


TEACHING HUMAN DIGNITY

Making Sense of Historical Atrocities

CENTRAL QUESTIONS:

- ◆ What are the factors that foster and promote systematic oppression and/or extermination of marginalized groups in society?
- ◆ How can knowledge of past atrocities help us identify unfolding atrocities in our own time and place?
- ◆ How can we think critically about contemporary social issues in light of the past and creatively advocate for those who have no voice?
- ◆ How can we intervene in unfolding socially accepted atrocities and act to prevent future atrocities?
- ◆ What makes a society humane? What kind of society do we want to live in?
- ◆ Can the average person make a difference and confront social issues through activism?

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Developed in Collaboration with Dr. Mary O'Callaghan.

Unit-at-a-Glance

Curriculum Area:

Social Studies

Time Requirement:

Ten 50 minute class periods
(teachers can modify as needed)

Descriptors:

Social Issues, Human Dignity, Genocide, Eugenics, Potato Famine, Native American Assimilation and Removal, Institutionalization, Developmental Disability, Disability Selective Abortion, Jérôme Lejeune, Jean Vanier, Systematic Oppression, Atrocities

Unit Objectives

Students will be able to:

- ◆ analyze attributes of mass atrocities as they apply to historical and contemporary events.
- ◆ understand how ideologies, philosophies, propaganda, science, and technology influence the perpetration of atrocities in the past and present.
- ◆ participate in structured historical inquiry to make sense of events as they gather information from primary and secondary sources.
- ◆ analyze and evaluate different perspectives and draw conclusions about complex issues grounded in the principles of human dignity and justice.
- ◆ use historical facts and supported evidence to explain why knowledge of the past is required to make informed and just decisions about disability selective abortion today.
- ◆ develop a plan for a targeted awareness campaign designed to persuade others about issues concerning social justice.

Rationale

Understanding history involves more than just the recall of facts and events from bygone days. It also requires the ability to make sense of past people, events, and trends as they relate to the present and future. In this unit, students learn to “do history” and function like historians. They engage in a structured historical inquiry about some of the darkest events in humanity’s past. They study mass atrocities--events that involve the intentional and systematic oppression and/or extermination of marginalized individuals and groups. As students study history, and make sense of what they learn, they are empowered to consider how they can most effectively engage with troubling issues in the present and future.

Unit Summary

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Objectives</i>
Unit Pre-assessment	Prior to the unit, students complete a survey and pre-assessment. Teacher uses gathered data to establish a safe classroom environment and modify instructional experiences in response to students' existing knowledge of historical events.	
Lesson #1: Learning about Historical Atrocities <i>Three 50 minute class periods (possibly additional time based on student ability)</i>	Students work in teacher-assigned groups to explore a particular historical atrocity using primary and secondary sources curated by their teacher. Each group presents new knowledge to their classmates in oral and multimedia format and summarizes this information in a shared document containing an analytical tool called a comparison matrix.	<p>Students will be able to read and synthesize primary and secondary sources on historical mass atrocities (e.g., genocide).</p> <p>Students will be able to support their interpretation of historical events with material from primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>Students will be able to explain the details of a particular historical atrocity to their peers using oral and multimedia presentations.</p>
Lesson #2: Analyzing Historical Atrocities <i>One or two 50 minute class periods, depending on desired depth of coverage</i>	Using the data entered by each group in the comparison matrix, the students participate in a structured inquiry as they answer the question "How do historical atrocities happen?" They exercise critical thinking skills in four steps: 1) noting similarities, 2) noting differences, 3) acknowledging new learning, and 4) making generalizations based on the data.	<p>Students will be able to analyze data and weigh evidence for claims about how historical atrocities are similar.</p> <p>Students will be able to analyze data and weigh evidence for claims about how historical atrocities are unique and distinct.</p> <p>Students will be able to make generalizations and refer to data that substantiates claims about the factors that enable atrocities to occur in society.</p>

Unit Summary cont.

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Objectives</i>
<p>Lesson #2 cont.</p>		<p>Students will be able to use data to explain how the values and beliefs of important people and society influence the analysis of and response to challenges and perceived problems.</p> <p>Students will be able to use data to explain how institutions, philosophies, and ideologies shape history through their contributions to key events.</p> <p>Students will be able to list some of the short- and long-term effects of the historical atrocities studied.</p>
<p>Lesson #3: Are Atrocities Unfolding Today?</p> <p><i>Two 50 minute class periods, depending on desired depth of coverage</i></p>	<p>The students analyze a current social trend--disability selective abortion--and referencing their knowledge from studying historic atrocities, answer the question "Are atrocities unfolding today?"</p>	<p>Students will be able to formulate educated predictions about disability selective abortion.</p> <p>Students will be able to read, organize, analyze primary and secondary sources about disability and disability selective abortion.</p> <p>Students will be able to engage in historical inquiry to collect, organize, analyze, the impact of science and technology on disability and disability selective abortion.</p> <p>Students will be able to use information to explain how biases, stereotypes, values, and beliefs of individuals and societies promote disability selective abortion.</p>

Unit Summary cont.

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Objectives</i>
<p>Lesson #4: Disability Selective Abortion</p> <p><i>Two 50 minute class periods, depending on desired depth of coverage</i></p>	<p>Students learn about a national effort to eradicate Down syndrome through disability selective abortion. They consider the role of values and beliefs in making this practice widespread, relying on data from news coverage.</p>	<p>Students will be able to analyze the contemporary practice of disability selective abortion using a variety of different sources (interviews, news stories, social media, and other documentation) and evaluate various interpretations of disability selective abortion to develop an interpretation supported by evidence.</p> <p>Students will be able to determine whether atrocities continue to occur at the present time in history by comparing and contrasting disability service abortion with historical atrocities.</p> <p>Students will be able to identify the consequences of science and technology on individuals and societies, and consider the ethical issues they raise, especially as they relate to historical atrocities.</p> <p>Students will be able to understand the complex characteristics of historical atrocities and create an effective argument that accurately references them.</p> <p>Students will be able to use credible resources to support an argument.</p>
<p>Lesson #5: Persons with Disability as Gift</p> <p><i>Two 50 minute class periods, depending on desired depth of coverage</i></p>	<p>Students will engage with primary sources that present new perspectives on disability: persons with disability as gift. Students will use critical thinking skills to compare and contrast the values and beliefs held by different groups about DSA, consider what makes a society humane, and contemplate what kind of society they want to live in.</p>	<p>Students will be able to organize and analyze the different perspectives on the impact of science and technology expressed in Lesson #4 and Lesson #5, and speculate about what this says about modern values and beliefs.</p> <p>Students will be able to analyze and evaluate the effects that science and medical technology have had for persons with Down syndrome.</p> <p>Students will be able to imagine how people who view disabled persons as a “gift” would answer the question, “What kind of society do we want to live in?”</p>

Unit Summary cont.

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Objectives</i>
<p>Lesson #6: Making a Difference Through Awareness and Activism</p> <p><i>One 50 minute class period with a 60 minute Homework assignment</i></p>	<p>Students will consider how concerned individuals can influence change on social issues through awareness raising and activism. They develop a more sophisticated understanding of activism by considering how it differs from a false form of activism called “slacktivism” and consider how activism has the potential to either prevent or promote the perpetration of an atrocity. The students identify a current social issue that concerns them and develop the plan for an awareness campaign that might make others aware of the issue and inspire them to activism.</p>	<p>Students will be able to name some of the differences between activism and slacktivism, specifically in their inputs and outputs.</p> <p>Students will be able to identify a social justice issue of concern to them and develop a plan for raising awareness in relation to this issue.</p> <p>Students will be able to speculate about the beliefs and values other people hold and think about how an awareness campaign could be tailored to address them.</p> <p>Students will be able to apply knowledge gained in the unit to a realistic scenario.</p>