

***Dream of a Nation*- Exploring Interconnectedness**

Dream of a Nation covers a variety of environmental, political and social issues facing our country by presenting solutions-based initiatives that are helping to solve these problems. Often times the book presents multiple strategies for solving a particular issue. Through exploring interconnectedness, students will begin to see how critical issues are connected and work toward a common goal.

After becoming Issue Experts in Lesson Module 1, students are ready to explore how critical issues are interconnected, engage in debate, explore compromise and focus on solutions.

1. Student Inquiry Part II

Using the questions that arose during Part I of the Student Inquiry lesson, begin to explore answers and solutions to the students' questions in research groups.

2. Solution Spotlight

In this activity students will be assigned a solution to spotlight. Students will be required to create a poster that highlights the ideas and processes that make their solution a viable option for solving a critical issue.

3. Solution Hierarchies

The 12 chapters in *Dream of a Nation* offer multiple solutions to help solve critical issues. Solutions don't always solve problems in their entirety, after discovering solutions in the previous activity students can create hierarchies for multiple solution categories.


4. Opposing Viewpoints

Dream of a Nation highlights critical issues and solutions, but inherently contained within these solutions is a sense of compromise. Other positions and viewpoints do exist, and before any brash conclusions are drawn, alternative and opposing viewpoints must be considered.

5. Issue Debate

Once students have become familiar with multiple issues and solutions, they will be prepared to participate in debate scenarios where their issues and solutions will be subjected to the scrutiny of the rest of the class in a productive debate session.

The following table lists essays in *Dream of a Nation* and activities that work best with those particular pieces.

1. Student Inquiry Part II	2. Solution Spotlight/3. Solution Hierarchies	4. Opposing Viewpoints/5. Issue Debate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a “We” Economy (p. 90) • Making Coverage Count (p. 128) • Tackling the Profit Problem in Healthcare (p. 240) • Ending Poverty in America (p. 252) • The Rise of the Conscientious Consumer (p. 298) • Establishing a US Department of Peace (p. 376) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving the Green Jobs Movement Forwards (p. 96) • Focusing on Solutions (p. 132) • Building a Conservation Nation (p. 190) • A Blueprint for Clean  Energy Economy (p. 209) • Key Steps for a Healthy Nation (p. 222) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting Money Out of Politics: Putting the Public First (p. 20) • Educating for a Sustainable Future • Making Education Work for <u>All</u> Students (p. 168) • Tackling the Profit Problem in Healthcare (p. 240) • 0.7% of Wealth: A Small Price to End Global Extreme Poverty (p. 265) • Transforming Urban Injustice into Beauty and Empowerment (p. 312) • Reallocating Military Spending, Taking Care of Soldiers and Increasing National Security (p. 364)

1. Student Inquiry Part II

Introduction

In Student Inquiry Part I in Lesson Module I, students created a series of questions that the assigned essay left unanswered. A class list of questions was compiled, some questions were answered but others were left without a solution. In this activity, students will begin to explore answers by breaking down the questions into basic components in order to more fully understand each question and its solution.

The purpose of this activity is to challenge students to understand the basic parts of an issue or solution by breaking it down into components that are more easily investigated and answered. The goal in this endeavor is for students to gain a fuller understanding that will provide them with the tools to participate in more complex research.

Procedure

Using the class list of questions created during Student Inquiry Part I, students (or groups) will volunteer or be assigned to breakdown a particular question and attempt to answer its smaller components. The goal is for students to ask themselves, “What do I already know that will lead me in the direction of a solution?” then use that information to reach a more comprehensive answer. These smaller components may bring about more questions that need to be answered.

Question Breakdown Example

This a question generated from *Dream of a Nation* chapter 2, an essay titled “Staying Within Our Limits.”

What can I do personally to lower my global footprint?

For such general question, it will be easier if students break it down into simpler components. For the above question, component questions might look like this:

What is a global footprint?

What is an average global footprint?

How is a global footprint measured?

What parts of my daily routine figure into a global footprint calculation?

What is my personal global footprint?

Are any parts of my daily routine dramatically increasing my global footprint?

Are any parts of my daily routine decreasing my global footprint?

Can I change my routine to lower my personal global footprint?

The goal of the component questions is to discover simple answers that lead to a more comprehensive solution. Students should be able to use general knowledge, the *Dream of a Nation* essays, and other easily accessed resources to answer the component questions. Students will record their questions and answers and use them in the upcoming activities.

Lesson Timeline

Assign questions to be explored	5 minutes
Break question down in component questions	20 minutes
Answer component questions	25 minutes

2. Solution Spotlight

Introduction

This activity allows students to take an in-depth look into a solution that helps to alleviate critical issues in the United States. In this exercise each student will be assigned or choose an issue to research. To guide their research, students can use the *Solution Fact Sheet* provided in the appendices. Using the information gathered, students will create posters that advocate for the solution and informs the general population of its benefits. The posters can then be hung in the classroom for a gallery walk. The posters also make great outreach tools when posted in the school or around the local community. Because of the vast number of solutions highlighted in *Dream of a Nation*, this activity works well when done individually.

Procedure

First all solutions from a particular chapter should be collected into a list.

For example a list from Chapter 6: Re-Powering America

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Solar Power | 7. Conscious Building | 13. Adjust Thermostat |
| 2. Wind Power | 8. Conservation Teams | 14. Public Transportation |
| 3. Energy Efficient Cars | 9. Car Sharing | 15. Alternative Transportation |
| 4. Upgrade Inefficient Appliances | 10. Energy Education | 16. Hydrothermal Power |
| 5. Turning Lights Off | 11. Weatherize Windows | 17. Incentives for Energy Conservation |
| 6. Energy Efficient Light Bulbs | 12. Water Saving Plumbing | 18. Urban Design Movement |

Students can then choose or be assigned a solution to research.

Allow the students time to research and fill out the *Solution Fact Sheet* (*Note: students will require use of the internet to complete the fact sheet*). Once completed, students can begin work on their posters that should include basic information made accessible to a general audience, including:

1. Solution Title
2. Solution Description
3. The issue being addressed
4. Facts and Statistics
5. Organizations Involved
6. Where to go for more information

Once posters are completed, students should be given an opportunity to view each poster and reflect on each solution's difficulty, impact, and implementation. This can be done with the grid on the *Solution Fact Sheet* (see for explanation) or on the back of the *Solution Fact Sheet*. Students will use this grid again to complete the next activity, "Solution Hierarchies."

As an extension to this activity, have students craft an essay describing their solution and its benefits. Allow students to form opinions on whether or not they feel the solutions are viable and ask them describe the advantages and disadvantages.

Lesson Timeline

Assign or choose solutions	5 minutes
Research and complete <i>Solution Fact Sheet</i> 	45 minutes
Create Solution Posters	40 minutes

3. Solution Hierarchies

Time: 60 minutes

Introduction

At this point, students are familiar with many solutions for combating critical issues. This activity allows students the opportunity to categorize, list and rank solutions based on many different criteria. This activity works best within a single chapter (for example “Re-Powering America”), but as hierarchies are created, solution lists from multiple chapters can be combined for more comprehensive comparisons.

Procedure

1. Students will already have a list of solutions for a specific chapter from the previous activity. Students will have also completed the grid on their *Solution Fact Sheet*, they will need to reference the grid to complete the activity.
2. Students will rank and group the solutions based on the following criteria resulting in 5 separate ranked lists and 3 solution groups when they are completed.

1. Most Easily Implemented	2. Most Energy Savings	3. Most Cost Effective	4. Solutions Our Class/School Can Implement	5. Solutions I Will Implement
Solutions Ranked 1-18	Solutions Ranked 1-18	Solutions Ranked 1-18	Solutions Ranked 1-18	Solutions Ranked 1-18


Individual Solutions	This group contains solutions that can be implemented by an individual effectively.
Group Solutions	This group contains solutions that must be implemented by a group or community to be effective
Institutional Solutions	This group contains solutions that require institutional changes to society, government and policies.

3. Students will then engage in a whole-class discussion in order to create four separate hierarchies the class can agree upon (“Solutions I Will Implement” does not need to be discussed). These hierarchies should be written on chart paper or projected for the entire class to view. Students can also discuss the placement of each solution into one of the three solution groups.

Lesson Timeline

Students rank or group solutions based on specific criteria	30 minutes
Students engage in a whole-class discussion to create whole-class hierarchies	30 minutes

4. Opposing Viewpoints

Time: 60 minutes 

Introduction

Dream of a Nation explores critical issues facing the United States, many of these issues are considered hot-button topics in the current political and social landscape. Invariably, viewpoints outside of those expressed in *Dream of a Nation* exist and must also be explored. In order to do this, students can use the list of websites below to explore alternate viewpoints that contribute to democratic values of debate and compromise.

Procedure

Start this activity by choosing a single issue to focus on as a class, or different issues can be assigned to students or groups of students. The class should already be familiar with assigned issue(s). Once issue(s) are assigned have students create Venn diagrams; on one side ask students to write arguments in support of an issue using the *Dream of a Nation* essays. On the opposite side students will write new arguments they have learned in an article from an opposing viewpoint source.

Opposing Viewpoint Sources

- www.cato.org
- www.aei.org
- www.foxnews.com
- www.nytimes.com/opinion
- www.washingtonpost.com/opinions
- www.bostonglobe.com/opinion
- www.guardian.co.uk/comment
- www.latimes.com/opinion
- www.wallstreetjournal.com/opinion

Once students have filled in both sides of their Venn diagrams, challenge them to find any common ground the two sources share and record it in the middle of their diagrams. From their Venn diagrams students will then create two statements that summarize the beliefs of each viewpoint. These statements will be used in the following debate activity.

Example: from Chapter 1 Essay “Getting Money out of Politics: Putting the Public First”:

“Money should be removed from politics because private financing of campaigns magnifies the power of large donors, it limits opportunities for qualified yet unconventional candidates, and it forces elected officials to spend too much time on fundraising and not enough on their constituents.”

Opposing Viewpoint

“Money should not be removed from politics because a cap on spending by incumbents or challengers would produce a less informed electorate, spending produces a more competitive election, and it advances the quality of democracy and leads to a vibrant political community.”

Source: “Benefits of Campaign Spending” by John J. Coleman from www.cato.org.

Lesson Timeline

Assign Issues	5 minutes
Locate and read opposing viewpoint sources 	30 minutes
Fill out Venn diagrams	15 minutes
Create statements for both viewpoints	10 minutes

5. Issue Debate

Introduction

The final activity in this lesson module brings together the material learned in the previous activities and challenges students to use it in a classroom style debate. In the Opposing Viewpoints activity, students created argument statements after completing their Venn diagrams. These statements will form the basis for a classroom debate. Be sure to inform students that they may be arguing for issues against their personal beliefs, but understanding and sympathizing with various viewpoints is a valuable skill. The teacher/moderator will score each team using the provided rubric and declare a winner at the end of the debate. The debate outlined below is a written style debate that will allow groups of students to research and construct arguments before presenting in writing to their opponents to dissect and counter. The outline below splits the class into two groups, but multiple topics and groups can be used to suit larger classrooms.

Procedure

1. Initial Argument

The class will be split into two groups, for example a “money should be kept in politics” group and a “money should be removed from politics” group. Using the argument statements from the previous activity, each group will create a statement using the strongest reasoning agreed upon by the group (groups should include 3-5 of the strongest arguments). Allow a group representative to announce the initial argument and post it on the board or projector for the opposing group to view.

<p>Money should be removed from politics because...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private financing of campaigns magnifies the power of large donors. • It limits opportunities for qualified yet unconventional candidates. • It forces elected officials to spend too much time on fundraising and not enough on their constituents. 	<p>Money should be part of the political process because...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cap on spending by incumbents or challengers would produce a less informed electorate. • Spending produces a more competitive election. • It advances the quality of democracy and leads to a vibrant political community.
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2. Counter Arguments and Questions

Once initial arguments have been made, groups can now convene to construct counter arguments and questions based on the opposite group’s initial statement. Each group will create a counter argument for each initial argument as well as 3 questions for the other group to answer. These will be written on a sheet of paper and group representatives will trade papers.



3. Concluding Statement

Once students have traded counterarguments and questions, groups can begin crafting their concluding statement. In their concluding statement, groups will state the initial argument, choose 1-2 counter arguments to refute, answer their opposition’s questions, and provide closing remarks. Each group will have a representative read their concluding statement. The teacher will then tally each group’s scores and declare a winner.

Counter Argument and Questions Example and Structure:

<p>Initial Argument: Money should be removed from politics because private financing of campaigns magnifies the power of large donors, it limits opportunities for qualified yet unconventional candidates, and it forces elected officials to spend too much time of fundraising and not enough on their constituents.</p> <p>Counter Arguments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If candidates didn't receive money from large donors national ad campaigns would be nearly impossible. • The two dominant parties rarely nominate unconventional candidates. • If candidates don't fundraise during their campaign it will be difficult to gain support from lobbyists once in office. <p>Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the electorate supposed to know which candidates are truly committed without large fundraising campaigns? 2. Why would someone want to run for high public office without making a high salary? 3. Wouldn't the ballot get crowded if anyone could run regardless of how much money they have raised? 	<p>Initial Argument: Money should not be removed from politics because a cap on spending by incumbents or challengers would produce a less informed electorate, spending produces a more competitive election, and it advances the quality of democracy and leads to a vibrant political community.</p> <p>Counter Arguments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The absence of money in politics would create less controversy and a clearer picture for the electorate. • Competitive elections are dominated by candidates with money, leaving no room for candidates without a lot of money to succeed. • The absence of money in politics creates a more level playing field. <p>Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the middle and lower class voice supposed to be heard when the rich dominate politics? 2. How can our government be considered a democracy when "the dollar" clearly has the largest vote? 3. What is to keep candidates from "buying" votes?
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Lesson Timeline

Assign groups and craft initial arguments	15 minutes
Write counter arguments and create questions 	25 minutes
Answer questions and construct concluding statements 	30 minutes
Tally scores and declare winner	5 minutes

Scoring Rubric

Use this rubric to score each group. You will score each part of this activity on a scale of 1-10 (weak-strong).

	Initial Statements	Counter Arguments	Answers to Questions	Concluding Statement	Total
Group 1					
Group 2					