

Public Histories Revisited

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THEME

Interpreting historical monuments in our communities.

CONTEXT

Memorials and monuments can be found in communities across the globe. They sometimes play a special role in education (especially as education into nationalist and patriotic beliefs) but for the most part they are often overlooked as a topic of learning. City dwellers tend to walk by monuments every day without paying notice to them, yet they invariably represent history and how communities commemorate history, or ignore histories, at multiple levels. Historical monuments can help communities keep their memories alive but are also inextricably linked to the present as well. Reflection on monuments offer the opportunity to reflect critically on histories, but also on the process of how monuments come into existence, how they can be interpreted and whose histories they might highlight and whose histories they might downplay.

GOALS

- Raising awareness of why monuments exist and the histories that they convey
- Critical reflection on the monuments that exist in our communities
- Promoting multiperspectivity
- Encouraging discussion about how societies commemorate past events and ignore other events.
- Insight into historical occurrences

METHODOLOGY

- Small group work and presentations
- Brainstorming
- Presenting
- PowerPoint

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students/participants are able to reflect critically on monuments in their lived environments and the histories they represent
- Students/participants improve brainstorming, mind mapping, improve power point skills, active listening and discussion skills

MATERIAL & EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Beamer, flip- chart paper and markers. Post-its.
- Pens or pencils to write with, computers to design in PowerPoint or Libre Office

Overview of activities (process)

Duration: 5 x 45 minutes

PREPARATION

The teacher/educator identifies 4 - 6 (one for each subgroup) national monuments (preferably local) that depict different histories of conflict or civil strife (especially monuments dedicated to victims of conflict or oppression). The teacher/educator develops short fact sheets about these monuments.

Several examples are included as images of these monuments should be integrated into the powerpoint to be used in Session 2.

PART 1: 45-50 MINUTES

Introduction: 10 minutes

The teacher/educator briefly explains what is expected of the students/participants.

He/she/they then places the students/participants into subgroups of 5.

Each subgroup gets a piece of flip-chart paper and a marker.

Each student/participant gets three post-its to write on.

The subgroup assigns the roles of facilitator, writer and presenter.

What is a monument?: 10 minutes (students/participants still in sub-groups)

The teacher/educator reads the following Instruction:

"Writer, please write the word monument in the middle of the flip chart paper and circle it".

Once completed: "You each have three post-its. Please write down on each post-it one thing that comes to mind when you hear the word 'MONUMENT'. Please do this individually.

Facilitator, when everybody is done please place the post-its on the sheet of paper and read out the responses as you do this. Facilitator, please raise your hand when your subgroup is finished."

Categorizing the post-its: 10 minutes

The teacher/educator reads the following instruction: Please place what you have in 4 different categories. It does not matter what kinds of categories they are. Looking at the post-its you might disagree on the 4 categories that best describe the contents of the post-its. But try to reach agreement on the 4 categories of responses. The facilitators will lead this process. Write the names of each category in one of the 4 corners of the sheet and then place the post-its in one of the corners.

Once completed:

Presentations: 10 minutes

Each subgroup hangs up their sheet and presents their categories to the larger group in approximately 2 minutes (the presenter from each subgroup is responsible for organizing the presentation).

If time allows the group explains where they might have disagreed or any particular insight or comment they want to highlight.

Wrap up and debrief: 10 minutes

The teacher/educator summarizes and comments on what the students/participants have presented; he/she/they also introduces what the next session will focus on

PART 2: 45 MINUTES

Introduction and settling in 5-10 minutes

The teacher/educator hangs up the sheets from the previous session and asks the students/participants to look at all the sheets for 5 minutes to refresh their memory. After they return to their subgroups, the teacher/educator mentions that they will now watch a short PowerPoint about monuments.

PowerPoint on Monuments: 35 minutes

The teacher/educator shows the PowerPoint. This is more of a frontal presentation in which the teacher/educator presents the powerpoint but constantly asks questions and connects the powerpoint content to the students/participants responses during the first session.

Wrap up and debrief: 5 minutes

The teacher/educator takes the remaining time to debrief the activity and prepare the students/participants for part 3.

PART 3: 45-50 MINUTES RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION

Explanation and preparation: 5-10 minutes

The roles in the subgroups rotate (so different person becomes facilitator, etc.).

The 'presenter' now becomes the person who is responsible (with the help of the others) for creating a short 3-slide power point about the monument.

The teacher/educator explains that each subgroup will focus on one of the monuments that were pre- selected by him/her. The subgroups get the following information about their particular monument:

- Photo of the monument
- Name of the monument
- Location of the monument
- If the above is too vague then a key link to the monument as well

Research and creation 3-slide powerpoint: 40 minutes

The subgroup researches the monument, takes fairly extensive notes (led by note taker) and looks at the many issues touched upon in the powerpoint, such as:

- what history does the monument depict?
- when was it created?
- who was involved in the creation of the monument?
- what design was chosen and why?
- what materials is the monument made of?

- does the monument convey a message? Does it represent a majority or minority view?
- has there been any controversies relating to the monument?
- Are there other monuments in the local community or nationally that cover the same topic? How do they compare?

PART 4: 45-50 MINUTES POWER POINT CREATION

Introduction to Part 4 and settling in: 5 minutes

Creating 3-slide power point: 35 min

After the subgroups have re-assembled, they look at their notes from the previous session and discuss (led by group facilitator) what should be on the 3 slides, in order to be able to provide a good overview to the full group of the monument. They then create their power point presentations in their group.

PART 5: 45-50 MINUTES POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

Introduction to Part 4 and settling in: 5 minutes

Presentations: 30 - 35 minutes

Each subgroup presents its PowerPoint and takes questions and feedback from both the full group and the teacher/educator.

Wrap up and debrief: 10-15 minutes

The teacher/educator wraps up the activity and provides more general feedback to the full group

HOMWORK IDEAS

Students/participants can be encouraged to do research on local monuments at home or to actually visit them if they are nearby.

ADAPTATION ALTERNATIVES

Instead of developing a powerpoint presentation, the students/participants can create the front page of a newspaper, in their small groups, focusing on the monument and the history it represents. To adjust this for an online environment, the following sequence is an option, since it will be difficult to follow the various steps proposed above.

Instead of the teacher/educator selecting 5 monuments they create pairs of students/participants. The creation of the pairs should reflect some geographic diversity in terms of where their parents (or grandparents) were born. The student/participant pairs go online (one computer per pair). They can be put in separate breakout rooms. For this purpose. Each student/participant takes 20-30 minutes, assisted by his/her partner in the breakout room, to find a monument or memorial in one of the parent's hometowns that focuses on conflict (or peace) in some way.

This will often be a village/town/city that is larger. The students/participants discuss with each other how to find more info on this monument (e.g. news items, tourist sites) and make a joint short description on: what the monument depicts, the architecture of the monument, when it was erected and why, any controversies, whether commemorative events take place there, etc. The students/participants, go home and as homework show their parents (if possible) (or grandparents or caretakers) their description. If possible they get feedback from their parents or grandparents. Each student/participant presents his/her selected monument to the full group in the plenary in about 2-3 minutes time.

EXPLANATION OF ROLES MENTIONED IN THE ACTIVITY

Facilitator/ Team Captain

- Makes sure that everybody understands the task
- Makes sure that everybody contributes to the task
- Focuses less on his/her own ideas and more on those of the entire group
- Tries to find where people agree and disagree
- Encourages a positive group atmosphere
- Represents the group if it has a question for the teacher/educator

Writer

- Takes notes on what is said
- Makes sure that the notes are rewritten and summarized for presentation

Presenter/Reporter

- Reads the group for presentation (who says what, what is used in the presentation)



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