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Uncovering Marginalized Topics Using WebQuests: From Atlanta to the Zoot Suit Riots

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Introduction

A critical part of social studies instruction is involving students in making sense of social issues in the past and present to help inform their decisions in the future. Through engaged inquiry students can tackle relevant topics associated with race, class, culture, gender, language, and nationality and explore how these challenging issues mitigate people's experiences. Moreover, these issues reflect similar tensions that students encounter in their everyday lives. Although these social issues have historical and contemporary relevance, they often are marginalized in state standards and textbooks.

For example, racial frictions have plagued the United States and, throughout the history of the country, this animosity has periodically intensified into riots such as the Chicago Race Riot of 1919. Highlighting the influence of the Red Summer and subsequent race riots, as cited by Montgomery College:

From the New York City riots of 1862 to the Los Angeles riots of 1991, this country has experienced repeated episodes of civil unrest between blacks and whites. The year 1919 was particularly noted for the large number of riots in the urban areas of the North where returning white veterans of WWI competed with Southern Blacks for jobs during the post-war depression. Again, in 1923, a racial confrontation erupted in Rosewood, Florida. There eight blacks and two whites died during the destruction of the Black community of Rosewood. However, the Tulsa Riots of 1921 were perhaps the costliest incident of racial violence in American history.¹

Despite the social and economic toll of this event, the Tulsa Riots have received limited attention in or been completely excluded from secondary social studies curriculum.

¹ <http://www.mc.cc.md.us/Departments/hpolserv/VdeLaOliva.html>



Educators often spend countless hours searching for resources to add depth and substance to marginalized topics and require additional time to identify and refine engaging teaching and learning strategies that introduce this content to students. Even though many textbooks ignore these topics of focus or assign limited space to these complex areas of inquiry, with the use of technology, there are dynamic instructional approaches that may enhance authentic and relevant learning. Educators can actively engage students to explore the connections between social studies and everyday people's lives by infusing marginalized topics into the secondary social studies classroom.

History of WebQuests

Since the emergence of WebQuests in 1995, their use in the secondary social studies classroom has greatly increased. Bernie Dodge (1997), a professor of educational technology at San Diego State University, coined the term "WebQuest" and carefully developed the concept in reference to "an inquiry-oriented activity in which some or all of the information that learners interact with comes from resources on the Internet, optionally supplemented with videoconferencing" (p. 1). With assistance from Tom March, a team-teacher with Dodge at the time, WebQuests were developed for most levels of curriculum and academic subjects. These two educators engineered a curriculum model intended to harness the power of the Internet and promote inquiry-based, critical thinking activities (Lee & Friedman, 2009). During the early stages of development, the team focused on designing and implementing a learner-centered pedagogy. Crocco (2005) cites the rationale in the design is "to use learners' time well, to focus on using information rather than looking for it, and to support learners' thinking at the levels of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation" (p.144).

Since 1995, such inquiry-based web projects have become extremely popular in both elementary and secondary classrooms. There are thousands of WebQuests available online today, and many teachers even maintain their own websites that include links to a gallery of WebQuests. One may begin exploration for WebQuests at San Diego State University's WebQuest Site (SDSU WebQuest Site, 2011) where access is provided to an extensive list of online adventures of inquiry.

Implementation of WebQuests

There are two main types of WebQuests to be implemented in the classroom: short-term and long-term. Short-term WebQuests usually take one to three class periods and focus on a few objectives, while long-term WebQuests can take more than one week for completion and are intended to meet a broader range of outcomes. Similar to other learning models used in education, there are guiding principles for implementation of the web-inquiry model. First-time users should familiarize themselves with these general ideas to maximize success and student results. In an article entitled "Five Rules for Writing a Great WebQuest," Dodge (2001) lays out the acronym (F.O.C.U.S.) for users to remember the WebQuest recommended model: (1) Find



great sites; (2) Orchestrate learners and resources; (3) Challenge your learners to think; (4) Use the medium; and (5) Scaffold high expectations. In this article, Dodge also provides templates that describe the anatomy of authentic WebQuests embedded online.

Using WebQuests to Uncover Marginalized Topics

As teachers begin to contemplate introducing WebQuests into instruction, they may consider the following questions: *Do I want to limit my instruction to textbook-based content for every lesson plan? Are there content-related marginalized, intellectual, and stimulating topics that extend beyond those referenced within the adopted curriculum? How can I venture beyond what has already been presented to students in the past?* Instructional boundaries that confine learning to textbook-based content can be extended or even torn down by incorporating marginalized topics.

Marginalized topics include events and people that lie just beneath the surface, or are pushed to the margins, of the basic curriculum. If introduced appropriately, such topics can provide exposure to issues students never knew existed, incite stimulating conversations, and prompt eye-opening research. To be more specific, a secondary American History curriculum may present topics of the Colonial Era and require students to identify and compare relationships amongst the 13 colonies. Although many examples can be found to facilitate learning around this topic, a quality WebQuest prompts inquiry based on the appropriate grade and learning levels of the students engaged in this practice and, as highlighted by Dodge (2001), should “challenge your learners to think” (p.8). WebQuests on the topic of the Colonial Era can be found within the two subsequent websites. Although identifying the colonies and geographic characteristics² are important components of learning about this time period, as is contrasting the ways of life for people living in different regions of the colonies³ a quality WebQuest extends beyond recall and encourages students to analyze and synthesize information (Dodge, 2001). While identification can prove to be insightful to student learning, especially when building the foundation, spiraling-up to higher levels of thinking is critical. If marginalized topics were incorporated, such as an exploration of the impact of women on the development of the colonies, a comparison of religious persecution in New England to post-9/11 America, or an evaluation of the parallels between the Salem Witch Trials and the eminent domain policies of today, learning would be even further

2

<http://www.columbia.k12.mo.us/mce/jhenry/13colonies/The%2013%20Colonies%20WebQuest.htm>

3

<http://www.urbana.k12.oh.us/ujhs/ClassroomResources/LIFE%20IN%20THE%20COLONIES%20WEBQUEST/LIFE%20IN%20THE%20COLONIES%20WEBQUEST.html#INTRODUCTION>),



enhanced. Popular textbooks will most likely limit references to marginalized topics in a “Capturing a Moment in History” margin. However, in an effort to maximize exposure to an inclusive perspective, teachers may enhance their teaching and learning strategies to include facilitation of WebQuests with marginalized topics to take students on a powerful inquiry adventure they will never forget.

Using a WebQuest to Explore Race Riots

In a typical American History textbook the turbulent era of the 1960’s and race riots are briefly mentioned in one paragraph of the reading or while previewing a chapter in the textbook, students may encounter a “Capturing a Moment in History” section featuring Dr. Martin Luther King as the key figure. One, maybe two, overarching questions are included to assess the students’ comprehension of the reading. When planning for instruction, in order to enrich the learning experiences of high school students, a WebQuest can be used to heighten content-based knowledge and enhance critical thinking skills. A traditional WebQuest concerning the Civil Rights Era may prompt students to research biographical information about figures such as John F. Kennedy, Dr Martin Luther King, or Malcolm X. Although these key figures are critical to American History, to extend beyond what is commonly-covered and embrace the marginalized, sometimes overlooked content, learning could be further facilitated to include race riots of the era. Presented in this article is a WebQuest about race riots in America outside of the 1960’s.
[enter WebQuest about here]

Online version available at: <http://questgarden.com/137/37/5/111221154108/>

Overview of WebQuest

The tasks and processes of this WebQuest are catered to students at the secondary level within a social studies classroom. A series of adventures within this WebQuest encompass many tasks to be completed through processes by students in small group formations with assigned roles. Content-based tasks provide students the opportunity to become familiar with Jim Crow laws, segregation, and racism, as well as the phenomena of race riots by providing exposure to the Atlanta, Belle Isle, Chicago, Tulsa, and Zoot Suit Riots. Skill-based tasks concentrate on reading a timeline, engaging with an interactive map, analysis of an audio broadcast, and interpreting primary resources. A rubric aligned with the presentation project following the WebQuest is provided for assessment purposes and is comprised of five components: (1) Evidence Gathered; (2) Workload; (3) Content; (4) Organization; and (5) Presentation. Students should be informed of the rubric before embarking on the WebQuest, so they are clearly aware of the criteria that will be used to assess their work. Students could be provided the opportunity for self-assessment upon conclusion of the presentation, while the teacher utilizes the rubric for assessment purposes, as well.



In regards to preparation and planning, after gathering resources, the actual time spent building this WebQuest was approximately three hours, which transpired into three, 50-minute class periods for student completion.

Benefits

This inquiry-oriented activity allows high school students to discover the impact of race riots in multiple regions of the United States and various eras throughout history. Students are also provided the opportunity to analyze the causes of riots, explore racism and discrimination, and heighten exposure to various cultures and ethnicities. Additionally, components of political science, geography, sociology, and history are infused throughout this activity thereby encouraging an interdisciplinary approach. Regardless of the content of focus, an inquiry approach in any given learning situation should offer learners an opportunity to contemplate real-world problems, overcoming authentic obstacles in such problem solving (Dodge, Molebash, Bell, & Mason, 2002). Finally, in an age of heightened accountability, this activity will encourage students to apply and analyze gathered information, as well as utilize critical thinking skills to evaluate content-based information.

Conclusion

As highlighted by Abbitt and Ophus (2008), March (2005) further describes the need for learning to be “real, rich, and relevant” (p.19) in order to engage today’s media-savvy learners. March offers WebQuests as one possibility for an authentic learning activity when implemented appropriately. Subsequently, rather than limiting content to what is provided in the textbook, in an effort to create an environment that is more conducive to learning, WebQuests can be used to explore learning opportunities. When WebQuests are used to facilitate learning of marginalized topics, students will be provided with a more comprehensive understanding and, as a result, will view those “Capturing a Moment in History” excerpts in a more inclusive way that does not continue to push such content to the margins.



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WebQuest

Race Riots Revisited: From Atlanta to the Zoot Suit Riots

As a team of world renowned professors from a prestigious university, you have been hired to complete a legal research study. The Department of Justice needs details on race riots throughout the United States so they may present a strong case against various groups inciting violence against minorities. These alleged violations of civil rights are unconstitutional for many reasons.

It is up to you and your team to *gather enough evidence* and *report data* in various ways to make this judicial process a success.

YOU MUST: *create a rough draft* with your notes during your travels throughout the country, *keep track of your sources and evidence* to report later, *delegate responsibility equally* and *execute tasks* based on your individual talents as professors, gather as many accurate details as possible when recording evidence, *organize evidence* gathered in a way that is *persuasive and informative* to legal officials, and ultimately *present* this evidence in a *creative manner* that captures the attention of your classmates, also known as the Department of Justice!

If you accomplish these tasks, new legislation will emerge and constitutional rights will be restored forever.

In a few moments, you will be placed into groups to accomplish the task of gathering evidence needed for your presentation in front of the Department of Justice in a few weeks. Each group may utilize a **graphic organizer** (*attached*) in order to gather evidence before and during this journey throughout place and time.

Assign roles within your team:

Visuals (Professor of Photography and Art)...gather or sketch pictures, photographs, and geographical information on areas of research

TIP: utilize printscreen button or other technology to capture visuals

Writers (Professor of English)...gather written or spoken content as well as primary documents from the scene

TIP: utilize Word document to record data after jotting down notes on paper



Sound (Professor of Journalism)...gather interviews and record significant details for the investigation

TIP: save sound clips from sites and upload within a Powerpoint or Word document

Legislation (Professor of Law)...gather significant information on state and federal laws relating to the investigation

TIP: reference an abbreviated constitution or visit <http://www.oyez.org> for case briefs

Management (Professor of Group Theory and Leadership)...organize the investigative roles of your colleagues, making certain the tasks are accomplished correctly, ensure quality in evidence gathered, and keep track of time before returning to Washington, D.C.

TIP: keep a timer nearby to monitor efficient use of time, delegate responsibility to the appropriate professors when necessary, and grant approval before completing the next task

BRIEFING: Washington, D.C. Headquarters

Before your team embarks on your mission, you must attend a meeting to in preparation for the events and ideas present in various parts of the nation. By the end of this briefing, you should **practice recording data** based on the roles assigned previously.

Go to the website:

<http://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/famoushistoricalfigures/martinlutherkingjr/>

Click on the prompt to play a short clip.

FIRST MISSION: Jim Crow South

Throughout your travels below the Mason-Dixon Line, your team has heard many stories and terms that may or may not be factual. You will need to find solid definitions to those terms, allowing you to describe future occurrences.

Adventure 1 – Go to the website: <http://www.dictionary.com>

Task (1): Define and record the meaning of the following terms: race riot, Jim Crow, segregation, and racism. Your team will define the phenomenon you are about to witness in order to gather evidence and report your findings. **Do not** begin the next journey until you have discussed the true meanings of the terms above, while viewing possible examples within the provided links. **Do not** forget to gather data; travelling back and forth can be time-consuming!

Adventure 2 – Go to the website: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/>



Gather and record data using the “5” W’s: *who, what, when, where, and why?* Your data may take various forms based on your team’s area of expertise.

Task (2): After clicking on “A Century of Segregation”, allow the appropriate professors to analyze the timeline and gather data to gain a sense of violent occurrences over time. You may click any of the tabs within this link to view videos, record important legislation, browse maps, etc. Be sure to browse the “1901-20” tab and gather data on the [Atlanta Race Riot](#) and [The Brownsville Affair](#). Professors will need to fulfill their roles depending on the available data.

Task (3): After clicking on “A National Struggle”, allow the appropriate professors to analyze the records of what “Jim Crow” means and gather any data important to your investigation. A local protestor provided your team with folders labeled “The President”, “The Congress”, and “The Supreme Court”. Think about what the Justice Department could use to confirm unconstitutionality of local or state laws in the area where you are travelling. Your team may browse any sub-links within this tab, as you are amongst a large amount of data to be gathered.

Adventure 3-Go to the website: <http://www.npr.org>

Task (4): Type “Atlanta Race Riot” into the NPR Search Engine. Browse the available stories and choose one with the “Listen Live” feature. Listen to the NPR Broadcast and list five or six interesting details to the stories from the recordings and notes from the articles. Remember to save the link or record content you will deliver to the Attorney General as evidence in your case.

Adventure 4-Go to the Library of Congress website: <http://myloc.gov>

Task (5): Preview the primary documents from the Brownsville Affair in Texas. The appropriate professors should fulfill their duties and gather documentation to take back to Washington, D.C. for the Department of Justice. Remember your tips or create new ways of recording data found in this resource.

There are many other race riots that have taken place throughout the United States such as the Belle Isle Riots, Tulsa Riots, and the Chicago Riots. Your team is slowly running out of time! Citizens are losing their lives and property damage is accumulating due to the disregard for the constitutional laws of the nation.

In order to save valuable research time as you travel to Southern California...

Adventure 5 – Return to the website: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow>

Task (6): Click on “Interactive Maps” and then follow the link titled “Go to Maps”. You will have the opportunity to view interactive maps as you travel to your next destination. Time is a factor, so work efficiently!

SECOND MISSION: California Chaos

Adventure 6 – Return to the PBS website: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/zoot/index.html>



Task (7): Click on at least three of the links provided on this website to gather evidence on the “5 W’s” (*who, what, when, where, and why*) of this tragic event. Implement your own data gathering techniques as well, based on what you accomplished in your travels through the “deep South”. Remember, your evidence must be relevant and useful to the Department of Justice in order to propose future legislation that protects the civil rights of citizens throughout the U.S.

Task (8): Your colleague is a Professor of Sociology and Latin Studies, but was not involved in this contractual opportunity. She would benefit greatly from the cultural content you have the opportunity to gather. Click on “Special Features” and utilize each professor’s expertise to gather information on the culture of the population inhabiting the various areas of Los Angeles, paying special attention to terms, clothing, interviews, social events, etc.

Upon completion of this mission, team members should review data collected from their travels. Various examples of presentation mediums may include, but are not limited to **Powerpoint, Online Slideshow, Posterboard, or Handouts**. Be sure to align the quality of your presentation with the rubric for assessment.



Rubric for Collection and Presentation of Evidence

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Evidence Gathered	Source information collected for all graphics, facts, sound clips, and quotes. All documented from WebQuest Sources.	Source information collected for all graphics, facts, sound clips, and quotes. Most documented in desired format.	Source information collected for graphics, facts, sound clips, and quotes, but not documented in desired format.	Very little or no source information was collected.
Workload	The workload is divided and shared equally by all team members from the beginning to the end of this activity.	The workload is divided and shared fairly by all team members, though workloads may vary from person to person from the beginning to the end of this activity.	The workload was divided, but one person in the group is viewed as not doing her/his fair share of the work.	The workload was not divided OR several people in the group are viewed as not doing their fair share of the work.
Content	Covers race riots and other injustices in-depth with details and examples. Subject knowledge is excellent.	Includes essential knowledge about race riots and other injustices. Subject knowledge appears to be good.	Includes essential information about race riots and other injustices but there are 1-2 factual errors.	Content is minimal OR there are several factual errors.
Organization	Content is well organized using headings or bulleted lists to group related material. If presented with technology, material is well-organized throughout presentation.	Content is logically organized for the most part. There may be 1 organization error present, but not a serious flaw in the presentation.	Uses headings or bulleted lists to organize, but the overall organization of topics appears flawed enough to confuse the audience.	There was no clear or logical organizational structure, just lots of facts.
Presentation	Well-rehearsed with smooth delivery and persuasive evidence that holds audience attention.	Rehearsed with fairly smooth delivery and persuasive evidence that holds audience attention most of the time.	Delivery not smooth or persuasive, but able to maintain interest of the audience most of the time.	Delivery not smooth or persuasive and audience attention often lost.



Graphic Organizer for Data Collection

Events	Key Clues and Evidence	Results
Interview Highlights	Useful Websites	Constitutional Rights Involved