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**Politics and War**

**Duration of Lesson: 3 Days (Summative Assessment would last for 1 month)**

**Overview of Lesson:** The question for this week is, “Did politics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century undermine national unity?”. Since I don’t believe I can provide a good balance for both sides of this question, I decided to change the question a bit. I want my students to focus on HOW politics undermined national unity in 19<sup>th</sup> century America. This lesson will have the students compare newspaper articles from the antebellum years and focus on tactics used by the two major opposing political parties, the Whigs and Democrats, and their supporters that created further division in the United States. The activity requires students to work in groups and using the “thinking historically” process to help students analyze the newspaper articles.

**Lesson Objectives:**

- Students will gain a better understanding of American politics in the 1830’s and 1840’s, often referred to as the Jacksonian Era.
- Students will develop a working definition for the term “undermine” and identify specific actions that represent examples of how politics undermined unity at that time.
- Students will learn more about modern politics by analyzing and comparing modern political tactics to those used by politicians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Learning Standards**

- Illinois Learning Standards:
  - **16.A.5a** Analyze historical and contemporary developments using methods of historical inquiry (pose questions, collect and analyze data, make and support inferences with evidence, report findings).
    - Completed during main activity and Fantasy American Politics summative assessment.
  - **16.B.5a (US)** Describe how modern political positions are affected by differences in ideologies and viewpoints that have developed over time (e.g., political parties’ positions on government intervention in the economy).
    - Would be looked at during Fantasy American Politics summative assessment.
  - **16.B.5b (US)** Analyze how United States political history has been influenced by the nation’s economic, social and environmental history.
    - During introduction when students identify the issues that the political parties will be divided on.
  - **16.D.5 (US)** Analyze the relationship between an issue in United States social history and the related aspects of political, economic and environmental history.
    - Done during introduction, main activity, and closure.

- Common Core State Standards for “Literacy in History/Social Studies” and “Speaking and Listening”:
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
    - Done during main activity and closure.
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
    - Done during main activity and summative assessment (Fantasy American Politics)
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.6 - Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.
    - Done during main activity and closure.
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8 - Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
    - Done during main activity and closure.
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 - Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.
    - Done during summative assessment (Fantasy American Politics)
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
    - Done during main activity, closure, and summative assessment.
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.7 - Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
    - Done during main activity, closure, and summative assessment.
  - CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.11-12.8 - Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
    - Done during summative assessment (Fantasy American Politics)

**Academic vocabulary and/or Glossary Terms:**

- Undermine
- Sectionalism

### Planning and Preparation:

- In order to teach the Jacksonian years of the antebellum era, I usually divide it into three themes, “Expansion,” “Sectionalism,” and “Reform”. There was so much going on during this era, that I believe these themes really give the students a comprehensive understanding. This specific lesson would take place under “Sectionalism,” but would get addressed again during “Reform,” which will be discussed under the formative assessments. The “Sectionalism” unit would follow the “Expansion” unit.
- For the main activity in this lesson, students would be placed in teacher –assigned-groups of three and assigned the following roles:
  1. Recorder – Records the information that the group must draw from the sources.
  2. Newspaper Navigator – In charge of using the mouse to navigate through the newspapers on the Library of Congress website.
  3. Fact-checker – Uses another computer or cell phone to look-up answers to questions that come up during the group’s analysis of the sources.

### Resources:

- Computer lab or access to at least one tablet per group.
- *The Caledonian*. St. Johnsbury, Vt.: A.G. Chadwick, 22 Aug. 1837. From Library of Congress, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.  
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84023252/1837-08-22/ed-1/seq-2/> (accessed July 31, 2014).
- *Constantine republican*. Constantine, Mich.: Munger and Cowdery, 25 Oct. 1837. From Library of Congress, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*.  
<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83016620/1837-10-25/ed-1/seq-1/> (accessed July 7, 2014).
- Handouts for the “Fantasy American Politics” project described below.

### Procedure:

- Aim: How did politics in the 19<sup>th</sup> century undermine national unity?
- Introduction:
  - Based off of our unit on “expansion” during the Jacksonian Era, what issues do you think people in America were divided on at this time? Identify at least three specific issues you believe created division.
  - Students would be given about 5-7 minutes to complete this activity. Then we would spend about 10 minutes discussing their answers as a class. During this discussion, it is important to introduce the concept of “sectionalism,” and begin introducing some of the issues that were connected to it at the time. I would ensure that the following issues would be introduced by either the students or myself: clashes between Americans and Native Americans as people moved west; division over the expansion of slavery into the western territories; division over the war with Mexico to gain western

territory; division over legislation meant to support economic expansion such as tariffs; division over the expansion of federal power.

- **Main Activity:**
  - Students would be placed in groups of three and given access to computers so that they can view the newspapers online. The jobs of each student in the group are explained above.
  - Each group would be given a list of article titles from the newspapers that would be useful for the assignment. This should make the newspapers more manageable for the groups to navigate and break the assignment down for them.
  - They will be given the rest of the class period (about 30 minutes) to begin reading through the newspapers and select 1 article from each newspaper.
  - Once they have selected their articles, they should use the following four steps identified by VanSledright to “think historically” about their sources:
    1. Identification – what type of source is it?
    2. Attribution – Who is the author and in what context was it created?
    3. Judging perspective – What was the author’s purpose for creating it?
    4. Reliability assessment – use other sources to determine the reliability of the source.
  - The above four steps would be typed out on a handout and given to the groups when the activity begins.
  - The Recorder should record the answers for all of the above questions, and the Fact-checker should look up information to help the group determine context and reliability. This would probably take up most of day two.
- **Closure:**
  - Once the students have completed the “think historically” process, they need to work as a group to further analyze the sources and answer the following questions: Choose two arguments that the political parties made against each other. Identify who made each arguments and what evidence was used to support the argument. What impacts do you believe these arguments had on the people who read these newspapers? Finally, how did these arguments undermine national unity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Be specific and defend your answer.
  - Note, when the students are first given these questions, I think it is important to discuss the meaning of “undermine.”
  - This closure activity would begin after the above activity is completed, which would probably be at the end of day two, then run into day three (about 20-30 minutes).

### **Assessment:**

- **Formative:**
  - The answers to the above questions would be the first formative assessment. They would be taken as a completion grade, but would help me gauge their understanding of the lesson’s objectives and the time period. Because it is a group assignment, it

will not help me gauge the understanding of each individual student, but help me engage understanding for the class as a whole. If the groups cannot answer the above questions and use evidence to support their claims, then I will address their deficiencies with them.

- The second formative assessment for this lesson would come up during the “Reform” unit, when I ask students if they believe any of the reform movements discussed created more unity in the United States or more division. (Note: This may not be done during this specific lesson, but it is one way I will continue to gauge student understanding of the information from this lesson).
- The summative assessment for this unit would be a group project that would actually span a one month period. It would not take place during this specific three day lesson. It would be introduced at the end of day three, but we would start it the day after the above activity is completed. I just believe it is a great way to connect the past to the present and assess student understanding of the material. It is titled “Fantasy American Politics,” and asks students to follow current American politicians over a three week period. The final week would be spent analyzing their finding from the past three weeks, and comparing modern politics to those used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This assignment is quite large, and would require a number of handouts to help guide the students through the process and to organize the overall project, but the following points should help break it down:
  - The students would remain in groups of three, and we would conduct a live draft in class (two days after the above activity is completed), in which the students would draft 3 current American politicians. I would try to limit it to federal level politicians since they tend to get more coverage. The draft would be run like any fantasy baseball or fantasy football draft would go, which means the groups would get two minutes to make a selection and we would snake through the teams until all teams have chosen their 3 politicians. In order for this to work affectively, the students would have to be given 1 class period (the day after the above activity is completed) to conduct research and pick out the top ten politicians they want to draft during the live draft.
  - Over the three week period, the students will need to pay attention to the news and find articles or stories about their politicians. While they would be given some class time to work on this, most of this portion of the project will be done outside of the classroom. Since this part can get a little out of control, I would limit it to specific 3 or 4 sources that they can all use. For each article or news story they find, they will have to complete a “Here’s the scoop” sheet. The “Here’s the scoop” sheet (AKA “Scoop” sheet) will include basic bibliographic info, a two or three sentence summary, and answers to these questions: How was their politician portrayed (positively or negatively)? What evidence did the source use to support the portrayal of their politician? Finally, what were the author’s intentions?
  - The groups have to turn in at least three of the “Scoop” sheets per week, which will be a part of their final grade for the project. On top of the points earned for the project grade, the groups will be competing for fantasy points. They will get 1

fantasy point for each completed “Scoop” sheet, so they will want to complete as many as they can. The winning group will receive extra credit at the end of the project. Bonus fantasy points would be given each week if their article contains a specific theme or obscure topic. For example, they would receive 3 points one week if their articles about their politicians include something about the environment (the week’s theme), and 5 points for articles if their politician was involved in a scandal (the week’s obscure topic, but sadly not so obscure). Hopefully you get the jest. Students will only earn credit for “Scoop” sheets if their information comes from the specific 3 or 4 sources that they are allowed to use.

- In the 4<sup>th</sup> week, the students would work on analyzing the information in all their findings to better understand modern politics, and then compare their finding to 19<sup>th</sup> century politics. They would be looking at the methods used by modern politicians to undermine national unity today, and comparing those methods to those used by politicians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I don’t have all of the questions prepared at this time, but the students would be given questions to guide them through their analysis of all the information.