

Content Area Reading

This lesson is designed for students to learn the important aspects of the caste system in ancient India while developing basic note taking skills and writing skills. From the needs assessment that I administered, I found that the ninth grade students need significant scaffolding with pulling out relevant information from a reading, taking notes, and expanding upon their ideas in writing. This lesson was designed to begin helping them with these skills. The students will have read the section in their textbook on Hinduism and the caste system for homework prior to this lesson. This lesson will review and expand upon the information that they read in their textbook for homework.

The chart and information gathering sheets are a modified version of a concept definition map because it helps students to work backwards from the examples to a definition and finally to the concept. The charts allow students to organize their thoughts on the concept and then develop a multifaceted explanation. The students begin by reading and filling out the chart of examples of the caste system. The questions in the chart guide students in identifying the important aspects of the examples. This will help them to pull out the differences and similarities among the examples. The students can then begin to put together a list of characteristics. This will help students to develop the ability to think more in depth about what they have read, especially in terms of comparisons. From the list of characteristics, they will develop a definition of the caste system. A list of five characteristics should show the students that they will need to write more than one sentence in order to include all the characteristics in their definition. I will instruct students to write complete sentences, and they will need to write more than one in order to incorporate all the characteristics. This will help students to expand upon their initial ideas to form a complete explanation. This is a goal of my cooperating teacher for this class, and this lesson helps the students to take an initial step towards completing that goal.

This lesson provides a significant amount of scaffolding for the students. After looking through the needs assessments, speaking with the special educator in the room, and speaking with my cooperating teacher, I found this to be necessary. Apparently, there was not much of a focus on writing in social studies in the middle school, so these ninth grade students have needed a bit more help to develop the skills necessary for writing and even with taking notes from their textbook. Students receive this scaffolding through the chart which helps them pull out relevant information from the text, and through the information gathering sheet which gives them the steps to develop full sentences for the definition. The students receive extra practice with this when they write definitions for the vocabulary from the lecture and textbook.

The sheet of non-examples provides students with an opportunity to use their prior knowledge by tying in Egypt and Mesopotamia, which they learned about earlier in the course. Students have the misconception that the caste system can be seen in other ancient societies, which is not true. This lesson makes it clear that caste is tied to Hinduism. Students also use

their prior knowledge about India from the textbook section which they should have read prior to class. Of course, many students still are not doing the reading at home which is why I go over the information in the lecture section. The students also use their prior knowledge of our society to determine why people like Oprah and settings like a high school are not examples of the caste system, but are examples of class.

The long term writing goal of my cooperating teacher is that the students will be able to write a five paragraph essay by the end of the year. This may be a lofty goal considering that the students have never written an essay in social studies before. This lesson helps students develop the ability to extend their thoughts on a concept beyond a few words or even just one sentence. It is the first step towards developing full paragraphs. A reading goal is that the students will be able to read the textbook on their own at home and not need much scaffolding in class. This lesson helps students move towards that goal by reviewing the information from the textbook section in class, and by having students practice pulling out information from the text and then making notes.

This lesson does not have students reading or writing in an overwhelming amount. It is based on short pieces of text and designed to help students learn content while developing their reading and writing skills. It is achievable and useful at this stage in the school year for ninth graders. (This was designed to be taught in mid-October.) This lesson is a beginning step in the linked lessons to be developed later. Those lessons will take students further in developing their skills, and the unit will take place over the length of the course to help students reach the long term reading and writing goals of the course.