



Debating Liberty Grades 5-8 Post Statue of Liberty Lesson Plan

Overview:

About 150 years earlier, politicians and the public both debated on whether the United States should accept the Statue of Liberty. In *Debating Liberty*, students will play the role of a citizen weighing the benefits/drawbacks of receiving the soon-to-arrive statue.

Time Frame:

30 minutes

Materials:

Quote cards

Objectives:

Students will analyze historic quotes to determine whether the speakers were for or against the Statue of Liberty's arrival. Students will then roleplay as those speakers to debate over whether or not to accept the statue.

Procedure:

1. Prior to the lesson, pull up an image of the Statue of Liberty on a Smartboard or write out the words "Statue of Liberty" on a whiteboard.
2. Ask students about any thoughts or feelings that come to mind when they think about the Statue of Liberty. Record their responses.
3. Explain that before the Statue of Liberty arrived in New York, there was a fierce debate about whether or not the United States should accept it. And today, they will be taking part in that debate through roleplay.

4. Prompt students for an explanation of roleplay and debate. Once students have established that they will be playing characters in the debate, ask them to come up with some good rules. How can they have a debate that is constructive? How can they make sure everyone is heard? Write down their ideas.
5. Students split into groups, no more than six, and each group picks up a quote card.
6. Students read and analyze the quote card to determine whether or not the speaker was for, against, or ambivalent about accepting the statue.
7. Students then explain how they know by listing clues in the text that support their position.
8. Once students have figured out the perspective of their quote card, they nominate a representative to debate their position. The question is "Should the United States accept the Statue of Liberty?" Remind students of the rules they came up with earlier for a good debate.
9. Representatives from each group come to the front of the room and debate their positions.
10. When all of the representatives have had a turn, and any rebuttals have been heard, ask the class if they can reach a consensus on whether or not to accept the statue. Hold a blind vote to determine who is in favor and who is not. Invite students to share how they came to their positions.

Quote Cards

<p><i>"No true patriot can countenance any such expenditures for bronze females in the present state of our finances."</i></p> <p>-New York Times</p>	<p><i>"I saw the Statue of Liberty. And I said to myself, "Lady, you're such a beautiful! You opened your arms and you get all the foreigners here. Give me a chance to prove that I am worth it, to do something, to be someone in America." And always that statue was on my mind."</i></p> <p>-Immigrant from Greece</p>	<p><i>"If the copper lady descended, she'd have to leave the island, and live on unequal terms with men in both France and the United States."</i></p> <p>-New York Suffragettes</p>
<p><i>"We must raise the money! The world is the people's paper, and now it appeals to the people to come forward and raise the money. The \$250,000 that the making of the Statue cost was paid in by the masses of the French people-by the working men, the tradesmen, the shop girls, the artisans-by all, irrespective of class or condition. Let us respond in like manner. Let us not wait for the millionaires to give us this money. It is not a gift from the millionaires of France to the millionaires of America, but a gift of the whole people of France to the whole people of America"</i></p> <p>-New York World</p>	<p><i>"...But the word liberty makes me think of the fact that this country is the land of liberty for men of all nations except the Chinese. I consider it as an insult to us Chinese to call on us to contribute toward building in this land a pedestal for a statue of Liberty. That statue represents Liberty holding a torch which lights the passage of those of all nations who come into this country. But are the Chinese allowed to come? As for the Chinese who are here, are they allowed to enjoy liberty as men of all other nationalities enjoy it? Are they allowed to go about everywhere free from the insults, abuse, assaults, wrongs and injuries from which men of other nationalities are free?"</i></p> <p>-Saum Song Bo, New York Sun</p>	<p><i>"Liberty enlightening the world, indeed! The expression makes us sick. This government is a howling farce. It can not or rather does not protect its citizens within its own borders. Shove the Bartholdi statue, torch and all, into the ocean until the "liberty" of this country is such as to make it possible for an inoffensive and industrious colored man to earn a respectable living for himself and family, without being ku-kluxed, perhaps murdered, his daughter and wife outraged, and his property destroyed. The idea of the "liberty" of this country "enlightening the world", or even Patagonia, is ridiculous in the extreme."</i></p> <p>-The Cleveland Gazette</p>