

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum Jesus and the Rise of Christianity

Curriculum Focus

World History

Grade level

9-12

Duration

One or two class periods

Objectives

Students will

- explore how change affects different classes within a culture;
- research the effect of Jesus and his teachings on different classes of people who were living during his time; and
- apply the findings about the relationship between social class and the acceptance of change to social events that have taken place in recent history.

Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by discussing the times in which Jesus lived. Was it a calm or a tumultuous time period? What was the status of Judaism? Were those following Judaism united, or did many different religious factions exist? To help paint a picture of the times, it may be helpful to show some segments of the video so that students can see that Jesus lived during a time of great social change.
2. Based on what students learned from the video, develop a list of the society's major social classes, which include the following:
 - Temple priests
 - Money changers
 - Merchants and artisans
 - Shepherds and farmers
 - The outcasts
3. Divide students into five groups. Assign each group one of the social classes listed above. Ask each group to consider the following questions from the perspective of a particular social class:
 - Do you think that this social class would have been interested in social change? Why or why not?

- Would this social class have supported the teachings of Jesus?
 - How do you think the teachings of Jesus affected this social class? Do you think they had a positive or negative impact?
4. Show the segments of the video that discuss Jesus' teachings. Then suggest that the groups visit the following Web sites to research the social climate during this time.
 - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/jesus/socialclass.html>
 - <http://www.loyno.edu/~seduffy/christianity.html>
 - <http://www.united.edu/portrait/social.htm>
 - http://claww.1mu.edu/~fjustBible/Jewish_Groups.htm
 - <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/portrait/judaism.html>
 5. Give students enough time in class to complete their research. Then have each group present its findings. Suggest to students that they prepare a skit to present their ideas. Within each group, one student could play Jesus; another, one of his disciples; and the remaining students, representatives of the social class.
 6. After all groups have completed their presentations, discuss any trends students may have observed. Which groups were more interested in social change? Which groups were less interested? Help students understand that those classes that are comfortable, such as the priests and the money changers, are less interested in change than those that are less comfortable, such as the farmers and the outcasts. The outcasts, who were shunned by most of society, probably had the most to gain by supporting Jesus.
 7. Conclude the lesson by discussing social movements in recent history, such as the civil rights movement and feminism. Which social groups supported these changes? Can students find any similarities between those people who supported Jesus and those who supported more recent social movements? Write a class summary of students' ideas on this question.

Evaluation

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

3 points: Students were highly engaged in class discussions, completed their research carefully and thoroughly, and developed a thoughtful and creative presentation based on information from the video and their research.

2 points: Students participated in class discussions, completed their research, and developed a somewhat thoughtful and creative presentation based on information from the video and their research.

1 point: Students participated minimally in class discussions, did not complete their research, and developed a weak presentation that is based only partially on information from the video and their research.

Vocabulary

class

Definition: A group sharing the same rank social and economic status

Context: During the time of Jesus, society was divided into rigid classes; the class you belonged to largely determined the life you led.

Dead Sea Scrolls

Definition: A major archaeological discovery found in Qumram, near the Dead Sea, in 1947

Context: The Dead Sea Scrolls include the work of Josephus, a first-century historian, who wrote in rich detail about the life and times of Jesus.

disciple

Definition: One of the 12 followers of Jesus who helped spread the teachings of Jesus

Context: Many of Jesus' disciples were fishermen and tax collectors, representatives of the society's lower classes.

Jesus

Definition: A leader who lived during the first century of the Common Era (CE) who inspired a new religion, Christianity.

Context: Some people believe that Jesus was the Messiah sent to Earth to create a new social order.

purity

Definition: Being clean, righteous, and healthy

Context: During the time of Jesus, as part of the society's political ideology, purity served to separate the upper and lower classes.

Academic Standards

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

- V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
- IX. Global Connections

Credit

Marilyn Fenichel, education writer and editor