussion:

1. How would an eyewitness describe the event?
2. Where could you find information describing this event?
3. Why is this event historically significant? What were its consequences?
4. What message about this event might be sent through a political cartoon of the time?

Directions

"You are to create an original publishable political cartoon that incorporates one of the symbols of the Progressive era chosen by the class, posted in the classroom, and discussed by all of us. Your cartoon should depict an event (other than those just discussed by the class as examples) of the period 1870-1912. It should also convey a political message which reflects the event and is characteristic of the time period. The cartoon should be artistically drawn, neat, and suitable for possible publication in the school newspaper. To accompany your cartoon, submit a written paragraph that elaborates on it. The paragraph should identify at least two sources of information that guided you in creating the cartoon, a brief statement describing the event symbolized in the cartoon, and a statement summarizing the political message that the cartoon is intended to convey. Also to accompany your cartoon, submit a copy of a current political cartoon that you located containing a symbol. Attach a note to it describing what the symbol represents and stating your interpretation of the cartoonist's meaning. You have a week to complete the assignment."

Procedure

Using a voting procedure, guide the class in selecting its four favorite symbols from the Progressive Era (one each representing, respectively, organized labor, anti-trust, health and safety, and political equality). Post large, well-drawn images of these four symbols in the classroom. Confer with the librarian so that he or she can help students search for information about events pertaining to the symbols. Conduct a whole-class discussion. Begin by identifying major events of the period associated with each symbol. Then, for each symbol, choose one event and guide the class in answering the four discussion questions posed in the prompt. Next, give each student a copy of the assignment directions and the guide for grading their assignments (scoring rubric). Finally, respond to any questions students might have about the assignment.

SCORING RUBRIC

BENCHMARK	SCORE			
	1	2	3	4
Students will categorize proposed reforms of the Progressive Era by type and describe responses to them at the time (I.1.HS.2)	Draws a cartoon with a symbol alluding to an actual historical event of the Progressive era.	Draws a cartoon with a symbol alluding to an actual historical event of the Progressive era, accurately describes the event, and states a plausible political message that the cartoon is intended to send.	With artistic flair, draws a cartoon containing a symbol alluding to an actual historical event of the Progressive era, accurately describes the event, states a plausible political message that the cartoon is intended to send, and identifies two sources of historical information that informed the creation of the cartoon.	With artistic flair, draws a cartoon with a symbol alluding to an actual historical event of the Progressive era, accurately describes the event, states a plausible political message that the cartoon is intended to send, identifies two sources of historical information that informed the creation of the cartoon, and describes the intended message of a current political cartoon containing a symbol.

ASSESSMENT TASK

COURSE TITLE: Twentieth Century American History

GRADE LEVEL: Ninth or Tenth Grade

UNIT: The Second World War

Abstract

This task is designed to assess the ability of students to participate thoughtfully and constructively in a small group discussion of the decision of the United States to use atomic bombs against Japan in World War II. They are given a prompt that summarizes major facts surrounding the historical decision and a second prompt containing guidelines for productive discussion of a public issue. They can also draw upon earlier discussions in class as well as persuasive essays they have written on the issue. Stimulated by these prompts, students videotape their discussion. The policy issue guiding the discussion is: "Should the United States have used the atomic bomb against Japan during the Second World War?"

Prompt

"Choices: Truman, Hirohito, and the Atomic Bomb." (See Instructional Resources, handout HS3-2.) This prompt is a brief summary of the choices facing President Truman for ending the war against Japan in the summer of 1945.

Performance criteria for a public issues discussion on pp. 289-295 of "Assessing Discussion of Public Issues." (See Instructional Resources, handout HS3-2) This prompt illustrates criteria for a productive discussion of a public issue.

Directions

"We have been studying President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to bring about the surrender of Japan. You are now going to evaluate the President's decision in a discussion with five of your classmates. Your discussion will be videotaped, and I will use the videotape to evaluate your individual performance.

"Check the listing of discussion groups posted in the classroom to identify the members of your small group.

Consult with the other members of the group to set a 45-minute block of time for your discussion. Schedule the block of time in the library to use the conference room and the video camera. Bring a blank videotape to the discussion. Identify a member of your group to set the camera at a fixed position on its tripod so that it captures the faces of all members of the group and audibly records everything that is said. See the media specialist for help in operating the camera if it is needed. Your group may choose to record the discussion outside of school if appropriate equipment is available and permission is granted.

"Prepare for the discussion in advance. You might want to review materials, your persuasive essay, and notes you have from our study of the issue. Read the short article "Choices: Truman, Hirohito, and the Atomic Bomb" to refresh your memory of the circumstances facing the president in the summer of 1945. Also read "Performance Criteria for a Public Issues Discussion" to review the qualities of a good discussion. Use the skills of good discussion during your videotaped session. Your discussion should address the policy issue: Should the United States have used the atomic bomb against Japan during the Second World War?

"Your individual performance in the discussion will be evaluated on the basis of your knowledge of the history of the period and your skill in discussing the issue with your classmates. Remember this is not a debate. The purpose of the discussion is not to impose your position on others but to clarify the issue and evaluate various positions. Be sure that all members of your discussion group have an opportunity to express their thinking during the discussion. As a result of the discussion, you should be better prepared to express your individual position on the issue, and to support it with accurate historical evidence, democratic values, and logical reasoning. See the scoring rubric for more details about the criteria that will be used to evaluate your discussion performance.

"Your videotape should be no longer than 30 minutes. It is due in class one week from today."

Procedure

Prepare and distribute a copy of both prompts to students. Assign each student to a small discussion group of five. Post the names of students in each group in the classroom. Make arrangements with the media specialist for students to reserve 45-minute blocks of time during or after school to record their discussions in the library conference room.

Arrange for a video camera with recording capabilities on a tripod to be available in the conference room and for a technician to be available if students need help operating the camera. Read the assessment task directions to students and post a copy in the classroom. Also, post a copy of the scoring rubric. Respond to any questions students have about the assessment task assignment.

SCORING RUBRIC

BENCHMARK	SCORE			
	1	2	3	4
Students will evaluate the U.S. decision to use the atomic bomb in light of core democratic values and the resulting costs and benefits as viewed from a variety of perspectives (I.4.HS.4).	Makes statements about the policy issue that express only personal attitudes, or mentions a potentially important idea but does not pursue it in a way that advances the group's understanding.	Presents a position on the policy issue accurately supported by one historical claim.	Presents a position on the policy issue accurately supported by two historical claims and considers an alternative position.	Presents a position on the policy issue accurately supported by two historical claims. Refutes an alternative position with historical evidence and logical reasoning.
Students will engage each other in conversations that deeply examine whether the United States should have dropped the atomic bomb (VI.2.HS.1).	Responds substantively to an idea expressed by another person or invites a response to an expressed idea, and does not inhibit contributions to the discussion from others.	States a factual, ethical, or definitional issue clearly and does not inhibit contributions to the discussion from others.	States a factual, ethical, or definitional issue clearly and engages in a dialogue; paraphrases or summarizes to move the discussion forward; does not inhibit contributions to the discussion from others.	States a factual, ethical, or definitional issue clearly and engages in more than one dialogue; paraphrases or summarizes to move the discussion forward; rationally challenges a statement made; does not inhibit contributions to the discussion from others and intervenes if others do.

COURSE TITLE: American Studies**GRADE LEVEL:** Eighth Grade**UNIT:** Immigration**Abstract**

This task is designed to assess students' understanding of the controversy over national policy regarding immigration to the United States. They read a periodical article which contains information on the history of twentieth century immigration and presents opposing views on restriction of immigration at the present time. Using the article as a stimulus, they are asked to seek out additional information to inform their thinking about the issue. Finally, they compose an essay expressing their own position on the issue supported by evidence and logical reasoning.

Prompt

Students receive a copy of an article by Alexandra Hanson-Harding, reprinted with permission, from *Junior Scholastic* (February 7, 1997). The article is entitled "Should the U.S. Cut Back on the Number of Immigrants Coming to America?" The first part of the article describes recent changes in federal immigration law, including new restrictions on welfare benefits to immigrants, and on bringing family members to this country once an immigrant has arrived. The article goes on to identify the costs posed to taxpayers by new immigrants, including public assistance, social security benefits, and public services such as schools. Next, arguments supporting immigration are presented, for example, that immigrants create new jobs, bring life to decaying cities, pay taxes, take jobs not wanted by others, and use welfare less than native-born citizens. In addition, the article contains brief stories about successful recent young immigrants. The article concludes with tables, graphs, and maps, taken with permission from the *Los Angeles Times*, of the history and geography of twentieth century immigration to the United States.

Directions

"We have been studying the history of immigration to the United States. You have traced the geographic origins

of immigrants, analyzed changes in the law governing immigration, read accounts of immigrants' experiences in America, and considered opposing views on immigration policy. You are now assigned to take a stand on the issue: Who should be allowed to immigrate to the United States? Compose an essay in which you take a position on this public issue.

"Read the *Junior Scholastic* article entitled 'Should the U.S. Cut Back on the Number of Immigrants Coming to America?'" Using the Internet and other library resources, locate and study additional information about recent immigration to the United States. Then compose your essay. As you compose your essay, do the following:

- State the issue and express a clear position on it.
- Refer to information in the article from *Junior Scholastic*.
- Support the position you take on the issue with clearly reasoned arguments.
- Include in your supporting arguments information that you discovered from your library search and identify the source(s) of your information.
- Identify an opposing position and explain why you think your position on the issue is more persuasive than the alternative.

"Your essay should be typewritten and no longer than 500 words in length. It is due in three days."

Procedure

Duplicate the prompt for each student. Confer with the librarian in advance, so that he or she can anticipate and organize resources that might be helpful, including possible websites for students to search. Read the directions to students with emphasis on the criteria for a good essay and respond to any questions students might have about the assigned task. Post the directions on the board or duplicate copies for students. Collect essays on the due date and score them using the scoring rubric.

SCORING RUBRIC

BENCHMARK	SCORE			
	1	2	3	4
Students will compose an essay expressing a position on a public issue relating to the topic of immigration (VI.3.MS.1)	The issue is stated as a question and a clear position on it is expressed.	The issue is stated as a question and a clear position on it is expressed. The position taken is supported by at least one reason that is elaborated. Reference is made to relevant information from the prompt.	The issue is stated as a question and a clear position on it is expressed. The position taken is supported by at least two reasons that are elaborated using information from the student's search of library resources. Reference is made to relevant information from the prompt.	The issue is stated as a question and a clear position on it is expressed. The position taken is supported by at least two reasons that are elaborated using information from the student's search of library resources. Reference is made to relevant information from the prompt. An opposing position is identified and refuted.