



Fighting 20th Century Tyranny

This lesson plan focuses on stories of people who escaped tyrannical regimes of the 20th century.

Subject

Geography

Grade level

6-8

Duration

Three class periods

Objectives

Students will

- recall the 20th-century regimes highlighted in the program;
- review stories from the program about people who escaped these regimes; and
- create a mock interview with people from each story.

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access
- Print and online resources about the life during the Holocaust, in communist East Berlin, and in Cuba under Fidel Castro
- Paper and pencil
- *Fighting 20th Century Tyranny* video and VCR (or DVD and DVD player)

Procedures

1. After watching *Fighting 20th Century Tyranny*, ask students to define the word "regime." (An oppressive, often tyrannical, system of government) What were the regimes that people were escaping? (Fidel Castro's socialist regime in Cuba, the Communist regime of East Berlin, and the Nazi regime during World War II)
2. Ask students to review the people whose stories were featured. You may want to write the following names and brief summaries on the board.
 - **Orestes Lorenzo Perez:** A Cuban Air Force pilot who illegally flew from Cuba to Florida in March 1991. In December 1992, he returned to pick up his wife, Victoria, and their two sons, Reyneil, 11, and Alejandro, 6.

- **Heinz Meixner:** A 20-year-old Austrian who rescued his East German fiancée, Margit, and her mother from East Berlin. In May 1963, he drove a small convertible under the barrier past the guards.
 - **Hartmut Richter:** A young man who escaped East Berlin in 1966 by swimming the canal that formed part of the border between East and West Berlin.
 - **Eric Ross:** A butcher in East Berlin who smuggled his wife and eight children into West Berlin in his refrigerated meat truck.
 - **Kristine Chiger:** An 8-year-old Polish girl who hid in a sewer with her family to Holocaust. She lived in the Polish city of Lvov, then part of the Soviet Union. Leopold Socha, a Polish Catholic sewer worker risked his life to help her family.
3. Divide students into five groups and assign each one of the stories above. (Assign the group with the fewest number of people to Hartmut Richter’s story.) Teams will work together to write and perform a mock interview with people from the story. The interview should include a discussion about the regime and the escape. Encourage teams to use what they learned in the program, outside research, and their own thoughts about how it must have felt to experience such ordeals. Provide the following guiding questions as students develop their questions and answers for the interview.
 - What regime did you escape from? What country did you escape to?
 - Why did you leave? What was life like?
 - Why couldn’t you easily leave?
 - Describe your escape, especially the planning and preparation.
 - Did anyone help you? What would have happened to anyone who helped you?
 - Were your family members involved in the escape?
 - What would have happened if you had been caught?
 - What was the most difficult or terrifying part of your escape?
 - What sacrifices did you make? What did you leave behind?
 - Was your escape worth the risks you took?
 4. Give teams two class periods to write their questions and answers and practice their interviews. (You may want to give teams a five-minute time limit for their interview.) Have teams perform their interviews for the class.
 5. Afterwards, discuss the people in these stories. What kinds of people were they? What qualities did they possess? Ask students if they would have attempted such escapes. Hold a discussion based on their answers.

Extensions

For “**A Sea Disappears**” segment: Have students discuss what they learned about Uzbekistan. Ask them about what is happening to the Aral Sea and the causes. Why are the land and water contaminated? Describe the villages that were once by the sea. Have the class create a country profile of Uzbekistan. Divide the class into six groups and have groups focus on one of the following topics: geography, religion, economy, language, natural resources, and major cities.

For the “**Outcasts No More**” segment: Have students review what they learned about the Dalits in India. Who are they? Why are they called Untouchables? How is the discrimination of Dalits discouraged? Have students learn more about the Hindu

caste system. What are the castes in India? What determines a person's caste? What types of discrimination do Dalits face? What jobs do they usually hold? Why do they have fewer opportunities than members of other castes? The following Web sites provide helpful information:

National Geographic: India's "Untouchables" Face Violence, Discrimination
http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/06/0602_030602_untouchables.html

Time for Kids: India's Rejected
<http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK/class/wr/article/0,17585,92370,00.html>

Who Are Dalits?
<http://www.dalits.org/whoaredalits.htm>

For the **"Improving Education"** segment: Review what students learned about education in Pakistan. How are educational opportunities different for boys and girls? Have the class explore the roles of men and women in Pakistan society, including education levels, in their households, marriage traditions, levels of health care, and the biradari (group of male kin) in social relations. Have students explore the following Library of Congress site: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pktoc.html> (See Social Structure, Health, and Education sections.)

Evaluation

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

3 points: Students recalled several key details about the tyrannical regimes featured in the program and the escape stories; participated actively in class discussions; worked well in a team; wrote and performed a thoughtful, comprehensive interview that included several details about the regime, the escape, and personal thoughts about the experience.

2 points: Students recalled some key details about the tyrannical regimes featured in the program and the escape stories; participated somewhat in class discussions; worked satisfactorily in a team; wrote and performed a satisfactory interview with some details about the regime, the escape, and personal thoughts about the experience.

1 point: Students recalled few or no key details about the tyrannical regimes featured in the program and the escape stories; did not participate in class discussions; did not work well in a team; wrote and performed an incomplete interview with few details about the regime, the escape, and personal thoughts about the experience.

Vocabulary

communism:

Definition: A classless society in which the state owns and controls all wealth; a system of government in which a single, usually totalitarian, party holds power, and the state controls the economy.

Context: During the Cold War, ordinary Germans went to extraordinary lengths to escape the oppression of communism.

regime

Definition: An oppressive, often tyrannical, system of government

Context: Ever since the 1959 Cuban Revolution, some people have been prepared to risk their lives to escape Fidel Castro’s regime.

socialism:

Definition: A political system in which there is no private property, which may lead to the exploitation of workers

Context: Many people have escaped Fidel Castro’s unjust brand of socialism for American capitalism and democracy.

tyranny

Definition: Cruel, unjust, and oppressive government; a country or state ruled by an unjust and oppressive leader

Context: In World War II, many Jews took great risks to escape the tyranny of the Nazis.

Academic Standards

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of the NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Governance

The National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) provides 18 national geography standards that the geographically informed person knows and understands. To view the standards online, go to www.ncge.org.

This lesson plan addresses the following NCGE standards:

- Human Systems: The process, patterns, and functions of human settlement; How forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth’s surface.

Credit

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