

Lesson/Mini-Unit: The Enlightenment

Persistent Issue: What should society do to promote fairness and justice for those that live within its jurisdiction?

Central Question: Do the ideals of the Enlightenment continue to promote fairness and justice in modern society?

Activity 1: Grabber

The teacher will begin the mini-unit by asking students to consider the term “influencer.” While most students will probably be explicitly familiar with the term, even students who don’t use this term will be aware of some influencers that will be named. Students should be asked to explain what an influencer is and give examples. Students may list people who are known specifically as influencers because of the social media term “influencer.”

The teacher should prompt students to determine what this really means. How are these people influencers? What does it mean to influence someone? Influence them to do what? (Ex: Logan Paul may influence students to drink Prime or watch pro-wrestling while another influencer may influence fashion choices).

The teacher will then ask students to consider other influential figures in society. Answers might include political figures, musicians, athletes, etc. The teacher will display images of popular and influential people and ask students to consider how each functions as an influencer and what they influence people to do. As students examine the different categories of influencers and what each is attempting to get people to do, the teacher may ask students to consider both the positive and negative effects of influencers.

Students will be asked to consider how “influencers” might have operated prior to social media, the internet, and television. The teacher will ask students if they know who the major influencers of the 17th and 18th centuries were. Students will likely be surprised that the prominent influencers from this time period were best categorized not as Youtubers, athletes, or celebrities. Instead, they were philosophers.

Activity 2: Enlightenment Philosophers Jigsaw/Thinkaloud (Major Activity)

Phase 1-

The teacher will divide the class into four expert groups for a Jigsaw activity exploring different Enlightenment philosophers. In the initial phase of the activity, students will work in expert groups to analyze primary documents/quotes and answer questions regarding the ideas of their philosopher and his influence on current and historical events. Due to class size variations, it may be necessary to have more than one group dedicated to each philosopher (ex: 2 John Locke groups, 2 Voltaire groups, etc.).

Philosophers:

- John Locke

LOCKE DOCUMENTS

LOCKE DRC

- Montesquieu

MONTESQUIEU DOCUMENTS

MONTESQUIEU DRC

- Voltaire

VOLTAIRE DOCUMENTS

VOLTAIRE DRC

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau

ROUSSEAU DOCUMENTS

ROUSSEAU DRC

Students begin in homogeneous groups with each student group representing one philosopher. Each group will be given a philosopher-specific handout with documents relevant to each philosopher and a DRC with questions for their philosopher (see above for links to each philosopher-specific document set). Students will work together to analyze the documents and answer associated questions designed to help them further understand their philosopher as well as their contributions to Enlightenment thought and real-world events. Teachers may wish to further assist students by providing sentence stems to help students formulate their responses to document-specific questions if necessary. The Locke and Voltaire DRC handouts include example sentence stems to aid struggling students. In line with the persistent issue and unit central question, students will also consider the ways in which their assigned philosopher advocated positions that promoted fairness and justice in society. Students should be reminded to think back to the grabber as they consider how their assigned philosopher was influential in their era and how they may still be influential in the modern world.

Phase 2 -

After completing work in their homogeneous expert groups, students will shift into heterogeneous groups with each student representing their philosopher in the new group. Students will represent their philosopher's views in a discussion that is designed to help prepare them to participate in the Coffeehouse Discussion by focusing on how and to what extent each Enlightenment thinker advocated for fairness and justice in society with their beliefs and writings.

In this phase of the activity, students will learn about the positions and contributions of all four philosophers and each student will advocate for their philosopher as being the most influential in advocating for fairness and justice. Students should be prompted to also consider who was most influential at the time and who continues to be most influential in the present day as they prepare for the Coffeehouse discussion.

Activity 3 – Coffeehouse Discussion

After completing the Jigsaw/Thinkaloud activity, students will be ready to participate in the Coffeehouse Discussion. The teacher will emphasize the authenticity of this activity as it represents an event that occurred frequently in the era of the Enlightenment as coffeehouse discussions of philosophical ideas became commonplace. While the room may be arranged

differently to accommodate whole-group discussion, students will continue to represent their assigned philosophers in this activity. Students may be released from their assigned perspectives at the beginning of the discussion.

The teacher will prompt whole-group student Coffeehouse Discussion with questions such as:

Which philosopher was most influential during the Enlightenment? Why do you believe this person to have been most influential at the time?

Which philosopher is most influential today? Where can their influence be seen?

Overall, how influential was the Enlightenment as a whole? How successful was it in promoting fairness and justice?

Optional – If time permits, the teacher may ask students to consider modern controversies and current issues by considering their philosopher's likely position on the issue. Why would their philosopher agree or disagree with a particular position on the issue? Students will also continually be asked to consider how the ideologies of their philosophers have promoted fairness and justice throughout the centuries.

Activity 4/Culminating Activity – Dialectical Writing Assignment

Now released from their assigned perspectives, students will complete the summative dialectical writing assignment.

Essay Prompt

The essay prompt provides thorough instructions for completing the dialectical writing assignment. The teacher may also wish to provide students with the **Sample Sentence Starters** document to aid them as they prepare their essays.