BIG QUESTION UNIT
Scott Glew
Individual

Descriptive Characteristics

Title/Theme
NCSS Strand X – Civic Ideals and Practices
Big Question: Can I change the world?

Student Target Population
High school civics or government class

Estimated Time Required
Three weeks

Rationale and Goals
This unit will expose students to various methods of change in the United States and the world. They will look at legislative change through voting and ballot initiatives and they will look at civil disobedience. They will research somebody who changed something in history. They will create their own plan to change something they think needs to be changed and they will carry out this plan. I believe that this unit will teach students that they are capable of noticing the social justice issues and problems of the world and that they are capable of doing something about it.

1. I want students to understand and appreciate the effects of individuals and groups who have noticed problems and social justice issues in the world and worked to change those issues.
2. I want students to develop their own understanding of change and be able to discuss this concept at a philosophical level so as citizens, they can contribute to a meaningful discussion on foreign policy and subsequent voting decisions.
3. I want students to recognize social justice issues and problems with our world.
4. I want students to understand and utilize their ability to work to change these social justice issues.

Specific Objectives

My Objectives
1. Students will identify and analyze social justice issues.
2. Students will compare and contrast different ways of achieving change.
3. Students will create a plan to achieve change.
4. Students will execute a plan to achieve change.
5. Students will evaluate the results of their plan.

State Standards
1. Students will understand the importance of informed decision making and the roles of public speaking, conducting a public meeting, letter writing, petition signing, negotiation, active listening, conflict resolution, and meditation, defending a public policy in a civil conversation.
2. Students will analyze the role of civil disobedience in the United States.
3. Students will examine the role of interest groups, think tanks, the media, and public opinion on the political process and public policy formation.

National Standards
1. Students will identify, analyze, interpret, and evaluate sources and examples of citizens’ rights and responsibilities.
2. Analyze and evaluate the influence of various forms of citizen action on public policy.
3. Construct a policy statement and an action plan to achieve one or more goals related to an issue of public concern.

Questions

Big Question
Can I change the world?

Focus Questions
What is change? What is changing the world?
What has changed in history?
Who has changed the world before us?
If you could change the world, what would you change?

Resources

Print
Civics textbook
Civil Disobedience – Henry David Thoreau
Newspapers
Gandhi: A Photo biography – Peter Ruhe
The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work, and Ideas – Louis Fischer
Gandhi: A Life – Yogesh Chadha
The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. – Martin Luther King Jr.
Why We Can't Wait – Martin Luther King

Video
Gandhi

Websites
www.workingforchange.com
www.dosomething.org
www.gandhiinstitute.org

Assessment Plan

Journal
Students will journal after each day and each event during the unit. They will reflect on their thoughts about what they are learning. Questions that they may answer are:

Have you ever wanted to change something about the world?
What are some problems that you see in the world?
Do you think you are capable of creating change in the world?

Project/Presentation
In groups, students will research somebody who is known for “changing the world.” Examples of these people are Martin Luther King Jr., Cesar Chavez, Nelson Mandela, Susan B. Anthony, and Mother Theresa. Students will research and teach the following to their class:
Who is this person?
What did they want to change in the world?
Why did they want to change it?
What did they do to change it?
What changed?
What would this person say about present times?

Project (Culminating Activity)
Students will get the opportunity to change something. This is a four part assignment.

1. Research and planning. As individuals or in small groups (2-3), students will come up with a problem or social justice issue that they would like to help change. They will research their issue and create a paper that addresses the following:
   - What is your issue?
   - Why did you choose this?
   - Why is this an issue?
   - What are the causes of this issue?
   - What has previously been done to change this?
   - What are you going to do to change it?
   - How and why do you think this will help the problem?
   This will be due at the end of the initial three week unit.

2. Carry out the plan. This students will be doing this on their own time as the school year goes on. This will allow them to really do something, rather than try and hurry through something in a week.

3. Presentation to the class. Towards the end of the school year, we will regroup and the students will share what they did with the rest of the class. They will share comments and feedback with each other.

4. Final reflection. Students will individually reflect on what they did in a paper. They should answer the following questions:
   - What did you do?
   - Did things go as planned?
   - Do you think you changed anything?
   - Will you continue making progress after this class? Why or why not?
   - What will you do different as you continue, or what would you have done differently to make your plan more effective?

Lessons

Lesson 1 – Opener (One class period)
Procedure:
1. Pose question to students: “Can I change the world?” Give them a couple minutes to think about it and write about it in their journal.
2. Have students share their thoughts in a class discussion.
3. Share the “Starfish” story.
4. Have the students write their thoughts in their journal.

Lesson 2 – Legislation (Two class periods)
Procedure:
1. Have students read the article “I petition, you petition, we all petition for ice cream.” The article is a true story of a girl who was able to change a law in her town by petitioning and getting the issue put on a ballot.
2. Discuss as a class.
3. Lecture based lesson about how individuals and groups can get laws changed through legislation.
4. At the end of the second day, pass out “Civil Disobedience” and assign parts for the students to
read before class the next day.

Lesson 3 – Civil Disobedience (One class period)
Procedure:
1. Begin class by allowing students to ask any questions or make any comments about their reading.
2. As a class, read portions of the writing, and break it down into more understandable language. Discuss some sections as a class.
3. Briefly lecture about Thoreau and introduce some examples of civil disobedience in our history.

Lesson 4 – Gandhi (Two class periods)
Procedure:
1. Students will watch the movie Gandhi.
2. As they watch, they will write their thoughts in their journals, focusing on answering the questions: What did Gandhi want to change? Why did he want to change this? How, or did he, change this?

Lesson 5 – Group Project Research/Work (Four class periods) and Presentations (2 class periods)
Procedure:
1. Students will be randomly split into five groups. Each group will be assigned a person to research and teach to the rest of the class. Five that I thought of were: Cesar Chavez, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King Jr., and Susan B. Anthony. If a group agrees to find somebody else to research, they may do so with the approval of the teacher.
2. As a group, they will research their individual and what they did. They will be looking for biographical information, the problem that they saw in the world, what they wanted to change, the ways they tried to change it, what they changed during their lifetime, and the lasting effects they had on the issue.
3. The groups will present their information to the rest of the class
4. The class will discuss what they have learned, looking mainly at the impacts the individuals had and comparing and contrasting the different people

Lesson 6 – Begin Work on Final Project (3 class periods)
Procedure:
1. The teacher will explain the final project to the class.
2. The students will be given the opportunity to work individually or in small groups (of 2 or 3) and they may choose their own groups.
3. These class periods will be devoted to time to research their problem or social justice issue and plan what they will do about it.

Lesson 7 – Show and Tell (2 class periods, later in the school year)
Procedure:
1. The students will share what they did to the rest of the class.
2. The class will discuss what they have learned through their project and from each other’s projects. They will give positive feedback and possible suggestions to their classmates, should they wish to continue with their ideas after this class is over.
## Assessment Summary

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<th>Title of Assignment</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<td>Personal Journal</td>
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<td>Every Day</td>
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<td>Group Research Project</td>
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<td>Lesson 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Lesson</td>
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<td>Lesson 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change Plan</td>
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<td>Lesson 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Execution of Plan</td>
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<td>Lesson 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Results</td>
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<td>Lesson 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Reflection</td>
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<td>Week after Lesson 7</td>
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### Rubric for Final Reflection

The following are the characteristics of a quality final reflection.

- Use appropriate writing style
  - Include analysis of:
    - What happened?
    - Did it go as planned?
    - Do you think you changed anything?
    - Will you continue working for your cause? Why/why not?
    - After seeing results, what would you do different?
- Completed on time

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