



TEACHING HUMAN DIGNITY SERIES:

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 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?

Unit-at-a-Glance

Curriculum Area: World/US History

Time Requirement: Ten 50 minutes 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 Goals</i>
<p>Unit Pre-assessment</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Students will be able to clearly and anonymously articulate their existing knowledge of events in history that involved the systematic oppression or mass extermination of individuals in a marginalized social group.</p> <p>Students will be able to speculate about the factors that enable historical atrocities to be perpetrated within different time periods and across cultures and societies.</p> <p>Students will be able to suggest current social trends that can be analyzed with the critical attributes of an atrocity.</p>
<p>Lesson #1: Learning about Historical Atrocities</p> <p><i>Three 50 minute class periods (possibly additional time based on student ability)</i></p>	<p>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>	<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>
<p>Lesson #2: Analyzing Historical Atrocities</p> <p><i>One or two 50 minute class periods, depending on desired depth of coverage</i></p>	<p>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>	<p>Students will be able to analyze data and weigh evidence for claims they make about the aspects historical atrocities have in common.</p> <p>Students will be able to analyze data and weigh evidence for claims as they appreciate how specific historical atrocities are unique and distinct.</p> <p>Students will be able to make generalizations about historical atrocities and refer to data that substantiates their claims about the factors that enabling atrocities to occur in human societies.</p>

Unit Summary cont.

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Goals</i>
<p>Lesson #2 cont.</p>		<p>Students will be able to correctly and effectively 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 information to explain how institutions, philosophies, and ideologies, shape history through their contributions to key events.</p> <p>Students will be able to organize, analyze, and evaluate information, and communicate findings regarding the impact of science or technology on society.</p>
<p>Lessons #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 use their historical inquiry skills to make predictions about what evidence they would expect to find if DSA is an unfolding atrocity.</p> <p>Students will be able to collect, analyze, and weigh information about disability selective abortion as they identify ways DSA is similar and different to other atrocities.</p> <p>Students will be able to compare and contrast their predictions with their research findings.</p>

Unit Summary cont.

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Goals</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 synthesize primary and secondary sources about DSA in order to identify and explain the factors that enable contemporary individuals and societies to permit this practice.</p> <p>Students will be able to effectively use data to explain how the values and beliefs influence the interpretation of and response to challenges and perceived problems.</p> <p>Students will be able to use information to explain how institutions, philosophies, and ideologies, shape contemporary attitudes about DSA.</p> <p>Students will be able to analyze and evaluate information, and communicate findings regarding the impact of science or technology on disability and DSA.</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 explain how the values and beliefs of individuals who view persons with disabilities as gifts to society influence the analysis of and response to disability.</p> <p>Students will be able to critically evaluate primary and secondary sources to compare and contrast different perspectives on the challenges, perceived problems, and perceived gifts of people with disabilities.</p> <p>Students will be able analyze the consequences of science and technology for people with disabilities, and evaluate the ethical issues these advances present society.</p>

Unit Summary cont.

<i>Lesson Title</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Learning Goals</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 identify a social 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>