

Revolution of the Mind

General

Grade Level

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

The word “revolution” can take on a number of meanings. Most often we think of it in terms of the forcible overthrow of one government and the institution of another. Using the documents below, students will think of the variety of ways in which revolutions take place. What is the lasting affect of the American Revolution within a global society? How can the ideas of the past take on a new meaning in the 21st century?

Rationale

This challenge encourages students to think of a “revolution” or revolutionary ideas beyond an 18th century, American context. Using primary source evidence (word and image), students will create a working definition of the word “revolution” which is multi-faceted and encompasses global and contemporary issues.

Notes to Teacher

This is designed to be used within a Government/Contemporary History classroom, or within the context of making current event connections. It may be helpful to provide students with tools for reliable news sourcing. Some knowledge of the American Revolution as well as current events would be helpful.

Steps

1. As a class, read the excerpts from the letter written by John Adams (dated 24 August 1815) and the famous “Give me Liberty” quote from Patrick Henry. Ask students: what do you think each author means in these excerpts? What does the word Revolution mean to you? Create a class definition for the word “revolution”.
2. Engage students in a discussion of the language used by Adams and Henry. Both are discussing the topic of revolutions, yet the wording and intended meaning are different. Work with students to note the similarities and differences in each author’s concept of “revolution”. On one hand, Adams is suggesting a revolution of the mind, where Henry depicts a revolution involving action. It may be helpful to make note of the adjectives students use to describe the similarities on the board in the form of a Venn diagram or list so that students are able to refer back to their ideas throughout the activity.
3. Working in groups of two or three, students will explore the Challenge Resources. Each represents a change within society. Ask students to identify the types of changes that are happening in society as represented by these images. The group will select two events which they believe represent different types of revolutions. Students will provide a title, as well as a brief explanation of how that title fits the actions depicted. (Teacher’s note: you may wish to brainstorm possible titles before beginning the activity, or allow students free reign to create categories based on patterns they see in the events).
4. Using the digital tools provided, students will create an online poster including their categorization and explanations. If technology is not available, you may wish to have photocopies of the images available for students to cut out and label on paper.
5. Wrap up: Return together as a class and allow students to share their posters. Discuss if the class definition of revolution encompasses the true nature of revolutions as demonstrated by their investigations. Revise as necessary, encouraging students to think beyond concepts of war and the overthrowing of a government to topics such as social change and non-violence.
6. As a homework or extension activity, allow students to research a contemporary conflict which they would describe as a revolution. These can be shared in groups or discussed as a class.