

Say What?

General

Grade Level

Elementary School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Challenge

Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

Duration

90-120 minutes

Challenge Question

Throughout history, how have messages effectively communicated ideas?

Rationale

Upper elementary school students must interact with and interpret historical materials in order to understand the messages they portray and the perspectives of the individuals and groups who devised them. This activity is designed to engage students in analysis of political/editorial cartoons and the messages they convey. After examining two cartoons, students will evaluate how the message embedded in each is communicated effectively. They will also discuss how communication has changed or remained the same throughout history. Finally, junior historians will evaluate historical documents to discover a common message about one event and represent that message with a cartoon or words.

STANDARDS:

NCSS History Era 3 Standard 1: The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory.

– NCSS History Era 3 Standard 2: The impact of the American Revolution on politics, economy, and society.

– NCSS History Era 10 Standard 2: Economic, social, and cultural developments in contemporary United States.

– NCSS Historical Thinking Standard 3: Draw comparisons across eras...in order to define enduring issues as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries.

Notes to Teacher

Students will create a digital poster with two political/editorial cartoons, explain their message, describe the intended audience, and discuss how communication has changed over time.

NOTE: Students will have prior knowledge of political/editorial cartoons and events leading to the American Revolution, including the Stamp Act, the Boston Massacre, and the Boston Tea Party.

INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE:

A.) Introduce the Essential Question: Throughout history, how have messages effectively communicated ideas? Encourage students to discuss the methods used (language arts methods; technology).

B.) Begin the lesson with a review of political/editorial cartoons, including the purpose and methods used to effectively communicate a message (main idea).

C.) Create groups of 2-3 students. Review navigation of the website.

D.) Provide instruction about the activity at the depth appropriate for the students in the class. Students can be allowed to engage in the activity with a great deal of independence or a limited amount. Students will undertake steps one, two, and three in groups. One addition that might be beneficial is to have students highlight selected portions of each cartoon that supports their explanation of the message, then cut and paste them in the text box.

E.) When students have completed their work on questions one and two, direct a class discussion about their findings.

F.) Instruct students to discuss the questions in step three. Discuss findings as a class (main idea; concise content; historical context; historical perspective; audience; and techniques used, such as drawing, color, word choice etc.).

G.) As a class, revisit the Essential Question.

H.) Provide directions for completing the assessment.

Steps

1. Find the two political/editorial cartoons in “My Collection” that are related to this challenge. Import the image of the oldest cartoon first. Create a text box to the right of the cartoon. Answer the following questions in writing:

- a.) Based on what you have been studying, how was information communicated in the 18th century?
 - b.) What is the message embedded in the cartoon?
 - c.) Who is the intended audience?
 - d.) What could be removed from the cartoon and still send the same message?
2. Import the most current political/editorial cartoon. Add a text box. Answer the following questions in writing:
- a.) How is information communicated in the 21st century?
 - b.) What is the message embedded in the cartoon?
 - c.) Who is the intended audience?
 - d.) What could be removed from the cartoon and still send the same message?
3. With your group discuss and summarize your findings in the text box.
- a.) What makes a message effective? Why?
 - b.) Which cartoon is the most effective? Why?
 - c.) How has communication changed since the colonial era?
 - d.) What are the benefits and challenges of communication in the colonial era? Now?
4. PROPOSED ASSESSMENT:
- Individually, choose at least two historical documents from "My Collection". You may also choose documents from your textbook and materials we have used in class. Be sure the ones you choose deliver the same message about your topic. The topic choices are:
- a.) The Boston Massacre
 - b.) The Boston Tea Party
 - c.) The Stamp Act
 - d.) A topic of your choice with teacher approval.

In the form of a paragraph or political cartoon, explain the message that you think the documents present. Who is your intended audience? Would Ben Franklin or Thomas Jefferson understand your point?