

PART I: BACKGROUND

Title: Write a descriptive title for your lesson study so that others may cite your work. (E.g., "Reading for Complexity: Recognizing and Valuing Ambiguity in Literature")

Lesson Study: The Gilded Age

Authors: Include the names and institutional affiliations of each person on your lesson study team.
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Discipline or Field: If your lesson may be used in more than one discipline or field, list all that apply.
History, Political Science, Economics

Date: Include the date you posted (or last updated) your final lesson study with KEEP Toolkit.
June 2, 2008

Course Name: Give the course title rather than its catalog number (e.g. "Freshman Composition" rather than "English 110").
Modern U.S. History

Course Description: Briefly describe the course, its place in the curriculum, and where the lesson fits in the course. Include pertinent facts such as course level, class size, student population, length of lesson, and learning environment (e.g. networked classroom, lecture hall, special equipment, etc.).
"Modern U.S. History" is a first year, introductory survey, General Education course that also fulfills the Global Perspectives requirement and Ethnic Studies requirement. While the course itself is not compulsory, since it does fulfill three requirements it is in high demand, especially for first year students. This lesson on the Gilded Age begins about the third week of the course – after the introductory review of the Civil War and Reconstruction and some initial work with primary documents and the online course features (e.g., D2L, drop box, discussion board). This class typically enrolls 45 students with a few overloads. All students have laptops and we work in classrooms with projectors, computers, etc. There are no TA's or graders allowed. Due to high enrollment, laptops, and the inexperience of first year students, there is much frustration during the initial weeks as students get adjusted to college-level expectations in the midst of all the distractions their laptops offer! When we begin this lesson study, students are at the point of realizing that they needed to keep up with the weekly reading, take notes, and come to class prepared if they wanted to do well.

Executive Summary: In approximately 250-450 words, provide an overview of your learning goals, instructional design, and major findings about student learning.
Our learning goals revolve around students' struggle to learn about strikes and government regulations because of their preconceived notions about unions and big government. We want students to understand why Americans supported an expansion of government regulations at the turn of the 20th century, especially why the middle-class initiated and drove these reforms in pursuit of "modernity." Therefore, we begin with the problems of the Gilded Age. Here students learn about the extreme wealth disparities, high mortality and injury rates in the workplace, poor public health, violent reaction to strikes, high unemployment rates, and corrupt urban machine politics. We constructed our study around an interactive lecture with a primary document discussion group activity that was graded for historical interpretation (i.e., an explanation of why these events happened at this particular time and are still relevant for us today). We found that students' preconceived notions of immigrants are their biggest stumbling block, but when we have them focus on their reactions to low wages, lack of workers' compensation, etc., they are able to anticipate Progressive Era reforms. Students enjoyed and seemed more engaged when asked to respond personally; they were most frustrated when asked to apply the reading terms from the textbook and to stick to the historical context. Individual reflection followed by group work seems to minimize these frustrations. However, finding the time in or out of class to cover the topic, reflect, then discuss (and grade homework) was still problematic.

PART II: THE LESSON

How to Teach the Lesson

Describe the steps of the lesson, providing enough detail for other teachers to use it in their classes. Include any necessary pre or post lesson work. For each step in the lesson describe instructional and learning activities, including the approximate time needed.

- Describe what teachers should do. Provide specific wording of prompts, explanations of handouts, etc.
 - Interactive lecture on the Gilded Age followed by primary document discussion. Prompt at least 2-3 times: What do you see (for the images)? What would you have done (for the pay cuts, working conditions)?
 - Discussions: First, handout primary document of various quotes before the lecture. Students follow along as the professor explains the context for each quote. Ideally, the students would have also seen some of the quotes in their assigned reading for the week. After the lecture, they meet in groups to fill out a primary document worksheet for one of the images in the textbook. They use the worksheet to interpret the image according to its symbols and by using the reading terms and the lecture material. (The image compared the past African-American slave system to the current wage system in the North. The image depicts previous slaves as carefree but current wage workers as impoverished and destitute. It portrays a split middle-class: some are protesting this new “slavery” while others are uncomfortable with the public protest.) Stress the need to use the reading terms so that their interpretations move beyond generalities (e.g., “Work was hard in the past but it is better now so I am grateful to how hard people had to work to make things better”) to historically specific understandings (e.g., “Owners imported workers to keep wages low but immigrants came over with the desire to leave autocracy and embrace democracy. The resulting strikes pitched idealistic workers against cut-throat employees with both sides believing that they were the saviors of democracy”).
 - See enclosed power point lecture and discussion handouts.
- Describe what students should do, and how they are likely to respond. Offer tips for responding to student questions, confusions, etc.
 - Student respond to questions during lecture. When there is silence, just wait. The images and stories are provocative enough that students always respond sooner or later. Give time, if possible, for students to write before verbally responding.
 - Students should take notes, then use them along with their reading notes during discussion and for the worksheet.
 - No textbooks during discussions! Otherwise, students use discussion time to do their weekly assigned reading. Stress the week before that they can use any notes that they have take but that they cannot open their laptops or textbooks. They must be prepared.

Student Learning Goals

List your student learning goals. Include both the immediate academic learning goals and the long term qualities the lesson supports (e.g., abilities, skills, dispositions, sensibilities, values you want students to develop in your program). Write the goals in terms of the knowledge and qualities students should exhibit as a result of the lesson.

Immediate academic learning goals:

- Students will recognize and show empathy for powerless workers in a depressed economy where entire families work long days but cannot make ends meet.
- Students will appreciate how immigrant groups become the scapegoat for economic downturns and layoffs.
- Students will be able to articulate the reasons why middle-class Americans supported an expansion of government regulations at the turn of the 20th century, especially in terms of “modernity.”
- Students will be able to connect the problems of the Gilded Age (intense wealth disparities, high mortality and injury rates in the workplace, poor public health, violent strikes, high unemployment, urban machine politics, low secondary school graduation rates) to their Progressive Era solutions.

Long-term qualities:

- Think creatively, analyze critically, synthesize clearly and act responsibly.
- Recognize and appreciate the collective heritage, ideas and values of a multicultural world and demonstrate sensitivity to socio-cultural diversity and the interdependence of groups in a global society.
- Understand the development and consequences of the behavior of individuals, groups and institutions in the context of major social, economic and political forces.
- Cultivate a historical and political consciousness.

Provide background on why you chose the lesson topic and your student learning goals.

We've seen a problem with students struggling to learn about strikes and government issued regulations because of their preconceived notions about unions and big government. In order to convey to students the reasons why the working class, middle class, and elite reformers supported workplace and business regulations means that we need to cover ethnic social history, Gilded Age economics, and urban machine politics. To cover all of these disciplines adequately is a teaching challenge. It can be done but often is too superficial and results in lack of student engagement and deep learning. By collaborating on an interactive lecture with both history and political science, and by choosing the best primary source, we hope to overcome this teaching obstacle. We chose these student learning goals because they are required for GE, global perspective, and ethnic studies courses – and because we think they are valuable for our students who are gaining degrees in retail, construction, and technology management.

How the Lesson is Intended to Work

Discuss how the lesson is supposed to work in practice:

- Explain how the instructional and learning activities and materials are designed to facilitate and support student thinking. If applicable, discuss how you tailored the lesson for the student population, learning environment, etc.
- Refer to any theoretical, empirical, or pedagogical work that influenced your lesson design.

The interactive lecture is designed to put students into the shoes of 19th century workers. By asking questions of the whole class, it shows that if they do the reading, they can come up with good, solid educated guesses to our questions. By allowing only the use of notes during group discussions, it conditions the students to take notes on the reading and to come to class prepared. Having the students work in groups encourages them to try out ideas on one another before completing the worksheet. It also gives them the experience of a diversity of interpretations of the same documents. The primary document – contrasting past African-American slavery with “wage slavery” – poses continuing stereotypes about African-Americans in the post-Civil War era and makes students reflect on which side they would chose.

Theoretically, I've been influenced by the following studies:

Brookfield, Stephen D. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. S.F., CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995.

Davis, Barbara Gross. *Tools for Teaching*. S.F., CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1993.

Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. S.F., CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998.

Pescosolido, Bernice A. and Ronald Aminzade (eds.). *The Social Worlds of Higher Education: Handbook for Teaching in a New Century*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1999.

PART III: THE STUDY

Approach

Describe the types of evidence you collected before, during, and after the lesson, e.g., observations, written work, student interviews.

Before the lesson, I simply relied on my past teaching observations, the comments I collect from students after each exam, and student evaluations. These all indicated that the Gilded Age / Progressive Era were confusing to students in terms of economics, politics, and immigrant history. During the lesson, we observed students' engagement in terms of body language and response to questions. After the lesson, we collected their primary document worksheets with their interpretations and reading terms.

Describe the procedure for observing the lesson, indicate who observed, what they observed, how they recorded observations, etc.

In each of the two lectures, a historian and a political scientist observed the students and the professor. See the Observation Form: they were to critique the content of the lecture, the student engagement with it, and how well the history of Gilded Age economics and political science were grasped by the students.

Findings

Summarize the evidence. Present major patterns and tendencies, key observations, or representative examples of student learning and thinking.

We found that students' preconceived notions of immigrants were their biggest stumbling block, but when we had them focus on their reactions to low wages, lack of workers' compensation, etc., they were able to anticipate Progressive Era reforms. In both lectures, students were moved by images – perhaps more so in the second lecture when we went into much more depth about the living and working conditions of the poorest and the wealthiest.

Students enjoyed and seemed more engaged when asked to respond personally: they shouted out answers to Dr. Zeidel's image of the Gatling gun and the destroyed railroad yard. Students were most frustrated when asked to apply the reading terms from the textbook and to stick to the historical context: they didn't know how to begin their "imagined" debate despite being handed primary documents from real people with their actual words. They just wanted me to tell them what they should learn from it. I ended up leaving the room because they wanted so much babysitting: I was reading the instructions to one group when another group wanted me to do the same for them. In the second iteration, I asked them ahead of time to consider what issues different groups might want to confront. Giving them a "heads up" for individual reflection followed, then the group work seemed to minimize their frustrations.

However, finding the time in or out of class to cover the topic, reflect, then discuss (and grade homework) was still problematic. In each lecture, the professor ran out of time for the group discussion. We didn't seem to tackle the coverage issue for an 85 minute class. We did have some time for students to respond to the probing lecture questions, but there was no time for group discussions. Instead, student completed the worksheets individually. During the next class session, when they handed the worksheets in, I prompt them for what they found interesting and useful from completing the worksheet. I took those responses and led them into a discussion of the Progressive Era and ended that lecture with prompts about what's different today and what's still the same.

Comparing the primary document worksheets from the first lesson study to the second shows an increased level of critical reflection, empathy, and historical analysis. The first set of worksheet were much shorter, made little use of the reading terms and resulted in interpretations of just a sentence or two with little to no evidence:

This proves that there was a deep divide between management and unions and that that divide sometimes sparked violence.

Or,

Basically, the owners didn't care what the workers did. They knew that the workers would have to come back and work for them eventually. This would just widen the gap between the rich and poor, but the rich people really didn't care at the time.

Sometimes, they were just superficial or nonsensical in their use of evidence: the document proved it was a "time of uncertainty," "a time of chaos," things were changing, or

This document helps prove that the times were turbulent and chaotic. At any minute strikes could turn into violent skirmishes, "No disagreement between any persons will justify the use of firearms," was a statement that was in the Jury empanelment. The fact that this is stated in a formal document issued by the government

indicates that attitude of the time and the fact that this offense maybe had been lessened in the eyes of the public.

But credit where credit is due, there was one response that clearly took in not only the reading, the lecture, and the document, but also previous lessons:

The time period is a time of confusion. The privileged whites are again unwilling to give up their position, however they do not even have race as an excuse this time. The US government was willing to forget about giving the African American equal rights if they were capable of gaining the Presidency, and now after that they are willing to sacrifice their own “Anglo-Saxon” family for money. An example of this would be the jury empanelment when they discuss that the jury should make a decision that will make the US government happy, although the government is willing to let companies put Gatling guns to “protect” their capital. The time period is a confused time period, the working class is being treated horribly – although without the working class the profit would not be available. The monopolized companies are willing to kill their employees, and the government stands by and lets this continue because they get the cut of the profits. The middle class really isn’t sure what to think because the owners of these monopolies are willing to give money to their communities to form schools, libraries, parks, and medical advancements. They also start to blame the immigrants which probably leads to more local violence, because the media associates all these ideas to the immigrants in one way or another.

In contrast, analysis, evidence, and synthesis were common in the second set of worksheets. For example, This image shows the discontent among the workers of the time. They had poor pay and working conditions, and if they tried strike they were replaced by new workers and their families starved. The fact that they had a banner at the parade comparing them to slaves proves they had horrible working experiences. The time period was characterized by these workers working for large monopolies where the captains of industry lived in luxury while oppressing their workers, as expressed in one of the signs carried in the parade. This oppression was masked by the fact that the economy experienced rapid growth and industrialization, but this cannot hide the fact that it occurred.

Or,

The image proves that economic problems were facing the country. The strikers walking the line prove that all is not good in the labor world. Their signs indicate they have poor working conditions and the backdrops indicate that they are being treated as the slaves were before the civil war. The image showing workers on strike shows bad economic times as if people are not working, products and services are not being made or accomplished which results in a bad economic situation for the US. With the image of the donkey facing the strikers indicates political opposition to the strikers which divides up or draws political lines in the sand and it’s putting workers against management or political parties against each other. A divided country?

Even when the writing skills were poor, students managed to pull in the evidence, reading, and lecture:

The gilded age was a tough time for everyone because it was almost a time of corruption and cheating. Get what you can and take whatever you could find seemed to be the overall image of what was going to happen. The men in the image holding the signs are clearly part of the labor movement and how the things they believed would change how people viewed slavery. The Great Depression had started in 1873 which had led up to what was happening with people not being able to find jobs. Along with the gilded age and the corruption of politics people were just not able to find freedom and safety for where they stayed and lived. The way that they lived in the cities was completely unsanitary and unsafe to the highest degrees. There would be quite some time before the country would be back to a normal standard of life and a place without war.

Discussion

Discuss what your study suggests about:

- how the lesson affected or changed student thinking, especially with respect to the lesson's goals
- what the lesson reveals about student thinking such as their misconceptions, difficulties, confusion, insights, surprising ideas, etc.
- how the lesson was designed and/or studied
- the practice of teaching and learning in your field

The lesson study took a group of students who had expressed barely disguised disdain for immigrants and got them to show empathy for what all workers had to go through during the Gilded Age, immigrants or citizens. They were able to articulate why the government had to step in with sanitary laws, workplace safety laws, child labor laws, and the like. They were much more creative and expressive in their writing when they had images to dissect and attach to the words in the textbook and lecture. They still did not demonstrate much sensitivity to the cultural sacrifices immigrants were forced to make in order to assimilate, but we tackle that in the 1920s and 1930s. Their interpretations were, however, able to confront their misconceptions about immigrants causing poverty and increases in crime at the turn of the century. Certainly, they articulated and understood the “development and consequences of the behavior of individuals, groups, and institutions in the context of major social, economic, and

political forces.” I think that even the first group were at the stage of inchoate expression of the consequences of the Gatling gun and the condescending attitude of the elites.

In terms of design and study, are there ever enough hours in day? I’m not sure that it was the best idea to act as principle investigator for four untenured faculty. Meetings were rare and sometimes without depth due to our collective fatigue at the end of very long days. It was with intense fortitude that we all managed to come together to complete the lesson study. Plus, it was very frustrating dealing with the project’s timeline: units cannot be taught sooner or later in a history course to suit a study timeline. We were always behind the curve because our lesson came at the beginning of the semester and the training didn’t start in time for us complete our first iteration that semester. It was a major headache with Accounting to get dispensation to continue our study without losing the funds even though it was a 2 year project. Again, we could have benefited from a more experienced faculty member who could have anticipated the problems and been proactive.

Recommend any further revisions to the lesson and discuss any remaining questions or concerns.
As above.

References

List any theoretical, empirical or pedagogical sources that you consulted or cited in your lesson study. Use a documentation style appropriate to your discipline or field (e.g. APA for Psychology, MLA for English, etc.).
As above.

APPENDIX

Include

- materials used to teach the lesson including student handouts, instructor’s notes, etc. Please annotate each item with a brief description.
- materials used to study the lesson including observation guidelines, written questions, prompts, checklists, etc. Please annotate each item with a brief description.
- evidence and data not included in the text of the report such as observers’ notes, examples of student work, results of data analysis, etc.

SEE ATTACHMENTS IN KEEP TOOLKIT