**A SOCIAL OR POLITICAL HERO?**

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

**The Controversy:** Is Joshua Chamberlain remembered as a hero because his deeds led to a great military and political victory during the American Civil War, or is Chamberlain’s hero status due to the fact that his character and life story exemplified so many traits 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.”

**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 List for Side B:**

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

 **Document B:** 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.** Come to an agreement regarding the controversy (or at least clarify where your differences

lie). Working 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 200-250 word essay, explain your own position on the nature of Joshua L. Chamberlain’s heroism. For you, why was Chamberlain considered to be a hero? Do we know of any modern Chamberlain-like figures? Do you think that ideas about

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.