"Bring your broom 'cause it's a mess!"

General

Grade Level

Middle School, High School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Challenge

Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

Duration

30-60 minutes

Challenge Question

During the election of 1800, significant amounts of mudslinging occurred between Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, along with their supporters. We know of the accusation made about John Adams being a "Monarchist." There is also the claim made by the John Adams camp toward Thomas Jefferson that if he were elected, a reign of terror would be unleashed on the nation. Thomas Jefferson was fed up with the Federalist approach to governing in the late 1790's and wanted to see the "mess" created by them cleaned up. What if you were in charge of spreading the word about your candidate, Thomas Jefferson or John Adams? Create a t-shirt, bumper sticker, or billboard that either supports your candidate or slings mud at the other. Provide information as to why a citizen in 1800 should support your candidate or why they should not support the opponent.

Rationale

The students will collaborate with 1-2 partners to better understand the Election of 1800. Students will learn the issues during this election, and SOME of the mudslinging tactics of both sides. Since only a small amount of the information can be used, students will have to rationalize with their partner(s) which information is the most important. They will have to decide which information should be used and which should be left out. It will also make the students ask and answer the questions of why someone would want to vote for their candidate or why someone should not vote for the other. The students will create these by using the image and text tools, and then submit the final product.

Notes to Teacher

This challenge should be done after the students have already learned about the Election of 1800, so it could be used as a sort of culminating activity or summative assessment for the lesson on the Election. They should be familiar with the two parties and the beliefs they embody. Also, this challenge does not have to be completed online if there is a lack of technology or internet. There is a T-Shirt template that can be found on the Sea of Liberty site. Also, if you would prefer to have students create actual poster boards, that would also be a great option. Some questions to ask the students to get their creativity going could be:

"Who would have endorsed each candidate?"

"What does each candidate believe about government and the direction of the United States?"

"Which foreign nation does each candidate favor?"

Steps

1. Take a sheet of paper and make a T-chart for John Adams and the Federalists, and then Thomas Jefferson and the Republicans. Brainstorm the different beliefs of each and record them on the correct side of the T-chart.
2. Now compare your information with that of your partner. Is there anything that your partner remembered that you may have forgot or vice versa? Is there anything that you both put down?
3. Next, highlight or circle the MOST important bits of information you have for each side. You and your partner should both agree on what needs to be used. Like any campaign, you need to focus on the most important issues and beliefs. Remember, you only have a very limited amount of space. What information must be presented to voters?
4. Then take out another sheet of paper to make a draft of what your t-shirt, bumper sticker, or billboard will look like. Come up with catchy slogans and phrases. Think about how you will use images and text, and how you will use the different font and color options. If yours is negative towards the other opponent, don't be afraid to slightly exaggerate the facts. For example, there is a picture of Thomas Jefferson being attacked by an eagle that the Federalists used, and there is also a picture of John Adams depicted as a king. Remember that it needs to be easily understood and interpreted by the average American citizen of 1800.
5. When you have completed your draft, get your teacher's approval then begin your final product. Click "Take Challenge" and begin your quest to elect your candidate for the Election of 1800!