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Economic System Critique Using “China Rises”

Rationale:

-China is a dynamic society, especially in terms of economics. This dynamism provides students with the opportunity to see many different economic systems in action without providing the specific names, per say. What this Systems (Capitalist, Democratic Socialist, Traditional, Mercantilist, Command, etc.). By watching 2 episodes of a 4 part miniseries called “China Rises” entitled “Getting Rich” and “City of Dreams” students will follow the lives of individuals in present day China of differing economic backgrounds. China is often said to be a communist (and by association, command economy) country and by showing this video and having a discussion/writing activity following its showing critiquing whether or not this is a valid assessment of China’s economic system will greatly dispel common assumptions about the very nature of the USA’s relationship with Chinese workers and business. This lesson plan will require approximately 2.5 class periods to complete (approx. 120-140 minutes).

Goals and Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify different economic systems by analyzing characteristics exhibited by individuals, businesses, and the Chinese government in the film
- Students will understand that basic human wants, needs, and goals cross national boundaries and that Chinese goals (personal or governmental) are the same as those in the United States

Ohio Academic Content Standards for Social Studies:

- EC9.1
 - Describe costs and benefits of trade with regard to standard of living, productive capacity, usage of productive resources, and infrastructure
- EC9.2
 - Explain how changing methods of production and a country’s productive resources affect how it answers the fundamental economic questions of what to produce, how to produce, and for whom to produce
- EC9.3
 - Analyze characteristics of traditional, market, command, and mixed economies with regard to private property, freedom of enterprise, competition and consumer choice, and the role of government

-HI9.6

-Explain the global impact of imperialism including political and social reform in China

Essential Questions:

1- What economic system do you believe China is? Why? What do you think the end result of this economic system will be on the people of China? Will there be winners and losers? If so, who??

2- What are the costs that people bear for economic progress and success and who bears those costs

3- What is driving the economic changes in China and why?

4- What are the goals, hopes, and dreams of the Chinese compared to Americans (specifically, you and your family)?

Strategy:

-The first 2 days of the lesson will be set aside for viewing the different episodes of the film (if needed, the viewing can be cut down to a single episode, I suggest "Getting Rich" as the choice). Students will be given the essential questions before viewing the documentaries and told to reflect upon them as they view the films. After viewing the films the class will have a writing assignment where they will answer essential question #1. Following this, the class will then discuss the essential questions and will try to convince the other students in the class that their view of China's economic system is the "correct" view. This will allow us to check the understanding of the students in terms of economic system comprehension. Additionally, this will allow us to show our students that the "far away land" of China full of "exotic" people have in actuality the same wants, needs, and dreams as themselves.

Materials:

-Handout of essential questions

-Copy of "China Rises" documentary

-Spinks, Sarah, Dir. China Rises. Dir. Edward Gray." Canadian Broadcasting Corporation: 2006, Film.

Evaluation:

-Students will be evaluated formally by reading and Scoring/Grading their writing assignments following the exercise and will be evaluated informally by their responses during the discussion activity

Possible Follow-Up Learning:

-This period of time in China's history draws many similarities to the Industrial Revolution/Turn of the Century in America. It may make for interesting possibilities to link this lesson to that era in 10th grade US History.