**Senate Debate: Should the Philippines be annexed by the United States?**

**Hook:** TR tells the following story to the students and asks them to respond:

You recently found out that your neighbors have millions of dollars worth of diamonds in the ground below their vegetable garden.  They know the diamonds are there but are not digging them up or attempting to get them.

1. What do you think of your neighbors?
2. How will you respond to this information?

Students will share their answers.  Teacher will debrief the story and make the connection between the story and the Philippine annexation by the United States. *(The goal of the story is to help students identify with the United States and why they wanted to annex the Philippines…it is easy for them with 2008 lens to simply be critical of the US and not see how it would have been very inviting for the US to become involved in Philippines.)*

TR will explain that the students will be role-playing a senate debate concerning the question  “Should the Philippines be annexed (made part of the United States), by force if necessary?”

**Debate Activity Overview:** There are eight people/roles that the students will be enacting for the debate (six participants and two senators).  The six participants will be presenting information and trying to convince the two senators (plus the TR who will act as a third senator) to vote in their favor on the question of annexation.

Students will be working in pairs/groups to learn about their role, prepare debate statements and develop questions of the other groups  (**See attached handouts for roles and step-by-step instructions for student preparation for debate)**

**Debate Structure:**

1. Opening Statements by Each Group
2. Questions from senators and responses from each group
3. Open Debate (Only questioners can ask questions but anyone in group can respond to questions)
4. Senators vote (They will vote twice—once as their role and once as themselves)

**Assessment Activity:** Student will write a brief response to the activity.  They will be asked to explain how they would have voted if they had been a senator and why?  Also, The students need to explain the opposing viewpoint and why they disagreed with that point of view.  Finally, They need to support their answers with evidence from the debate and/or text.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

\* Does the debate format:

   a) Encourage greater use of the text, both during the debate and in the assessment piece?

   b) Encourage a deep understanding of the content?

\* What challenges do students have staying in the role and time period?

\* Who participates the most during the debate?  Why?

\* What is the quality of student questions?  Are they relevant?  Accurate?  Fully-developed?

***Q: Why do role plays?***

\* see multiple perspectives on important issues, empathize with the figures they portray, and understand that the meaning of historical events is always contested.

\* learn how to argue effectively and how to ask their opponents challenging questions.

\* understand the validity of positions with which they may not personally agree, but may have to represent in the role play.

\* develop their skills working in cooperative, problem solving groups.

\* grapple with essential questions and big ideas of a unit through a performance task that is complex, open-ended, authentic, fun, and memorable.

**Notes from Lesson Study Observation Day**

**Berkeley High-Mandela High Lesson Observation Reflections**

J.Woo Dec. 3, 2008

**AP** – felt kids were engaged and seemed eager to get feedback from the adults    -  students were not as shy as he initially thought they would be, and is not sure as to why that was    -  students seemed to struggle with the historical context, i.e. they are aware of the Iraq-U.S. context, but not the Philippines-U.S. context of the 1890s; so, their questions seemed more vague because they’re not as grounded in the contexts    -  noticed that those who were the imperialists, did not run with the role play    -  in helping students with the questions, the thinking was clearly there, but they struggled with how to phrase the questions in a way that could be understood    -  the students’ energy was much higher today

**AB** – valuable to provide sentence starters for the questions, and to refer back to Andy’s example as a model “You say this, but…” “How can you justify that…” “What evidence do you have that…” “Isn’t it true that…” “Please explain…”    -  Important for students to understand their purpose for questioning: are they…        o   Asking a question to get information        o   To get at a lack of evidence or logic        o   To expose        o   To make a point

**NO** – groups were working and engaged even when no adult was working directly with them    -  William Jennings Bryan group worked hard on the right wording of the questions even after Andy left them    -  Noticed a lot of students were referring back to the text when drawing up questions

**NU** – anti-imperialists group realized that they had to refer to the text to create questions after they attempted to make questions without the text    -  some of the students were unclear who they were supposed to question    -  wonders how much scaffolding is needed for the text, in particular the Anti-Imperialists Platform    -  should we include modeling for the roles    -  note the need to be explicit – what does it look like to discuss, to be ready, to rehearse?

**AP** – possibly include a model question for and against the U.S. intervention in Iraq

**NU** -  so many skills required in this lesson: drawing upon prior knowledge, synthesizing prior knowledge with information from the lesson; reading of text; questioning; knowing who they are in their role before being able to question

**AB** – scaffolding of questions is needed – questioning vs. interrogation    -  suggestion to identify key information and ideas for each role – could be charted out    -  address contextual questions and prior knowledge    -  address developing questions and anticipating questions

**NU** – questioning must be practiced over the course of time

**JW** – how to scaffold students being able to access prior knowledge into their arguments and logic    -  possibly include a fact sheet for the Philippines, incl. population figures and resources

**BP** – making sure that the groups have access to all the other groups’ info

**AP** – primary sources are supported with summary and a biography; but which is better – this or pulling out key quotes

**BP** – additional frames that could be used… Imperialism and isolationism Realism and idealism    -  review these spectrums with the 8 different perspectives as a closing activity or to help students during the lesson if they are struggling

**NO** – noticed 2 of the groups referred to the hook while they were preparing their questions

**REFLECTIONS**

Choosing a **TOPIC** for Debate:

1. Choose a **debatable** issue.  A true debate should have more than one legitimate point of view that a student can defend using evidence.
2. It is important to provide students with a **balanced array of perspectives** from either side of the debate.  Our debate was slightly unbalanced for a few reasons.  One of the pro-annexation voices sat on the hearing committee asking questions, as opposed to defending a pro-annexation position.  This was particularly damaging to the pro-annexation side because most students from the beginning felt strongly that annexation was wrong.  Providing ample amounts of accessible material for an unpopular position is thus important to ensuring a more balanced debate.

**Preparing** Students for the Debate

1. **Primary versus Secondary Sources**: We provided students with primary sources to help them "get into character" for their roles in the debate.  Though we modified many of the sources, students nonetheless truggled with their vocabulary and syntax.  Thus, if we were to repeat this lesson, we would consider substituting secondary sources for primary sources, and only provide students iwth key quotes from the primary sources.  Making this modification would speed the pace of preparation and make it easier for students to understand their individual roles.
2. **Biographies:** Student questioners had the daunting task of preparing questions for every other character int he debate.  Thus, we would highly recommend providing students with short (less than one paragraph) biographies of each character in the role-play.
3. **Making connections to Opponents**: Students had trouble understanding the vast array of perspectives represented in the debate.  This was reflected in their questions and comments to each other during the debate.  Prior to the debate, it would be helpful to lead the class in placing each character on a spectrum of opinions on imperialism.  Representing the information visually would help students organize the huge amount of information for which they were responsible.
4. **Structure**: This may seem obvious, but providing a clear structure was essnetial to running an effective debate.  We required students in each team to have a clear-cut role, and we organized the debate so that each team had a chance to speak.  It was also important for the teacher to act as moderator so that the debate remained orderly.

**OUR TIPS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

**During the Debate - Tips and Lessons**

In the role play, we wanted students to become emotionally invested and to challenge one another directly.  This had many advantages for their engagement with the content, but the debate can be side-tracked if comments and questions become too heated, one-sided, or personal.

So, to keep things on track, we suggest:

* Have an impartial moderator -- someone (probably the teacher) who can call the shots without asking too many questions or taking sides.  Leave the question-asking and side-taking to the students.
* Create student roles and an explicit agenda that are clear, well structured, and require all students to actively participate.
* Insist that students must be prepared (fully and in writing) in order to participate.

**After the Debate - Tips and Lessons**

We found that a role-play debate gave students deeper engagement and insight than reading, lecture or traditional discussion formats.  Yet, to move from the debate to a written expression of one's understanding was not necessarily simple.

To help students connect to the historical issues, facts and details, we suggest:

* Be sure to debrief the experience - help students to connect their feelings during or about the role-play to actual content.
* Require that students explicitly acknowledge and respond to multiple perspectives and arguments raised in the debate.

Emphasize the importance of using evidence to evaluate the arguments -- and help