1/7/14

Grade Nine World History

Unit: The Byzantine Empire

Lesson: “The Byzantine Empire and the Justinian Code”

Enduring Understandings:

* Individual actors can have lasting and unexpected impacts on the course of history.
* The politics of the personal and regulation of intimate relationships have great impact on the power dynamics of society

Essential Questions:

* How did the Byzantine Empire develop?
* Who was Empress Theodora and how did she influence the status of women in the Byzantine Empire?
* How do the politics of the personal and the regulation of intimate relationships affect the power dynamics of a society?

Standards:

* CC.8.5.9-10.A: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
* CC.8.5.9-10.B: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
* CC.8.5.9-10.D: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
* CC.8.5-9-10.I: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Set-up:

* Connect my computer to the SMART Board
* Make copies of the Empress Theodora biography
* Make copies of the Justinian Code laws

Activities:

1. **Do-Now (10 minutes):** When students enter the room they will sit in their assigned seats and follow the instructions on the SMART Board. The first instruction is to place their *Empire of the Sun* movie reviews on their desks. Next, they will be asked to jot down everything they know about the Byzantine Empire in their notes. Though this is the first lesson of the Byzantine Empire unit, students are familiar with the Byzantine Empire’s location and development from our study of the fall of Rome. Students will take 5 minutes to record their thoughts, they we will review student answers as a class.
2. **Brief Lecture (10 minutes):** I will introduce the Byzantine Empire with a brief lecture, building off of students’ prior knowledge that they demonstrated in the Do-Now discussion. I will show a map of the Roman Empire after the divide of the Eastern and Western halves, explaining that the Byzantine Empire grew out of the eastern half after the Roman Empire’s military and governmental dissolution. The first slide I will show will be primarily review about the beginnings of Byzantium – refreshing student’s memory about Constantine’s rule of Rome, the legalization and spread of Christianity, the relocation of the capital from Rome to Constantinople, the East/West divide, and the “fall” of Rome. I will ask students why “fall” is in quotations, and then build into a discussion of the preservation of Roman cultural traditions – architecture, literature, Greek classics, art, engineering, and Christianity – in Byzantium. I will then move onto the prominent Byzantine Emperor, Justinian I and his marriage to Theodora, and then show a map depicting his expansion of the Empire.
3. **Empress Theodora (10 minutes):** As a woman with a compelling personal life who wielded a considerable amount of political power, students will read a brief biography about Empress Theodora and then discuss the following discussion questions with a partner in their letter groups (1s and 3s, 2s and 4s):
4. What was unconventional about Theodora’s childhood and young adulthood?
5. Why was Justinian’s marriage to Theodora considered taboo?
6. How did Theodora influence her husband’s rule?
7. Today Theodora is considered an “early pioneer of women’s liberation.” Why does her life story warrant this feminist title?

After students have had a few minutes to discuss the questions in pairs, we will review student answers as a class, building into a broader discussion of Theodora’s earlier pioneering of “women’s liberation” and the aspects of her life that contribute to her legacy as a feminist icon.

1. **Primary Source Analysis (20 minutes):** We will then move onto an analysis of the Justinian Code. Given Empress Theodora’s legacy of female empowerment and her known influence over her husband’s rule, I will inform students that they will be working in their letter groups to investigate how the laws passed during Justinian’s rule impacted women. I will begin with one slide about how the Code was developed, how it was organized, and the aspects of society it governed. I will then distribute a set of laws from the Justinian Code to each letter group. One group will have laws pertaining to marriage, one to divorce, one to adultery, one to prostitution, one to rape, and one to incest. For each law, students will work with their groups to complete the following 2 steps on a separate piece of paper (to hand in at the end of class):
2. Summarize the law in your own words.
3. *How* does this law impact the status of women?

**Think:** Does it give women more or less freedom? Does it increase or decrease women’s safety? Does it increase or decrease equality between men and women?

Explain your reasoning in at least 2 complete sentences.

I will project a slide on the SMART Board with difficult vocabulary words defined to enhance

student’s understanding of the text. As students are working in groups I will circulate the room to

facilitate students’ understanding of the laws. With several minutes left in the period, we will

come back together as a class and I will first ask students which laws they thought negatively

impacted the status of women and why, and then the laws that they thought positively impacted

the status of women and why. Then, if we have time, I will ask students about how they think

various laws impacted the status of men. Positively? Negatively? Did they have any impact?

Homework:

* None