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LESSON PLAN

EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION ON THE IRAQI CONSTITUTION RATIFIED IN 2005

GRADES: Middle School (6-8)

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SUBJECT: American History, Government

TIME REQUIRED: Two 50-minute class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. Student will recognize the influence of the U.S. Constitution on the Constitution of Iraq.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Handout 1: Partial text of the Iraqi Constitution as printed in the Washington Post. Key ideas have been boxed to help students find points of comparison. Advanced students will read more than the boxed areas, and can find more points of comparison. Portions of the Constitution related to rules of procedure, transition, etc. have been removed.
- Handout 2: Partial text of the U.S. Constitution. Only points of comparison have been included in this handout. Students may supplement this worksheet with their own knowledge of U.S. law.
- Handout 3: Compare/Contrast worksheet
- Teacher Guides: Key to Compare/Contrast worksheet

BACKGROUND:

Following the ouster of Saddam Hussein during the Iraq War, the Iraqi government needed to draft a new constitution. The U.S. Constitution was an obvious source for the document, and the Iraqi Constitution contains many examples of nearly identical language. At the same time, there are many differences. These similarities and differences provide a terrific springboard for student conversations about the reasons for the similarities and differences.

PROCEDURE:

1. After completing study of the U.S. Constitution, pass out copies of Handouts 1, 2, and 3.
2. Provide background information to the students about the circumstances of the Iraqi Constitution ratified in 2005.
3. Have students think/pair/share their predictions of what things will matter most in Iraq at the time the constitution was written. Remind them of the welfare state that existed prior to Hussein's rule, the importance of Islam in the country, and the resources available in the country. (Predictions are especially helpful to this activity because in addition to engaging the students and giving a purpose to their reading, prediction will also reveal the students' knowledge and bias, thus allowing the teacher to address issues as necessary.) After a few minutes share the predictions with the whole class, and write them on the board.
4. Let students know that, as they read through the Iraqi Constitution, they will notice topics that are not in the U.S. Constitution, but have been addressed elsewhere such as Civil Rights. They may use their knowledge of current U.S. law as part of the comparison.
5. Have the students then read through Handouts 1 and 2, and fill in the Compare/Contrast worksheet (Handout 3).
6. When most of the groups have filled in their worksheets, have them share their insights with the class.
7. Lead a class discussion on the similarities and differences.
 - What similarities do you see between the two documents?
 - Why do you think the Iraqi Constitution has so many similarities to the US Constitution?
 - What differences do you see?
 - Why do you think some of the positive elements of the Iraqi Constitution do not appear in the US Constitution?
 - Will Iraq be able to uphold such lofty goals?
 - Does the U.S. uphold its lofty goals?
 - What limitations are on Iraqi freedoms (e.g. freedom of speech)?
 - What limitations are on American freedoms (e.g. freedom of speech)?
 - Are any of the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution contradictory?
 - Article 2 - Islam is the fundamental source of legislation, and it guarantees the full religious rights of all individuals to freedom of religious belief and practice...
 - Which constitution would you rather live under? Why?
8. Finally, have each student turn over his Compare/Contrast sheet and answer the following question: "What is the most important similarity or difference between the U.S. Constitution and the Iraqi Constitution?"

EVALUATION:

Students will be assessed on their participation in understanding their group's card, presenting the information to the class, and on the quality of the answer to the question in Step 7. A good answer will fully explain the similarity or difference and make predictions about its effect on the country of Iraq.

ENRICHMENT/EXTENSIONS:

- Gifted students may be required to find points of comparison beyond those identified by the boxes.
- It has been nearly ten years since the passage of the Iraqi Constitution. Students may do research to see how the constitution has been implemented and/or changed in Iraq.
- The Iraqi Constitution may be used as the basis of a Socratic Seminar.

