

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum Pope John Paul II: Triumph Over Communism

Curriculum Focus

Modern World History

Grade level

9-12

Duration

One or two class periods

Objectives

Students will

- discuss major events in Poland that influenced Karol Joseph Wojtyla before he became Pope;
- study one event and its significance in the papacy of John Paul II and describe the reflection of the Pope's beliefs; and
- develop a class timeline of significant historic events in Poland and the papacy of John Paul II.

Materials:

- Computer with Internet access
- Print resources about the history of Poland and Pope John Paul II

Procedures:

1. Using what they learned in the video, have students make a list of words or phrases that describe Karol Joseph Wojtyla (who became Pope John Paul II). What are the qualities for which he is best known? Examples follow:
 - Defender of religious freedom and tolerance
 - Human-rights advocate
 - Catalyst in the collapse of Communism
 - Seen by more people than any other person in the world
 - First non-Italian Pope in more than 400 years
 - Controversial
 - Poet, actor, playwright
 - Scholar, teacher
 - Nonviolent leader
 - Respectful of all cultures
2. Ask students to review the major events in Poland during the 20th century that influenced Karol Joseph Wojtyla. (Either list these events or create a timeline.) Discuss how each event shaped the Pope's life and how he responded to it. Some examples:
 - Poland gains independence after World War I (1918).
 - Period of dictatorship begins when Josef Pilsudski assumes power in a coup (1926).
 - Hitler invades Poland (1939).
 - Soviets invade and occupy eastern Poland (1939).
 - Germans occupy Poland (1941).
 - Holocaust and treatment of Jews in Poland
 - Nazis destroy Warsaw (1945).
 - Stalin's Communist regime (1947-1956)
 - Polish Solidarity movement (1980s)

The following Web sites may help students review the history of Poland:

- <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/pltoc.html>
- <http://www.polandonline.com/history.html>
- http://www.worldrover.com/history/poland_history.html
- <http://www.pbs.org/weta/forcemorepowerful/poland/>

3. Tell students that they will work in pairs to study describe the significance of an event in the papacy of John Paul II. The class will create a timeline of significant events. Students will want to explore Web sites about the John Paul II (see below) before they select an event. Events may include the following:

1979: The Pope visits the site of a Nazi death camp at Auschwitz.
1979: He returns to Poland and holds Mass in Warsaw's Victory Square.
1986: He visits the synagogue in Rome, Italy.
1989: He receives Mikhail Gorbachev, then President of the Soviet Union.
1998: He visits Cuba to meet with Fidel Castro.
2000: He visits Israel.

4. Have students use both print and online resources in their research. The following Web sites may be helpful:

John Paul II: The Millennial Pope (PBS)
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pope/>

Pope John Paul II (CNN)
<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/pope/>

John Paul II Biography (The Vatican)
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/biography/index.htm

The Holy Father
<http://popejohnpaul.com/Biography.htm>

Pope John Paul II (Time)
<http://www.time.com/time/time100/leaders/profile/popejohn.html>

The Papal Visit to Cuba
<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1998/cuba.pope/>

5. Once pairs have selected an event, ask them to summarize it on one page. Have students write the month and year of the event at the top of the paper. Their summary should answer the following questions:
 - What took place?
 - When did it take place?
 - Where did it take place?
 - Why is the event significant?
 - How does it reflect the values or beliefs of Pope John Paul II?
 - Who did this event influence most?
6. Have students present their findings, and then post their papers on a bulletin board according to date. This will create the a class timeline.

7. Finally, hold a class discussion about the most influential contributions the Pope has made. What do the students think is his greatest legacy?

Evaluation:

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

3 points: Students are highly engaged in class discussions and create a comprehensive and thoughtful presentation about an event in the papacy of John Paul II.

2 points: Students participate in class discussions and create a somewhat comprehensive presentation about an event in the papacy of John Paul II.

1 point: Students participate minimally in class discussions and create a simplistic presentation about an event in the papacy of John Paul II.

Vocabulary:

Pope

Definition: The highest leader of the Roman Catholic Church

Context: When Karol Joseph Wojtyla was elected as Pope in 1978, he became known as Pope John Paul II.

Communism

Definition: A social system in which property and goods are owned in common; under this system, people are deprived of certain political and economic freedoms; a doctrine based on revolutionary Marxian socialism and Marxism-Leninism that was the official ideology of the Soviet Union.

Context: During much of the 20th century, Eastern European countries were under the rule of Soviet Communism.

Solidarity

Definition: The labor movement against Communism that took place in Poland in the 1980s

Context: Solidarity eventually brought democracy to Poland.

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

IV: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

V. Civic Ideals and Practices

IX: Global Connections

Credit

Joy Brewster, freelance education writer, editor, and consultant