

Journal Entries for Social Change

Overview: After reflecting on the writing we have done in this class, something that I want to bring into my teaching is having my students journal. I have found this a very empowering practice for myself and look forward to giving kids this opportunity. I plan to have at least five minutes for students to journal every single day at the beginning of class in order to get them reflecting and writing. I have six different civics units, and each of them have journal prompts that go with the curriculum. Many of these journals are focused on issues of social justice and change. Some journal questions have a short clip or reading that is done before. Some are copied from the writing course I have just taken. Most journals have multiple parts to a question. Students can choose to answer the entire question or just focus on one part of the question

A few journals have activities that I will do after to get kids sharing their thoughts. Some of these activities include: one line read aloud, one word read aloud, reading their journal to a group of students surrounding them, circles, and drawings. Some journal entries are written for a specific lesson, others are very broad and can be used to fit the whole theme of the unit, or used to just have students think about their own identity.

These questions will act more as a question bank of potential journal entries I can use to start class.

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Unit 1: Team Building/Understanding self

Journal #: 1

Topic: Getting to know you

What are you passionate about? What topics, conversations, etc. make your blood boil, make you raise your hand or put your foot down and say something? Why are you passionate about these topics?

Follow-up activity: Partner share out. Read your paragraph to the person sitting next to you.

Journal #: 2

Topic: Getting to know you

What factors have been the biggest influence on your life? How do these factors shape you, influence you, etc.?

Follow-up activity: Come up with three words that describe what you wrote. Say them to the entire class.

Journal #: 3

Topic: Self-portrait project

What parts of yourself reflect your family's history? How do you carry your family history with you? In what ways does it live with you? This could be focused on your name, but it could be many other things as well. What does it mean to come from your family? Where does your family come from? What is significant to you about your family?

Follow-up activity: Read one sentence from your writing to the entire class.

Journal #: 4

Topic: Self-portrait project

Explain a time or experience you have had when someone misjudged you based on what you look like, sound like, what you're passionate about, etc. How did you feel?

OR

Explain a time when you misjudged a friend or teacher when you first met them. What was your first impression? Why was this your impression? What made you change your mind about this person?

Follow-up activity: Look at your writing and think about one word that summarizes the feeling you get for being misjudged. Share aloud.

Journal #: 5

Topic: Self-portrait project

Show the clips: The ways

Tall Paul writes about the story of *his* language. Write the story of *your* language. What are some moments where you've noticed that language let you in to a space, kept you out of a space, told you something about your family or history?

Follow-up activity: Ask for a few members of the class to share aloud.

Journal #: 6

Topic: Self-portrait

What characteristics and personality traits do you think are most important for people to have? Do your friends and family members have some of these traits? What about yourself?

Follow-up activity: Pick out word to share to the entire class that describes your writing.

Journal #: 7

Topic: Self-portrait

Why do you think it is so important for people to understand multiple perspectives?

Follow-up activity: Draw a picture that depicts your writing. Share it with your table partners.

Journal #: 8

Topic: Self-portrait

Describe a time when someone could not understand your perspective on an issue. What did it feel like? What did it look like? What happened?

Follow-up activity: Share with the person next to you.

Unit 2: Origins of Government

Journal # : 9

Topic: Why do we need government

Could a place exist without a government? What would it look like? If you were to make the most perfect kind of country, what would it look like? What kind of rules or no rules would there be?

Follow-up activity: Stand up if you said no.

Journal #: 10

Topic: Places with no government

After researching your assigned government-less country, pretend you are living in this stateless place. Describe what it looks like, feels like, sounds like, smells like. How do you feel living in this place? What is it like to live day to day in this place? Be creative!

Follow-up activity: Choose one line and read it aloud to the class.

Journal #: 11

Topic: Government philosophy

Are people born inherently good like Locke argues or inherently evil like Hobbes argues? Do people need government in order to do good?

Follow-up activity: Raise your hand if you said good. People that said good, partner up with someone that said evil. Read your writing to each other.

Journal #: 12

Topic: Hobbes & Locke conversation/debate

What is the difference between a debate and a conversation? Is one better than the other for learning? Why do teachers use debates more than conversations? Is that a problem?

Follow-up activity: Share what you wrote with your conversation group.

Journal #: 13

Topic: Types of governments

What do you think are the most important things a government should do?

Follow-up activity: Share 3 words that describe what a government should do.

Journal #: 14

Topic: Types of governments

After learning about the different types of governments and thinking about the things you find most important for a government to do, what do you believe is the best type of government? Why?

Follow-up activity: I will say a government type. Stand up if you argued for that type of government.

Journal #: 15

Topic: Types of government

What makes a government socially just? What are examples of government abusing its power? Why does government have so much power?

Follow-up activity: Spend the day compiling the last four-five journals and create one piece of writing that summarizes what you have said about governments, their purpose, and their power.

Unit 3: Citizenship, political parties, voting

Journal #: 16

Topic: Immigration

What does it mean if someone is an immigrant? What words come to mind? Why? What would make someone want to move from one country to another?

Follow up activity: Go around and say one word that sums up your writing.

Journal #: 17

Topic: Immigration

Watch: <http://documentedthefilm.com/>

While watching, write down the following...

I hear.... I see..... I wonder....

Expand one of your ideas in response to the video.

Follow up activity: Read your writing to the person sitting next to you.

Journal #: 18

Topic: Political Parties

How much do politics and political parties influence your life? Does your family talk about it often? Does anyone in your family or friends share different political opinions or any different social opinions? How does that make you feel? What do you talk/argue about most?

Follow-up activity: Read two sentences to your group of four.

Journal #: 19

Topic: Political Parties

Do you think it's easy or difficult to be friends with someone who has different beliefs than you do? What are some problems you've run into? Describe an experience you have had with a friend.

Follow-up activity: Stand up if you said yes that it can be hard to be friends with someone of different beliefs.

Journal #: 20

Topic: Activism/voting

Explain a time in your life when you were left out of something because of your race, gender, socioeconomic status, friends, etc. How did you feel? What happened?

Follow-up activity: Partner share out. Read your paragraph to the person sitting next to you.

Journal #: 21

Topic: Activism/voting

What would you be willing to fight for? To die for? Explain.

Follow-up activity: Share what you'd be willing to fight for. Can opt out.

Journal #: 22

Topic: Topic: Activism/voting

What is courage? Explain a time where you either gained courage or lacked courage.

Follow up activity: Choose one line and read it aloud to the class.

Journal #: 23

Topic: Activism/voting

What does activism mean to you? What does it take to be an activist? What people are not activist, but claim to be? Would you consider yourself an activist?

Follow up activity: Read your writing to the person sitting next to you.

Journal #: 24

Topic: Activism/voting

People have fought and died for their right to vote, yet less than half of our voting population goes to the polls during election to vote. Why do you think that is? Do you believe voting is important? Will you vote in every election you can?

Follow up activity: Choose one line and read it aloud to the class.

Unit 4: Early history, origins, philosophy, founding documents

Journal #: 25

Topic: Early history

What, if anything, would make you want to start a revolution in this country? What would you be willing to fight or possibly die for? Explain why.

Follow-up activity: Read one word to the class.

Journal #: 26

Topic: Early history

Do you think the United States will ever have a revolution or a change in government? What would have to happen in order for this to happen?

Follow up activity: Read your writing to the person sitting next to you.

Journal #: 27

Topic: Creation of U.S. government

Write about a time when social class mattered. This may be a time when you had access or not to something, when you were over or under resourced, or something else.

Follow up activity: circles

Journal #: 28

Topic: Creation of U.S. government/founding fathers

As we talked about, Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, and sexually assaulted women. Yet, he is one of the most celebrated people in our history and has contributed greatly to our government. Do you think that we should celebrate a person like Thomas Jefferson? Can we separate his work from his character? Explain.

Follow-up activity: Everyone who stood said no we should not celebrate Thomas Jefferson, stand up.

Journal #: 29

Topic: Creation of U.S. government/constitution

What is power? In what ways does our society decide who has power and how they should get to keep that power? How does someone gain power over an individual? Over an entire group of people?

Follow-up activity: Read three words to the entire class that sums up your reading.

Journal #: 30

Topic: Creation of U.S. government

When you have learned about U.S. history in the past, what voices have been absent? Are the absent voices as important as the present ones? Explain.

Follow-up activity: Circles

Unit 5: Bill of Rights & other Amendments

Journal #: 31

Topic: Bill of Rights

What does it mean to amend? What is something you wish that you could amend in your life? What would it be and why?

Follow-up activity: Read one word to the class.

Journal #: 32

Topic: Bill of Rights

Of the Bill of Rights (listed on the board), which Amendment do you think is the most important? Explain.

Follow-up activity: Read the amendment out to the entire class.

Journal # : 33

Topic: 1st Amendment

Think of a time that someone has said something to you that has been used to hurt. How did it feel? What did you say back? Do you think that they had a right to say that?

Follow-up activity: Read two sentences to your group of four.

Journal #: 34

Topic: 1st Amendment

Should hate speech, speech that is used to hurt other people, ever be restricted? Explain.

Follow-up activity: Stand up if you think that hate speech should be restricted.

Journal #: 35

Topic: 2nd Amendment

Do you believe that people have the right to own a gun? Explain.

Follow-up activity: Rapid fire say yes, no or pass.

Journal #: 36

Topic: 2nd Amendment

What, in your mind, is the solution to stop mass shootings? Is it restriction on guns, more mental health resources, or something else entirely? Explain.

Follow-up activity: Choose three words to share to the person next to you

Journal #: 37

Topic: 4th-8th Amendments

What freedoms do you lose as a student? Do you think you have a right to those freedoms in school? Why or why not?

Follow-up activity: Circles

Journal #: 38

Topic: 4th-8th Amendments

Of the rights of the accused, which right do you believe is the most important? Why? What is the least important? Why?

Follow-up activity: Go around the classroom and say what you believe is the most important right. Which one is the least important right?

Journal #: 39

Topic: 15th, 19th, 24th, 26th Amendments

Does everyone deserve the right to vote? Why or why not?

Follow-up activity: Share with your table group

Journal #: 40

Topic: 14th Amendment

The 14th Amendment gives everyone living in the United States equal treatment. Are there people living in the United States that should get more or less freedoms than other people? Explain.

Follow-up activity: Nod or shake your head when asked follow-up questions by the teacher.

Journal #: 41

Topic: 13th & 14th Amendments

Do you think punishment works? Think in terms of jails, prisons, etc? But also within classrooms. What do you believe

Follow-up activity: Circles

Unit 6: Three Branches of Government

Journal #: 42

Topic: Supreme Court

Can you ever be truly impartial to an issue? How about to all issues? Is it okay if a justice is not impartial to an issue?

Follow-up activity: Circles

Journal #: 43

Topic: Supreme Court

In your opinion, should SC justices serve for life? Why or why not? What are the pros and cons?

Follow-up activity: Read one line to the class from your writing.

Journal #: 44

Topic: Supreme Court

Do you think you would make a good judge? Explain using an example or general experience you have had.

Follow-up activity: Read a section of your writing to your partner.

Journal #: 45

Topic: Executive Branch

Describe a time when you were put into a leadership role. What was hard about it? What was easy about it? What did you learn from it?

Follow-up activity: Share three words to the entire class.

Journal #: 46

Topic: Executive Branch

Describe your ideal president. Where would they stand on major issues?

Follow-up activity: Share one word to the entire class.

Journal #: 47

Topic: Executive Branch

Can someone be a successful leader by themselves? Explain

Follow-up activity: Read a section of your writing to your table.

Journal #: 48

Topic: Legislative Branch

If you could make one law for the United States, and everyone had to follow it. What would that law be?

Follow-up activity: Share the topic of your law to the class.

Journal #: 49

Topic: Legislative Branch

What branch of government do you believe is the most powerful branch? Which branch of government should be the most powerful?

Follow-up activity: I will say each branch. Each person will stand for whatever branch they made their argument for.

Name: _____

Hour: _____

Social Justice Journal for Weeks ___ & ___

Journal #: _____

Date: _____

Journal #: _____

Date: _____

Journal #: _____

Date: _____

Journal #: _____

Date: _____

Journal #: _____

Date: _____

Journal #: _____

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Journal #: _____

Date: _____

Journal #: _____

Date: _____

Reflection Paper

My original lesson plan was to create a voting rights unit. I still plan to do this and look forward to using many of the resources that I got from class when creating my lesson. However, as I thought more about what would make the most immediate impact in my classroom, I changed from a traditional lesson plan to having students write journal entries at the beginning of every class. While taking this class over the last two weeks, I have found so much power in the five minute writing prompts at the beginning of each class. They have brought up memories that I hadn't thought about in years, and have made me become comfortable in exploring my writing. They pushed me to flush out my ideas and really take the time to consider how I felt about an issue or how I identified with a topic. I want to be able to give this gift to my students.

I have tried to use journal entries before with students, and I actually had really great success with them. I teach five classes of amazing, but rowdy 9th graders and so starting my class with a journal right away allowed my kids to transition, and center themselves in what we are doing in class that day. I was also able to see what kids were thinking, and how they were reflecting and taking in the material that was being taught throughout the week. It's so hard to know where kids are at and give them space to communicate with you within the constraints of your classroom when there are 35 of them and you only have 45 minutes. Journals allowed everyone to participate in the class and have a personal connection to the material and to me. I love that it gives more introverted students space to reflect and participate, and sometimes an easier means to communicate with me.

I fell off doing journals though for several reasons last year. Firstly, I would find myself last minute writing a journal question before classes began. They were be haphazard and not

thoughtful or intentional. Sometimes I would repeat questions I had already done before, or ask silly questions like “what is your favorite animal and why?” It was a major stressor for me. The second big reason was that I had kids writing their journals in a notebook. It seems silly that this deterred me from having them do journals so much, but it absolutely did. It was so difficult for me to bring 150 notebooks around and find the particular pages of their journals for me to read. Plus, kids would lose their journals all the time, which was also very frustrating.

I believe the way I went about creating this lesson plan helped deal with these two issues. Since I have already written out the questions, and been very intentional about what I am asking, then the stress of coming up with a meaningful journal right before class has been alleviated. I think that these questions are very different from one another and are ones that I am really excited for students to begin investigating. Secondly, the template that I am using for students to write in their journals will be something I give to them at the start of every two weeks or every unit. This will eliminate bulk for me, and make it so that students just have to hold onto this one packet. For students who are very disorganized, I will keep a box in my room where they can keep their journals so as not to lose them. I believe that this will make journaling more manageable for both the students and myself. I would love to be able to do all of their journals electronically. Unfortunately, we only have two chromebook carts for my entire department so right now that is not realistic.

One thing a group member suggested to me was that I could have my students write a culminating journal entry at the end of the week or the end of a unit. They would essentially answer a larger question and splice and combine all their journal entries together. This would make them better at pulling out big themes, editing, and combining their work into a final

draft-all of which are skills that are very important for students to know how to do. It could be their assessment for the unit. Or I could grade that piece of writing, and then give the others a grade for completion. I'm very excited about this idea, and would like to play around with it more.

I broke up my journal entries into my different units that I have for 9th grade Civics. Originally, I considered just creating a large bank of journal entries, but then figured that this would be more useful for my own teaching. Each journal topic has some kind of theme that the kids would be reflecting on. With some journal topics, I know exactly what day we will be using it in class. With others, I don't quite know, but believe they will fall well within the unit. Some of my units are longer than the amount of journal entries I have, but I look forward to using this list as a starting basis that I can add to as I think of more and more important questions for students to answer.

I attempted to create all the questions in a way that was accessible to all kids, no matter what level they are at. I did not ask recall questions, but more opinion and belief based questions. Most of my questions do have a basis in social justice, which I think is the most important thing I can bring into my classroom and get kids to reflect on. My plan is to allow kids five minutes to write at the beginning of each class. I will have them put their phones completely away, and my expectation will be that they will write for the entire time. Some of these questions, like the one "what would you die for?" are huge questions that then lead us into deep conversations about activists and people who have died for the right to be treated equally in America. It also will give me such a powerful glimpse into my students' lives. Other questions, like the one about whether we should celebrate Thomas Jefferson, forces students to make some kind of argument one way

or another. Being able to craft an argument using evidence is one of the most important skills that a student can learn to do in a social studies class.

Some questions deal more directly with the curriculum. For example, students are asked to contemplate on what they had learned from days before and reflect on it. I think this will help them connect to larger themes. Still other questions deal with their own identity and sense of self. My hope with this is that students can then see themselves within the topics that we are talking about. I hope that they can feel a strong connection to what they are learning. I also think that so much of schooling should be about students grappling with their own beliefs. Even though the journaling will only be five minutes of the day, and the sharing will be another five, I think as the time goes on, students will become better and better writers and thinkers. I am so excited to do see this growth.

Another way that this is going to be different from when I originally was having my kids do journals is that I have a follow-up activity for each journal. The follow-up activity acts as a way to share what they wrote. One of the major things I found empowering about this course was reading my writing to everyone. I remember being so uncomfortable with that premise of that on the first day. But then I grew to feel strong and comfortable. It was so empowering for me to share, and also to hear others' insights. I feel like I know some of the people in that course so much better than my friends who I've spent more time with. I think creating a classroom culture where we share our ideas is going to be really powerful. I plan to start it off pretty simple, but hope to get more in depth as we set up more and more classroom norms. I'm hoping kids will feel the empowerment I felt, and also learn all the awesome things about each other. I know that

this is going to take away from a lot of instruction time, but in the end, I think that it is truly worth it.

I am very excited to have kids start to write more in my class. I think the power of writing, the ability to express and present ideas, as well as the importance of reflection are all key things that I strongly believe every student needs to develop. I will be curious about how this year goes compared to last year if I hold true to these writing prompts. I think that they will be a very empowering experience for my students, and I hope to also be able to see improvement in their writing and ability to communicate their thoughts throughout the year.

Lastly, I think that I will likewise keep a journal that I will share with my students. I'm hoping that I can write when they are writing. I realize that this means I will be writing the same prompt five times a day, but I think it will be interesting for me to see how my ideas change from hour to hour, and how they grow in depth. It will encourage me to continue to be a writer. It will also show kids that we are all in this together.