**A SOCIAL OR POLITICAL HERO?**

**A STRUCTURED ACADEMIC CONTROVERSY (SAC) with JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN**

**The Controversy:** Did Joshua Chamberlain come to be remembered as a hero because his deeds led to a great military and political victory during the American Civil War. Or, was Chamberlain’s hero status attributable to the fact that his character and life story embodied so many traits (like *honor* or *duty*) valued in 19th century American society?

**Side A**

“Chamberlain was a  **political hero** and was worth remembering because he clinched a Union victory at

Little Round Top during the Battle of Gettysburg.”

**Side B**

“Chamberlain was a **social hero** because of the compelling nature of his life story, his apparently clean character, and his strong sense of honor and duty.”

**STEP I. Reading and Preparation (~30 Minutes).**

**a.** Using the articles below, find evidence to support your team’s side of the controversy. Craft your position in 2-3 well-written, evidence-based statements that draw directly on the texts provided.

**Document List for Side A:**

 **Document A:** Report of Col. Joshua L. Chamberlain, Twentieth Maine Infantry.

Gettysburg Campaign. July 6, 1863.

 **Document B:** Tom Desjardin, *Stand Firm, Ye Boys from Maine* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 2009).

 **Document C:** “Letter to the Governor of Maine after Gettysburg.” *Bangor Whig and*

*Courier,* Jul. 1863.

 **Document D:** “A Bayonet Charge the Last Hope.” (Medal of Honor Recommendation).

1893.

**Document List for Side B:**

 **Document A:** Letter from Joshua L. Chamberlain to Governor [Israel] Washburn, Brunswick, July 14, 1862.

 **Document B:** Eloise Jordon, ”Joshua Chamberlain: One of Maine’s Greatest Men,”

*Lewiston Journal*, 1982.

 **Document C:** Martin Pengelly, “The Maine Lesson of Gettysburg: Real History is Never

So Romantic as Reel,” *The Guardian*, 2013.

 **Document D:** Letter from Joshua L. Chamberlain to his father, Brunswick, February 20,

1865.

**STEP II. Position Presentation (~ 10-15 Minutes).**

**a.** Side A clearly presents their position using supporting evidence from the texts.

**b.** Side B restates to Side A’s satisfaction.

**c.** Side B presents their position using supporting evidence from the texts.

**d.** Side A restates to Side B’s satisfaction.

**STEP III. Building Consensus (~30 minutes). a.** Abandon original roles.

**b.** Build consensus regarding the controversy (or at least clarify where your differences lie). In

collaboration with your peers, and using supporting evidence, craft a statement of consensus that works to reconcile both elements of the hero controversy.

**Consider the following questions as you craft your statements:**

 What type of hero was Joshua Chamberlain?

 Which pieces of evidence were most useful in this exercise and why? Which sources were less useful?

 What lingering questions do you have about sources and ideas encountered?

**Record Consensus Statement Below:**

**STEP IV: Wrap-up (Time remaining).**

**a.** Whole-group sharing of consensus statements

**b.** Open conversation about the exercise, lessons learned, historical thinking, etc.

**STEP V: Making Sense of it all (Homework/Out-of-Class).**

 In a well-written 400-500 word essay, provide your own position on the nature of Joshua L. Chamberlain’s heroism. In your mind, why was Chamberlain considered to be a hero? Do we know of any modern Chamberlain-like figures? Do you think that conceptions of heroism have changed at all? Why or why not?

 Great essays will consider each of the prompts above, will be free of grammatical errors, and will make thoughtful use of select sources encountered in the SAC.