

## I. CAN YOU WIN OUR HEARTS, OUR MINDS, OUR VOTE?

- A. We aim here to partner with other teachers to provide students with the experience of analysis, judgment, and critical thinking that will lead to insight. We aim to do that by creating conversation and debate opportunities for students as young as 14 through university starting with words from John F. Kennedy's last speech at Amherst College. His words are timeless; simultaneously his words evoke intellectual and emotional response, and we aim to help each student stop, experience the full response, examine and develop the ideas that capture her or his curiosity, imagination, and emotional response - and then ask them to assess possible decisions, including the constraints and benefits to themselves, their community and the nation.
- B. In this way we hope that students will build a framework for personal values - a framework that at once is flexible yet sturdy; a framework that responds and adjusts yet always acts as a guideline for examined views and informed action.

### Lesson Plan: (High School Project)

#### Phase A / Creating a Context

- **Create Student Body presidential candidate platforms, and programs to implement them, on an issue of each student's choosing. \***

Students will work individually. Each candidate will outline a strategy for winning.

Each will give a five-minute presentation aiming to win the primary.

Everyone votes for three. The winners ask for volunteers, and request that volunteers commit based on the candidate's values and program proposals. Volunteers will explain their choices.

- **Formulate Strategy**

What do my constituents care most about?

What do I care most about?

What factors determine whether someone wins?

What are my possible plans?

How will I use language to accomplish my goal of winning?

How will I connect with my constituents?

What tone will I adopt?

What examples will I give?

Do I want to win based on informed decision making or emotional response?

Do the means matter to the end?

- **Make a Speech** (teachers will encourage multi-media)
  - *If students all choose the same issue, there can be a three-way debate.*
- **Take a Vote**

- **Deconstruct the winning strategy**
  - Three finalists will explain what decisions they made in order to develop the strategy.
  - Each student will have a chance to explain what influenced her or his vote.

### Phase B / Group/Team Work

Students receive a composite of quotes from, say, Kennedy's invocation of Frost, Frost's words on language and on human behavior; Kennedy's words on power and poetry. Teachers draw from the film script, Kennedy's inauguration speech, Bernstein on poetry, other sources.

What does President Kennedy say about the exercise of power and the role of language, specifically poetry?

What do various people say about how experience can change people? Do you think experience always changes people?

### Phase C / Project Work

- **Types and Forms of Darkness**  
*opportunity for rest, ignorance, willful blindness etc.*
- **Types and Forms of Power**  
*personal power, public power, power over powerless, parental power, rightful exercise of power, wrongful exercise of power, persuasion vs. threat and weapons etc.*
- **Types and Forms of Poetry**  
*what it is, how it differs from prose, types of poetry, comparisons, words/poetry/silence/sensing poetry and common denominators*
- **Innate Bias, Experience and Insight**  
*do you agree with Frost (Mending Wall), is bias universal, what does the Harvard Self and Other study suggest to you, why does experience produce insight, recognition and realization?*
- **The Uses of Language**  
*Describing, communicating, influencing, selling, explaining, persuading, deceiving, lying etc*
- **Patterns in History and Eternal Optimism**  
History repeats itself writ large, but hope springs eternal. The triumph of hope over experience (Sam Johnson), Candide, action over passivity, can we control our fate?

### Creating

Students select a theme or idea that has arisen out of work on A and B, and may consider the project suggestions for C and create - an essay, article, poem, story, picture book, cartoon, podcast, web site etc.

\* **Note:** Teachers are resources/guides, helping students identify platforms. Teachers may encourage each student to support her or his decision by reference to human nature, patterns in human

behavior, patterns in history, and the many ways language can affect outcomes and the reach of power.

Teachers may provide examples of platforms, issues and programs, to a student individually or to the class as a whole based on her or his judgment of students' readiness for starting with a blank sheet of paper, as it were; but it is advisable to provide such help only after encouraging students to consider patterns in their own everyday life and formulating at least a sketch of one platform.

Submitted by Helen Kelly 11/5/18 for use in a HS Teachers' Guide or Teachers' Introduction to Our Study Guide