

Unconventional Enemies: Should the United States negotiate with terrorists?

Title: Unconventional Enemies: Should the United States negotiate with terrorists?

Descriptive Subtitle: This lesson plan helps students make connections between Mr. Jefferson's handling of the Barbary Pirates and contemporary presidential actions toward unconventional enemies of the United States, including Jimmy Carter's Iran hostage crisis and George W. Bush's War on Terror.

Grade level: high (9-12)

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Duration: 2 55-minute class periods

Overview:

In this day and time, the news is filled with stories of terror attacks both at home and abroad. Our nation's leaders have to grapple with questions about terrorism over and over again. If they react softly on terrorism, they are criticized by one group; if they react strongly, they are criticized by another. Surely terrorism has become the new scourge of our nation – or has it?

The war on terror, in one sense, is nearly as old as our nation. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams debated what to do about early terrorists attacking American ships while both were serving as European ambassadors to the new United States. Interestingly, the normally bellicose Mr. Adams was against going to war, while the normally cautious Mr. Jefferson made the argument for war.

The object of their discussion was the Barbary corsairs, normally called the Barbary Pirates. These sailors operated out of what are now the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. Their objective was to harass ships throughout the Pacific and the Mediterranean, effectively cutting off trade in the Mediterranean for those countries who could not, or would not, pay tribute to them.

The question of payment of tribute continued to be an issue for Mr. Jefferson when he became the third

president of the United States. As president, he chose to send the navy to fight along the Barbary Coast. Two separate wars were fought: one during Jefferson's administration, and one during Monroe's administration. The Barbary pirates were eventually stopped when a multinational force blockaded their ports.

The United States used two different approaches to stop the pirates from attacking our ships. First was tribute payments, and second was the Barbary Wars. Thus, from the beginning of the United States, presidential administrations have grappled with the question of acquiescence or attack when it comes to unconventional enemies.

Students will be asked to debate the question: How should the United States deal with unconventional enemies? During the debate, they should be able to consider the historical context of each of the events studied.

Prior knowledge:

This lesson should be taught toward the end of the school year as a review and reflection of themes in US history.

Standards: Georgia Performance Standards:

US History: SSUSH 25. The student will describe changes in national politics since 1968.

US Government SSCG20: The student will describe the tools used to carry out United States foreign policy (diplomacy; economic, military, and humanitarian aid; treaties; sanctions and military intervention).

AP US History:

Key Concept 4.3.I: Struggling to create an independent global presence, the United States sought to claim territory throughout the North American continent and promote foreign trade.

Contextualization C3—Situating historical events, developments, or processes within the broader regional, national, or global context in which they occurred in order to draw conclusions about their relative significance.

Objectives:

Students will understand that presidential decisions are based on the historical context of the times.

Students will be able to view events in historical context.

Students will be able to compare the decisions about unconventional warfare from various presidential administrations, and understand the complexity behind those decisions.

Steps:

1. Show the first five slides of the power point entitled “Unconventional Enemies.” After showing the slides, ask students to decide what policy the United States should take toward the Barbary pirates. Have the class discuss their options in small groups for approximately 3 – 5 minutes.
2. Poll the class for their decision before showing the rest of the presentation.
3. Present the final slides of “Unconventional Enemies” as a review of the Barbary Wars.
4. As a class, complete the first row of the chart provided. (5 – 10 minutes)
5. Next, divide the class into groups of four for a jigsaw activity. Each group will be given one of two sets of papers: one will be primary source material from Jimmy Carter’s handling of the Iran hostage crisis, and the other will be primary source material from George W. Bush’s responses to the 9/11 attacks. Groups should work together to fill out the first four columns of the chart for their event. Allow 10 – 15 minutes for the groups to read the documents and fill out the chart.
6. After each group has finished their information, group students into pairs – one from the Bush situation, and one from the Carter information. Each person should explain the situation they reviewed to their partner, and help their partner fill in the first four columns of their chart for the other event. (10 – 15 minutes).
7. As a closing activity, tell the students that the next day will be a class discussion on these events and their similarities and differences. Students should come to class prepared for the discussion.
8. The next day is reserved for a class discussion or debate on the US response to “unconventional enemies.” Students may take part in a formal debate or in a student-led class discussion on what the American response should be. For my class, I have adapted a scored discussion format I received at a Georgia Council for the Social Studies presentation. In the scored discussion, the teacher presents a question, then allows the students to discuss the topic without interference from the teacher. Students are given positive points for making contributions to the class discussion and negative points for comments that distract from the conversation.

Materials: Primary source documents from Jefferson and contemporaries, Primary source documents (Carter), Primary source documents (Bush), American Response to Unconventional Enemies chart, Unconventional Enemies PowerPoint

Optional Materials: The video located at www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ym_zikyGk is the opening scene of the movie “Argo,” which gives an excellent overview of the reasons behind the taking of American hostages in Iran.

Assessment(s): Homework assignment: Students will write a reflection on the discussion held in class. The reflection should answer the question: How does historical context influence presidential decision-making?

Assessment Criteria (rubric, checklist, etc.): Students will be scored based on their participation in the class discussion and on their reflection.

Accommodations: list suggestions for adapting the materials, procedures, and assessments included in this lesson for students with varying learning styles and abilities

Grouping should consider learning styles and abilities. Students with lower abilities may also be given charts that include questions to help them find the information they should complete.

Students needing enrichment could also be given documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis to include in their chart. They should consider the similarities and differences in that case and write a reflection outlining those.

