

Lesson Plan: World Zionist Congress

Middle East History

April 22, 2015

Introduction

Today's class will simulate an adaptation of the World Zionist Congress where different leaders in the Jewish world (and in our simulation - the Arab world) will offer their solution to the Jewish Question: Given the plight of Jews in Russia at the end of the 19th/beginning of the 20th century and that anti semitism still thrives in Europe despite the enlightenment, where should the Jews of the world live and should it be Palestine?

Essential Questions

1. How were Jews affected by changing social, political and economic conditions in Europe?
2. What were the solutions that Jews found to resolve the dilemmas and existential dangers that threatened them in the 19th century?
3. Describe the origins and ideological diversity within the Zionist movement. Why did it take 2000 years for Jews to see themselves as having a political identity as well as a cultural one?
4. Evaluate the successes and failures of the early Zionists.
5. Compare and contrast Zionism and colonialism; how are they the same or different?

Learning outcomes

- Students will master the content of the stream of Zionism or anti Zionism that they are representing by simulating the Congress and answering questions.
- Students will understand the core beliefs and motivations of the different streams of Zionism and Anti Zionism.
- Students will be able explain the differences between the streams and how the identify of the Jews (or Arabs) represented affects the solution of the Jewish Question.
- Students will articulate why understand why some Jews and Arabs were opposed to Zionism.
- Students will synthesize historical material from previous classes in the unit to provide historical context to their speeches.

Classroom time required

One to two periods

Pre-activities

The students are in the middle of a unit titled, "Jewish Nationalism." The unit began with the differences between ethnic, national, and civic identity. Then they

have studied the historical origins of Jewish peoplehood and how it manifested into the modern idea of nation-state. The previous class they studied the origins of Palestinian Nationalism.

Students spent two half-class periods preparing for [the simulation](#). They read the [sources provided](#) and wrote their speeches as well as received one-on-one teacher instruction to clarify concepts, define vocabulary, edit speeches and/or pronounce non-English words or names.

Differentiation

There are 11 students in the class. Three students receive resource services and two students are enrolled in AP level classes in the Humanities. The resource students receive services during the same period, so the instructor and I work closely together. The resource students were assigned articles at a lower reading level than the rest of their peers (but still at the high school level). They were also all assigned positions that opposed practical Zionism so that their resource teacher could instruct all three of them at once, rather than one at a time. One advanced student was assigned the longest and hardest profile: Theodor Herzl. The other advanced student was assigned another difficult task given that they didn't actually participate in the World Zionist Congress: the Arab point of view.

Activities and Flow of Lesson

1. Students will be reminded of the structure of the simulations. Speeches followed by questions.
2. Students will create a placard and write their names. They will also receive the name of the presentation to which they will be asking a follow up question.
3. Each student will present a speech. Each speech will be followed up by a question.
4. The World Zionist Congress will be continued during the next class or adjourned.

Checking for Understanding

- Students' questions will offer some indication of their understanding of the presentation: clarification questions vs. expansive inquiry.
- Students will work together [to complete a chart](#) summarizing the different streams of Zionism.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on the accuracy and authenticity of their speech and ability to answer and ask follow up questions. They will be evaluated in real time.

Credits

The essential questions and learning outcomes were written by Ms. Abigail Chill.

Reflection on Lesson Plan Observation

I decided to write a reflection on the lesson plan after I met with the students for the following class so that I could provide a realistic goal of what was actually learned rather than only touch upon what occurred in the lesson. Today in class, we looked at a chart that asked students to apply their knowledge from the simulation in a different, unscripted format. The questions on the chart asked similar information from their presentation, but in a more objective, historical, and comparative tone.

Out of the 11 students, 10 could easily answer the second set of questions about their person. The students found more difficulty in answering questions about other characters that weren't their own in the simulation (which was also the purpose of this exercise). The one student who had difficulty also had difficulty in his presentation.

While the individual outcomes during the simulation was extremely successful, the issue that I find is always raised when participating in student led activities is "How much do they learn from students' presentations?" The answer is in direct correlation to their stake in the presentation. I don't mean the stake of learning the material; learning is unfortunately not enough of a motivational factor. There needs to be stakes during simulation to maintain their involvement. So for example, last semester when students were involved in the Iran Negotiations, the motivator was "Keeping our nuclear weapons" vs. "Disarming Iran." Also, the students wanted to win. There was no winner in this simulation. One aspect that kept their attention was the question portion. I would consider adding another mandatory question per person to improve their focus.

The big success of the simulation was that students developed a mastery over their individual topic and although did not demonstrate mastery over the other thinkers, did note significant interest, specifically with the anti-Zionist thinkers. This mastery and interest will propel them when they review the other Zionist leaders and anti-Zionist leaders for their final. In addition, if they study together, they will be working with other experts, rather than someone else who is unsure of the material.

The instructional takeaway is that no matter how good a student-led lesson turns out, it is important for the instructor to review the material covered to ensure that all students have a foundational understanding of the material. The simulation empowers the students; the follow up lesson instills the knowledge so that they are prepared on a meta level and a micro level.