

Context:

The Renaissance – *The Prince* by Machiavelli

World History I, 9th grade

Time – one block, approximately 100 minutes

Overview:

The students are studying the Renaissance at the time of this lesson. Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* as a guide for rulers on how to gain and maintain power. As opposed to ancient writers like Plato that the students have studied earlier in the year, Machiavelli did not discuss government in terms of high ideals. He stressed that the ends justify the means, and urged rulers to use whatever methods were necessary to achieve their goals. People still argue whether Machiavelli was realistic or just cynical. Machiavelli viewed himself as an enemy of corruption. The students will read Chapter XVII and/or XVIII from *The Prince* which are the sections on whether it is better to be feared or loved and how the ends justify the means.

Instructional Model:

This lesson will be taught using the Socratic Seminar method. The students will sit in a circle and discuss the chapter from *The Prince* led by the teacher with questions. The teacher should attempt to stay out of the discussion as much as possible. The students do not need to raise their hand to speak, but should remember the norms for a discussion such as speaking one at a time, not interrupting each other, not dominating the discussion, and telling each other which parts of the text they are referring to when speaking. This type of lesson provides students with a meaningful opportunity to engage with a text and dig deeper into that text through discussion with their peers.

Objectives:

- The students will be able to explain that *The Prince* is an early modern treatise on government and will be able to identify the following points about it (WHI.13b):
 - Supported absolute power of the ruler
 - The ends justify the means
 - One should do good if possible, but do evil if necessary
- The students will be able to interpret the text (a primary source) in order to learn more about the Renaissance in general and Machiavelli's ideas in specific. (WHI.1a)
- The students will work on developing their discussion skills by supporting their thoughts with evidence from the text and building off of their peers' thoughts.

Assessment:

- Entrance ticket to participate in the discussion
- Exit ticket
- Formative assessment during discussion:
 - Speaking one at a time, no interrupting
 - Not one or a few dominating discussion
 - Referring to specific places in the text
 - Building off of one another for a discussion
 - Supporting their ideas with evidence from the text

The students will be reading and completing their entrance ticket in class since this will be the first time they will be engaging in this type of lesson. Students will not receive a grade on this, but it should show me whether students understand the document before the discussion begins. I can then have a better idea of which question to begin with. I will read the exit tickets after class to see what students got out of the discussion, if they understand the text, and whether their thoughts on the text changed. These will be assessed as a piece of participation and will not receive a formal grade. However, I will make remarks to students and return the tickets for them to see my feedback. This is a chance for students who did not speak to participate and show what they know.

After the discussion is over, I will debrief the students and give them feedback on how I thought the discussion went, especially the skills outlined above. If there is any more individual feedback on discussion skills that needs to be given, I will include this in the remarks on the exit tickets.

Content and Instructional Strategies:

Seminar Text: *The Prince* by Machiavelli –Chapter XVII and Chapter XVIII

This is a good text to use for a seminar lesson because Machiavelli's *The Prince* is an important and well known work, and it is listed as an SOL objective. As we are always striving to have students go beyond merely knowing the name and important points of some subjects, having them actually read from and discuss *The Prince* will do just that. This text points out some ideas about power that would have been helpful to rulers at the time, but many of these ideas we would not want to see in our rulers today. Students should be able to note that change in values from the early 16th century to today. This will bring up the issue of whether Machiavelli was realistic or cynical. A big issue that this text raises is if the ends justify the means. Machiavelli thought so, but we do not usually accept this today. The translation of the text which I found is a modern translation, so the students can go deeper into the text without having as many issues just reading the text. It is in language which is much easier to understand than some previous translations.

Opening Question:

- What advice does Machiavelli give to rulers? (Remind them to use the text to answer.)

Core Questions: (not necessarily in this order, it depends on where the discussion goes)

- What does Machiavelli mean by the ends justify the means?
- Why does Machiavelli say that it is ok to do evil?
- Was Machiavelli being realistic or was he being cynical?
- Do you agree with Machiavelli?
- Does any of his advice still apply today to rulers? (depending on how far the discussion goes, this one will probably not be used because it will not focus on the text as much)

Entrance ticket questions: (some of these questions may also be used during the discussion)

- What was the purpose of this chapter? Why did Machiavelli write it?
- Who was the audience for this book?
- Does Machiavelli say that it is better to be feared or loved? What part of the text causes you to think that?
- Does Machiavelli think that the ends justify the means? How do you know?

Exit ticket questions:

- Does Machiavelli support absolute power of a ruler? How do you know this?
- What does Machiavelli mean that the ends justify the means?
- What does Machiavelli mean when he says that sometimes it is necessary to do evil?
- Is there anything that you wanted to say in the discussion but didn't get a chance to? Write it here.
- Is there anything that you are still unclear on or have questions about? If so, what?

Preparation for Seminar (text):

Students will use the first half of the class to prepare for the Seminar. Since this will be the first lesson of this type for these students, it will be beneficial for them to prepare with a teacher in the room to help scaffold the preparation. They will be able to work with a partner to prepare for the discussion. They will complete their entrance ticket during this first half of the lesson. This should help to ensure that all students will be prepared to participate in the seminar. Before the discussion begins, students will talk to their neighbor as a warm up to discuss some of the questions in the entrance ticket.

Room Arrangement:

For the first half of the lesson, the room will be arranged as usual, in pairs so that students can prepare for the seminar. For the second half of the lesson, the room will be arranged in a circle. This will not be an issue because the first class will have this lesson over two periods (each 55 minutes). The second class is split in the middle for lunch (50 minutes before and 50 minutes after), so I can rearrange the room during that time. There are between 20-25 students in each class. I would like to have this seminar be a whole discussion. Unprepared students will sit outside the circle and note participation and the main points.

Preparation for Seminar (discussion skills):

I will explain to students the norms of discussion for a seminar. They should not raise their hands to speak. They must speak one at a time. They should not interrupt each other, but they can and should reply to what their classmates are saying. Along with that, they should talk to each other, not to me. They should allow time for others to speak as well, if they feel they are speaking too much. They should tell the group which part of the text they are looking at, so we can all follow along. This particular action, I will model before the discussion begins by pointing out a specific quote, waiting for the group to find it, and then sharing a thought relating to that point. Since this is the first time that this group will be participating in a lesson of this type, I will give them the discussion phrases by writing them on the white board. The students will not be required to use the phrases, but seeing them should help them to understand how to talk to each other (instead of to the teacher) and how to build off of each other. All students should have the ticket completed since we are doing it in class, but if there is a student who misses the first half of the lesson, they will listen and take notes. At the end of the discussion, they will fill out the entrance ticket questions and the exit ticket.

Procedures for the Seminar:

The seminar procedures are those mentioned above for the students. I will have to make sure that I keep out of the discussion as much as possible. I will ask my questions and allow plenty of wait time for students to answer. Since this is the first time they will be participating in a Socratic Seminar, I may have to occasionally remind students of the norms and procedures. This may include reminding them to reference the text, tell us where they are in the text, not interrupt, talk to each other and not to me, etc. Mostly I will try to ask the questions and stay out of it. The follow up questions will be asked when it seems as though the previous question has been exhausted. I will especially keep an eye out for students who look like they want to say something and are finding it difficult to jump in. I may ask if anyone else has a thought before moving on. Basically, I will need to pay attention and keep it flexible because you never know where this type of discussion is going to go.

Post-Seminar and Debrief:

Students will talk to their neighbor after the discussion to share any last words or anything that they did not get to say in the discussion. Then they will fill out an exit ticket after the discussion. I will share with them how I thought the discussion went, and what aspects of the discussion skills that they need to work on and what went well. After that and/or at the beginning of the next class as a review, I will go over the points they need to know for the SOL objective, especially if they do not hit all the points during the discussion. After I read the exit tickets, it might be necessary to revisit this topic for review.

Resources:

Desk arrangement

Copies of the text for all students

White board and markers

Discussion phrases

Differentiation:

This lesson is heavily text based, but there are aspects that should allow all students to participate in some way. Students will read the text and work with a partner before the discussion. Talking to another person will help students to feel more secure in expressing their thoughts on the text since they already know at least one other student who may agree. Students who enjoy speaking up in class should shine during this lesson, but students who are quiet will have a chance to show me they were thinking and engaged through the entrance and exit tickets.

This lesson challenges students to interpret a text, speak up in class, and work on their discussion skills. It will be different and possibly difficult for many students, but it is certainly achievable for students to understand the text. I do not expect every student to be comfortable speaking up, so I will be looking to see if they are still engaged even if quiet.

Adaptations:

There are a few students with IEPs in the second block section of this class. The students will be paired up with other students whom they work well with for the reading and work on the entrance ticket. I have left plenty of time for students to read the chapters and work on the ticket. Also, they will be doing this in class so any difficulties can be assessed, and I can help them as well. This along with the fact that all the students are not used to this type of lesson is what led me to decide to have the students read and prepare the text in class. It will lead to a much better chance of having a rich discussion with many participants. A couple of students have difficulty taking notes quickly, so having time to create notes or jot down ideas ahead of time will help

these students to be able to jump into the discussion. Working with partners should help to motivate certain students, and the material itself has concepts and ideals that are interesting enough to hopefully engage the students with motivation issues. Today we learn that the ends do not justify the means, so to see someone give this advice is surprising. Hopefully these types of issues will cause students to think and want to share.

Reflection:

Working on the entrance ticket in class should help to ensure that students participate. Some students may not want to read or may pretend to read the chapters. I will walk around to try and monitor that, but hopefully working in pairs will help to motivate students not to slack off and anger their partner. Certain students may dominate the discussion because there are a few students who tend to carry the class in terms of participation on a regular basis. I will try to leave time for other students to jump in before moving on to another question, and I may even ask if anyone who hasn't spoken has a thought. I do not want to force students to participate because this is the first time they will be doing a Socratic seminar. If the students in general do not participate at all, I will try to prompt them by asking what they found interesting or what they had questions about. This tactic usually gets these students (meaning the ninth graders in my classes) to come up with something to say in class. If students get too far off track, I will have to steer them back on course by reminding them to use the text or by asking a new question, perhaps one that is more concrete and requires using the text to answer.

I am concerned that I will ask the questions too quickly and rush through the discussion in a matter of minutes. This is a particular aspect of my role that I want to pay attention to. I will work on not being uncomfortable during the initial silence that occurs after a question, so that I am able to leave a sufficient amount of wait time. I should be much better at this by the time I teach this lesson since it will be towards the end of my student teaching. All of these issues are why I wrote so many different questions. Between the entrance ticket, exit ticket, opening question, and discussion questions there should be enough to engage students in a meaningful discussion on the text.

Note: I will mark every five lines on the student copies so that it will be easier to identify what sections they are referring to.

For this lesson I used Chapter 17 and Chapter 18 from the following version of *The Prince*:

Wootton, David (1995). Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince* (Translated and Annotated) (p. 51-55). Hackett Publishing Co. Kindle Edition.