

Class Debate Based Historical Fiction: Jack Schaefer's *Shane* and the Role of Firearms

Grade/Ability Level:

Grade 7 Inclusion and Heterogeneous. One or more class periods of 52 minutes based on ability level of class

Statement of Purpose:

This lesson will focus on familiarizing students with academic debate. The subject matter will be introduced during their cross-curricular reading of Jack Schaefer's work of historical fiction, *Shane*. This lesson is one of numerous activities students could complete in their Social Studies class, after reading *Shane* in their English/Language Arts class.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Analysis of historical fiction
- 2) Use of technology for research
- 3) Introduction to and use of academic debate

Activity:

After reading *Shane* in English class, have students reference Chapter 5 (page 55). In this section, Shane is explaining his philosophy on guns. Use this passage to introduce the subject of firearms to the class. The central theme put forth by Shane is as follows: "*A gun is just a tool. No better and no worse than any other tool, a shovel – or an axe or a saddle or a stove or anything. Think of it always that way. A gun is as good – and as bad – as the man who carries it.*" After reviewing this proposition with the class, instruct students that they must formulate their own responses for use in a debate. Students should not engage in any discussion with their peers prior to the debate.

Using a computer with a DLP projector, the teacher will instruct students how to access and navigate example websites listed below. Students may conduct research on these site, and/or others they can find. All sources must be cited if used later during class debate; therefore supporting evidence must be printed by students.

After students have had sufficient time to conduct their research and formulate their own positions, the teacher will then explain their desired structure for a class debate. Debate format may vary based on the class size, maturity level and time constraints. The teacher should moderate this debate and ensure that it is at all times academic and civil. All sides and views should be given equal time to be presented. When the debate has concluded have students write on a piece of paper individually the answers to the following two questions: Do they agree with Shane's above statement? Moreover, did the debate change their mind in any way?

Assessment:

After completing this lesson, students will have had the opportunity to express their views on a significant historical/current event in a structured academic setting. Furthermore, students will learn and retain the skills needed to engage in future debates.

Materials:

Schaefer, Jack. *Shane*. Dell-Laurel Leaf Books. New York, 2003.

Computer with DLP (Digital Light Processing) projector

Computers for student access (number will vary with class size)

Printer(s)

White copier paper

References:

Jurist Legal News & Research website: <http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/gunlaw.htm>

National Rifle Association website: <http://www.nra.org/>

The Coalition to Stop Gun Violence website: <http://www.csgv.org/index.cfm>

Gun Owners' Action League website: <http://www.goal.org/>

Schaefer, Jack. *Shane*. Dell-Laurel Leaf Books. New York, 2003.