Historical Enquiry - What should be done about the Broad street controversy?

Tom Hilton - The Cherwell School - Oxford - UK

This is a sequence of lessons which aims to teach pupils not only the details of the reconstruction era but make them meaningful in today's world. By creating a 'real' end product the aim is to motivate pupils in a detailed historical study which has relevance today and show them how important the past is in order to understand the present and future.

Lesson 1 and 2

*What should be done about the Broad street controversy?*

**Stage 1** - introduce the image of Broad Street Columbus GA at the end of the 19th century and play Billie holiday's strange fruit. THINK

* Where might this be?
* What sort of time period?
* Why might the tree be controversial?

The song should give pupils enough clues but after finishing introduce them to the idea that this tree which still sits in the heart of uptown Columbus was the site of a lynching in 1896. So why is it so controversial?

**Stage 2** - Locate ourselves in time and geographical location using slides 4-8.

**Stage 3** - Using slide 10 as worksheet for collecting information begin research. I leave the method of this research up to individual teachers but the students should collect examples of both positive and negative treatment of slaves after 1866 within the framework of the cultural approach (CAH). The six categories may have already been introduced to pupils if they are using the CAH in history or other school lesson - if not they will need to be familiarised with the six institutions.

I have included some documentaries which could be used alongside the school textbook to support research. I would envisage this taking around one and half hours of teaching time.

**Stage 4** - Linking the categories. Complete the task on slides 12 and 13 to make sure that students have begun to practice explaining in depth through combining the categories.

Lesson 3

*Why is Broad Street so controversial?*

**Stage 1** - Use 'think, pair, share (slide 1) as a method of getting pupils to discuss the image. Try to leave the responses open so that you can slowly reveal more of the image of the Lynching of Slayton and Miles.

**Stage 2** - Present the pupils with the two newspaper extracts on slides 7 and 9

Source 1 - Double Lynching - An extract from the Savannah Tribune - June 6th 1896 and Source 2 – Extract from the **Richmond planet., June 20, 1896**

**TASK:**

Read the two sources closely to try answer the questions below:

* What happened to Slayton?
* What happened to Miles?
* What did the **city** authorities do?
* What was the verdict on the murder?

Pupils should complete the table on slide 8 to keep a record of their observations from the sources.

Now discuss what it seems that we can e sure about what happened. Create a list of what seems to be certain.

**Stage 4** - Now introduce that central to the controversy is the role that the city authorities played in the lynching. Now ask the pupils to look again at the sources to be certain what each one says the role of Jailer, Guards, Court verdict, Military and especially the Police was.

If the students do noyt pick it out highlight the quote - "Columbus, Ga. is a populous city, has a military company and officers of the law and yet no attempt was made to frustrate the murderous designs of the cut-throats."

This is essentially asking why the Police did nothing:

**Stage 5** - Now highlight the fact that the Inquest after the event by A.R Martin said that no witnesses could be found. Well what about the city authorities?

Now using slides 14 -18 discuss with pupils the role of the Police in the Lynching.

**Stage 6** - Now ask pupils what they think should be done? If you choose it would also be possible tp present them with the 4 alternatives on slide 19. This initial idea might be worth writing down as they will be asked to develop it in the next lesson.

Lesson 4

What should be done about the Broad street controversy?

**Stage 1** - Get students t re-cap their position on the debate over what to do with the Tree.

**Stage 2** - Introduce the pupils to the debate over how Major Tomlinson responded to the request for an apology and plaque to mark the Broad Street tree. On slide 2 there is a line to the you tube clip of the debate with Mayor Tomlinson which you could use to set up the debate. It is important to establish that the Mayor refused both a city marker or monument AND an apology. Play PART 2 of the debate from 6:10 to see the request for an apology and the Mayor's response.

**Stage 3 -** So now we need to address the issue of what other markers exist - Run through slides 3 - 7 explaining each one of the memorials and what they are for. There is a state register for all historical markers so these can be easily researched.

**Stage 4** - The next stage is to introduce the precedents of apologies by Governments or authorities.

Introduce the 3 precedents on slides 8,9 and 10.

**Stage 5** - Pupils must now discuss using think, pair, share to decide what they think about the issue.

This could then be widened into a whole class discussion.

**Stage 6** - Final TASK:

Write a letter to the mayor of Columbus which explains the option from the list above that you feel she must follow. You must include:

1. Information on the treatment of Slaves in the reconstruction era. (Try mention Social, Political, Religious, Aesthetic, Intellectual and Economic elements)
2. Discussion of the at least 2 other monuments in Columbus
3. Comparison with 1 or 2 of the historical precedents we discussed
4. A clear explanation of why you think this option is the way forward

**Stage 7** - I firmly endorse actually sending these letters to the Mayor and also a copy of all the letters to the Columbus Black History museum so that they are aware of the student's perspectives.