



Lesson Plan: National Symbols

Activity Steps:

The following steps are presented in “days.” It is important to know that these days were not consecutive when I presented this project. Our third grade class has Social Studies for one hour twice a week. Therefore, this took about three weeks to complete with the class.

Hook: Project the “Walk/Don’t Walk” images from a crosswalk. Ask the students what they mean and how they know their meaning. Students pair share other symbols they know of. Share out these symbols. At some point a student may bring up the US Flag as a symbol. Use this example to bring up the subject of the lesson: US symbols.

Student intro activity after hook.

Days 1 & 2:

Before activity: Have four distinct areas in the room each with the image of a national symbol or landmark displayed on the wall or an easel. Along with the image is a brief summary of its history and significance. Have one copy displayed and several other copies provided for the students to refer to as they are visiting the station. Each area will be manned by a docent (either yourself, a paraprofessional or parent volunteer). Have Museum notebooks prepared to hand out to each student.

Announce to the students that for the next two lessons the class will be going on a simulated field trip to a museum of National symbols, monuments and landmarks. As they tour the museum, they will take notes in their Museum Notebook. Use the criteria sheet to display what the students are expected to write in their notebooks at each station. Teacher should model this by completing a page of the notebook on the overhead or elmo projector. Clarify any questions about these expectations before the activity begins. Strategically place the students in four heterogeneous groups and assign them to a station. Docents guide the students as they read about the landmark or symbol displayed. Discuss personal connections and experiences the students may have, then have them complete the notebook page displaying that symbol following the museum criteria chart



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Students rotate through the museum spending 15 minutes at each station and filling in their notebooks.

This activity is repeated on the second day of the unit with four new symbols or monuments displayed.

Day 3:

Pass out completed Museum Notebooks. Have students share their knowledge of these national symbols.

Explain that the students will write a friendly letter to a family member informing them about their simulated field trip and describing their favorite symbol or landmark. Teacher projects the criteria chart for the friendly letter and goes over the expectations with the students. Then model writing the assignment by choosing one of the symbols in the notebook and writing a friendly letter on the white board. Refer to the criteria list as you write and include each item in the letter.

Allow students to compose their own letters while you circulate, assisting them and clarifying any misunderstanding or questions they may have.

Day 4:

Teacher leads a discussion about the significance of the items viewed on the trip to the museum. Gear the discussion to include the reason for national symbols as a way of expressing the cherished ideals our nation is founded upon: Liberty, Justice, independence, etc. Specifically bring up the US Flag and review what the colors represent as well as the stars and stripes.

Students then brainstorm using a “Circle Map” to come up with the cherished ideals that should be displayed in the classroom. Narrow the list down to 7 or 8 words. My class came up with the following: Honor, Caring, Fairness, Individuality, Responsible, Respect, Helpful and Trustworthy.

At this point the students understand how a symbol can represent something abstract,



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such as a cherished ideal. Pass out the sheets of symbols and have them work in pairs deciding which of the cherished ideals the class came up with can be represented by the various symbols. It is important to let the students know that there are not any right or wrong answers here. As long as they can give a good reason why they pick a symbol for an ideal, that is fine. Share out how they labeled the symbols and why.

Assignment: the students will be given a project to do at home with their parents. The project is to design a class flag using symbols and colors to reflect the cherished ideals they came up with in class. Explain that they can use the symbols on the sheet they filled out or they can add any other symbols that they feel reflect one of the cherished ideals the class agreed upon.

I assigned this project on Monday with the final product due on Friday. When I passed out the description of the project, I also gave them their sheet of labeled symbols to use as a reference when working at home.

Day 5:

Presentation of Class Flags: Students present their Class Flag to the class explaining the design and what it represents.

Special Needs of students are considered in this lesson:

The class I used to develop this project has 23 students - eight of them have IEPs. Their disabilities range from ADHD, Autism, Specific Learning Disabilities and Language and Speech Disorders. The activities and assignments have been developed to benefit all learning styles. Hands on learning with visuals, opportunity for movement, strategic grouping and ownership of learning are all included in the learning activities.

Extension Ideas:

As the unit continues students will explore why laws are formed, how they are passed and the role of the three branches of government in the process.