



Signature in the Schools: Here's the Deal

Exercise: *Individual vs. Collective*

Subject(s): History, Theater, English

Goals: Students will be able to:

Use examples from their knowledge and experience to support the main ideas of their oral presentation.

Evaluate the evolving and changing role of government.

Keep eye contact with the audience, adjust volume, tone, and rate, be aware of postures and gestures and use a natural tone.

Show Connection:

In *Here's the Deal*, the students of the present and the figures of the past both come to terms with the concept that to survive and progress through tough times, collective action is needed. As President Franklin Delano Roosevelt stated, "This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper...We now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we cannot merely take but we must give as well."

Resources:

[The Common Good](#)

Set-Up:

Divide the students into four groups of equal size in breakout rooms sessions that will take place later

in the lesson. (We recommend dividing groups ahead of time for efficiency, an ability to focus on the exercise and to get to the fun as quickly as possible.)

Label each breakout group as either a group focused on “Individual Liberty” or on “Collective Good.”

Description:

Part 1: Opening

As a class, discuss “How does a society balance individual freedom with governmental power?” Resist the urge to give them definitive answers here. This is about them exploring open-ended ideas rather than locking down on anything at this point in the exercise.

Send students to their respective breakout rooms. Each group has five minutes to produce a definition for their assigned concept (individual freedom or collective good) and three examples from day-to-day life of that concept’s application. Groups should be prepared to share their definitions and examples with the rest of the class.

Bring the students back together and have each group share their definition and real-life examples of the concept. (Be sure to remind students that we are not here to argue if one of these concepts is better than the other. The two concepts need one another.)

Where and when does individual liberty take greater importance than collective good? The other way around? Is there more collective good or individual liberty in your home? At school? Your job?

Part 2: Alien Invasion

Introduce the following scenario to the students: Aliens have landed in 20 cities across the US and are demanding we give them half of all people under 25 so they can repopulate their alien planet.

Send the students back to their respective breakout rooms. They now must create a compelling argument for their perspective (either individual freedom or collective good.) They must argue their stance before all of humanity - “Now is the time for us to work together!” or “Now is the time for each of us to fight our own fight!” Each group should use whatever tools they have with their classroom virtual platform to make the most convincing argument possible for their approach to the invasion.

Once groups are prepared, close the breakout rooms and give groups the opportunity to share their persuasive presentations. As pieces are presented, discuss the merits and shortcomings of proposed arguments and sales pitches (both the substance of their arguments and the presentations of them.)

As a class, collaboratively create an “alien invasion response plan” utilizing elements of both the students’ “individual liberty” and “collective good.” The group must come to an agreement. You may propose something like this:

We will know we our plan is ready for implementation when we have a five point (or five sentence plan) of attack for how we will operate in the world that finds a balance between individual liberties and care for the collective good.

Discuss with students: “It took us a while, but I think we’re mostly content with this, right? We found a balance between caring for the individual and caring for the community in our alien invasion response plan. **But** – every time a community changes, every time a community is confronted with a new situation or problem, the balancing act between the individual and the collective must be renegotiated and rewritten. **Why do you think this balance is so difficult to achieve?**”

This kind of compromise seems to be required when confronting every major issue in American history. (Reconciliation following the Civil War, affordable and accessible healthcare, and economic stimulus packages for those in need to name a few.) The process is always complicated and frustrating and sometimes never resolves itself. It can be a discouraging process; compromise rarely means you get everything you hoped for.

The US Constitution’s preamble suggests that we are working to ‘form a *more* perfect union,’ **not an actually perfect one.** Perfection isn’t possible. But the work of compromise, reevaluation, of caring for each citizen, will allow our nation to achieve a *more* perfect union.”

Discussion:

What parts of your own life do you feel require constant compromise for better or worse? Where does compromise not exist in your life but wish it did?

Is it easier or harder to find compromises among larger groups? Why or why not?