

› › › LESSONS AND ACTIVITIES

THE PRICE OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

(See Teacher's Guide web site for Resources; Suggested follow-up lesson to The Documents that Shape Society)

OBJECTIVES:

- Students evaluate positions on the fundamental values and principles of civil society and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.
(California Content Standards for History-Social Science, Grade 12, Standard 12.3)
- Students identify personal next steps for stemming injustice, bigotry and racism in classrooms, schools and communities.
- Students examine the role of policies and law(s) versus personal responsibility to promote social justice in classrooms, schools and communities.

ACTIVITY:

Students read and discuss primary source documents by well known activists for justice and human rights. Select primary source documents that describe an individual's commitment to beliefs, regardless of the consequences. The following suggested primary source documents are available on the Museum of Tolerance Teachers' Guide web site:

"Speech in the Virginia Convention," by Patrick Henry

"Civil Disobedience," by Henry David Thoreau

"Letter from Birmingham Jail," by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Discussion points should address the following questions:

- *What is similar/different about the ideas presented in each of these primary sources?*
- *How far was each of these authors prepared to go to ensure liberty and justice for all? What were they willing to give up?*
- *How far should one go to defend individual rights and freedoms?*
- *What might be the costs? What might be the benefits?*
- *How do you feel about the statement "I am not free until everyone is free?"*

Students present individual or group responses to the above discussion questions or respond individually in grade-appropriate writing assignments.

PRODUCT/APPLICATION:

Students participate in small/large group discussion and prepare drafts or compositions summarizing and comparing the significant features of two primary sources. Advanced students take and defend a personal position related to their study of the sources. Student products can be individual/group presentations or individual writing assignments. Appropriate grade level rubrics should be used to evaluate student writing. Rubrics to guide and respond to student writing can be found on the Museum of Tolerance web site.

EXTENSION:

Following the visit to the Museum and a review of the above activity, students discuss and/or write about their own personal next steps by addressing the following questions:

- *What injustice are you committed to help reverse or end?*
- *How far are you willing to go to interrupt or end this injustice? Do you have a commitment to this issue only or for all manifestations of injustice you observe and encounter? Explain differences in your level of commitment for various issues.*
- *What might you need to give up to realize your commitment? What might you and/or others gain?*

Students voluntarily share their responses/products.



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