

Fire Bell in the Night

General

Grade Level

High School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Document Analysis

Duration

100-170 minutes

Interdisciplinary Connections

Theater and performance arts

Objectives

Overview

The Missouri Compromise was a difficult time in American history. The question of slavery and states' rights came to the forefront as America and their leaders debated how to handle the admission of new states. There were many different opinions and as one can guess, they often varied depending on where they were located. Even in retirement Thomas Jefferson was a man whose opinion was valued. By looking at the correspondence of Thomas Jefferson and other notable public figures we can gain a better understanding of the Missouri Compromise.

Prior Knowledge

Students should have a general knowledge of the Missouri Compromise.

State Standards

VUS1- Student will identify, analyze and interpret source documents

VUS 6- The student will describe the cultural, economic and political events that divided the nation

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

By the completion of the lesson, the students will be able to describe the Missouri Compromise and explain the viewpoints of the sides involved in the debate.

Procedures

1. 5-10 Minutes

Introduction

1. Ask the students what their thoughts are about an issue. Try and pick an issue that hits close to home and will bring out strong opinions. Hold a discussion for a few minutes on this issue.
2. Ask the students to define compromise. Write the definition up on the board.
3. Have the students come up with a compromise to the issue that they were discussing.

2. 5 Minutes

Lesson

Inform the students that they will be discussing the Missouri Compromise today. Start the discussion by asking the students what they know about the Compromise. Next, follow-up with these questions:

1. What are primary sources (or source documents)?
2. Why do historians use source documents?

Let the students know that they will be studying the Missouri Compromise through the use of source documents.

3. 15-20 Minutes

1. Divide students up into groups of 4-5 students. Each group will receive a single document or set of documents related to the Missouri Compromise and slavery during this time period. Documents

are included in the Fire Bell in the Night Source Documents link

(<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/resources/download/408/Fire-Bell-in-the-Night-Source-Documents/>). Many of the documents are also available as pdf's. The documents will be by the following individuals and organizations:

- a. Thomas Jefferson
- b. John Adams
- c. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams
- d. Virginia Senator James Barbour
- e. New York Senator Rufus King
- f. American Society for Colonizing the Free People of Colour

2. Some of the documents may be quite long. Read through them and answer the following questions on a sheet of paper:

- a. Who is the author?
- b. What is the date of the document?
- c. What kind of document is it (i.e. letters, private diary or public speech)?
- d. Will the kind of document change how the individual conveys their opinion? In other words do you think people speak differently in private than they do when they are giving a speech?
- e. Is the writer for or against slavery in Missouri? If the article does not mention Missouri, what kind of stance does the speech take on slavery?
- f. What kinds of phrases does the author make that stand out to help reinforce their opinion?
- g. What is your overall impression of the document?

3. When students are finished answering the questions transfer the answers to the butcher paper up on the walls. In about 20 minutes have each group share what they have found about the documents. (Give students time to answer the questions)

4. 15 Minutes

1. Have each group share what they found. Take a few minutes and have each group present a lesson on what they have discovered. They should answer each question.

5. 15-20 Minutes

1. We can see that there were a variety of different opinions about the Missouri Compromise. The next step in our lesson involves students reacting to the documents you have read. You should respond to the author or the document in writing. Your response must be a minimum of 1 paragraph long and contain at least three points of agreement or disagreement with the speaker. You decide whether or not you agree or disagree. You have 15 minutes to complete this task. (Give students time to complete the task and then collect their responses).

For those students who need enrichment, have them write two letters. One should be to a speaker whom they agree with and one should be to a speaker who they disagree with.

6. *20-30 Minutes*

1. The final portion of this lesson involves performing in front of your peers. You are going to take the place of your historical character. You will step into character and deliver the speech in place of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams or other participant. You will deliver a 2-3 minute dialogue about the Missouri Compromise that incorporates key phrases and sentiments of the figure in question.

2. You have the remainder of class to read through your material, highlight key points and craft your presentation.

This portion of the lesson may be modified according to the needs of the class. Students may be given time outside of class to work on their performance or it may be compressed into a smaller time frame. An alternative to the performance aspect would be to have the students use the primary source documents to hold a debate in a mock congressional session. Students could speak in for or against their viewpoint and then hold a vote.

7. *20-60 minutes*

1. Have students give their performances

2. It may be helpful to have students do a performance review of their peers depending on the maturity of the students. Some students may benefit from HELPFUL feedback after their performance. It may also be helpful to have students determine which side had a more persuasive argument.

8. *5-10 Minutes*

Conclusion

As we have seen, the Missouri Compromise was a tense, confusing time. The question of slavery was once again inserting itself into the American dialogue. Both sides felt that their argument was the right one for the country and themselves. When analyzing an issue like this one, it is imperative to examine both sides.

Have the students answer these questions as they conclude the lesson:

1. What is a primary source or source document? How can these documents be helpful in constructing history? Are there any drawbacks to utilizing source documents?
2. What were the various sides in the Missouri Compromise?
3. How was the Missouri Compromise finally settled?

Materials

Materials Needed

Source documents for the lesson are located at the following websites:

1.
<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/resources/download/408/Fire-Bell-in-the-Night-Source-Documents/>
2.
<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/resources/download/409/Speech-by-James-Barbour-on-the-Restriction-of-Slavery-in-Missouri/>
3.
<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/resources/download/407/Address-to-the-American-Society-for-Colonizing/>
4.
<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/resources/download/410/Speeches-by-Rufus-King-on-the-Missouri-Bill/>

Technology Needs

Computers and internet may be helpful when students are preparing for their debate or reenactments.

Accommodations – Advanced Learners

The entire speeches for many of the individuals are attached to this lesson. Some of them are quite lengthy (30 or more pages). For students that are looking for a greater challenge give them the entire speech to analyze instead of excerpts.

