

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum Great Books: The Book of Exodus

Curriculum Focus

World History, Religion and Culture

Grade level

9-12

Duration

One or two class periods

Objectives

Students will

- review what they've learned about Moses and the book of Exodus;
- review the Ten Commandments and the covenant made between Moses and God;
- analyze one of the Ten Commandments, focusing on its historical meaning and significance, as well as any possible meanings today; and
- develop a class list of commandments or "ten common rules of morality" that should govern our society today.

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access
- Print resources about the Ten Commandments

Procedures:

1. Using what they learned in the video, have students review the story of Moses and the Israelites from the Book of Exodus. Focus the discussion around the following questions:
 - Who was Moses? Where was he born?
 - Explain his transition from a slave to a prince to a leader of the Israelites.
 - What sign was he given from God that led him to free his people from slavery?
 - How would you describe the journey known as the Exodus?
 - How would you describe the relationships between Moses and God and between Moses and the Israelites?
(As you review the story with students, touch on the following terms: Egypt, pharaoh, burning bush, plagues of Egypt, Red Sea, Ten Commandments, covenant, Mt. Sinai, Promised Land.)
2. Discuss the message behind the Book of Exodus. Why is Exodus a "story of liberation?" How is this story an inspiration to oppressed people?
3. Have students focus on the events at Mt. Sinai. First have them explain what the Ten Commandments were as a whole, not the individual commandments. (*For example, the Ten Commandments are accepted by Judaism and Christianity as a summary of the important rules of behavior that God expects of humanity.*) Then ask them about the covenant made between God and Moses. (*You may want to explain that a covenant is a contract. In the Bible, it refers to an agreement made between God and man. God and Moses made a covenant in which God*

promised that the Israelites would reach the Promised Land if they obeyed the Ten Commandments.)

4. Ask students why they think the Ten Commandments are important today. *(They provide the foundation for the Judeo-Christian morality.)* Tell the class that in this lesson, they will focus on one of the Ten Commandments. *(Let students know that the Ten Commandments vary slightly, depending if they are from the Catholic, Protestant, or Jewish faith. Wording may vary depending on the source. The commandments below are common abbreviated versions typically cited in the Protestant faith.)* You may want to write these on the board or hand out photocopies.

Ten Commandments

- I. I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other gods before me.
 - II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images...Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them.
 - III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
 - IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
 - V. Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long.
 - VI. Thou shalt not kill.
 - VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
 - VIII. Thou shalt not steal.
 - IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
 - X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.
5. Divide the class into ten small groups and assign each group one commandment about which they will answer the following questions:
 - If this is an abbreviated version, what is the full text of the commandment?
 - What does this commandment mean? (Define any terms that may not be familiar to the class.)
 - Has the meaning of this commandment changed today? If so, how? How could this commandment be applied to a current situation?
 - Do you believe in this commandment? Why or why not?
 - What might be challenging or difficult about obeying this commandment? How would following or obeying this commandment be rewarding?
 6. Encourage students to use print and online resources to study different interpretations of the Ten Commandments. The following sites may help in their research:

Bible Study Ten Commandments from God
<http://www.biblestudygames.com/biblestudies/ten.htm>

The Ten Commandments (analysis from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America)
<http://www.goarch.org/en/ourfaith/articles/article7115.asp>

Ten Commandments (analysis from the Bethel Church of God)
<http://www.bethelcoq.org/TenIndex.htm>

The Ten Commandments (A lecture by Rudolf Steiner)

http://wn.elib.com/Steiner/Lectures/TenCom_index.html

7. Hold a class discussion about the students' research on each of the Ten Commandments. Begin with the first commandment, and let each group lead the conversation, explaining their understanding of the commandment and what it means today.
8. Conclude with a discussion about how the commandments are followed or not followed in our present-day society. Which commandments are reflected in current laws? Which ones are most commonly followed or believed by most Americans, but may not be reflected in a formal law? What immoral actions are not included in the Ten Commandments? (*Examples include rape and domestic violence.*) Finally, have the class develop a list of their own commandments, or ten common rules of morality, that should govern our society today.

Extension activity

In the Book of Exodus, Moses is a leader of his people. He confronts his oppressor, the pharaoh, and follows the beliefs of truth and nonviolent resistance to free his people from oppression. Compare and contrast Moses with two 20th-century leaders, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. As a further extension activity, you could have students compare the Ten Commandments to the Eight Steps of Buddhism or the Five Pillars of Islam.

Evaluation:

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students are highly engaged in class discussions and lead a comprehensive and thoughtful discussion about their assigned commandment.

2 points: Students participate in class discussions and lead a somewhat comprehensive discussion about their assigned commandment.

1 point: Students participate minimally in class discussions and lead a simplistic discussion about their assigned commandment.

Vocabulary:

covenant

Definition: A contract; in the Bible, an agreement between God and his people

Context: In the Book of Exodus, God made a covenant with Moses that the Israelites would reach the Promised Land if they obeyed the Ten Commandments.

Exodus

Definition: The second book of the Old Testament, which tells the story of the departure of the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt as they were led by Moses. ("Exodus" is a Greek word for departure.)

Context: In the Book of Exodus, God gave Moses and the Israelites the Ten Commandments.

Moses

Definition: The leader and prophet of the Israelites, who led his people out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land

Context: Moses and the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years before reaching the Promised Land.

Ten Commandments

Definition: The commandments, or rules, engraved on stone tablets that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai in the Book of Exodus

Context: The Ten Commandments are accepted by Jews and Christians as a summary of the important rules of behavior that God expects of humanity.

Academic Standards

This lesson plan addresses the following standards from the National Council for the Social Studies:

I: Culture

II: Time, Continuity and Change

III: People, Places and Environments

IX: Global Connections

Credit

Joy Brewster, freelance education writer, editor, and consultant