

Using *Fidel Castro* to Consider Perspective, Bias, and the Myth of Political Neutrality

By Kyle Kopsick

Grades: 11 -12

RELATED CONTENT AREAS

History, Social Studies

INSTRUCTIONS

Overview	<p>This lesson plan utilizes the documentary <i>American Experience: Fidel Castro</i> to urge students to consider the significance of bias, perspective, and political neutrality. It also prompts students to develop a more nuanced understanding of Fidel Castro and Cuban political history. The lesson plan asks students to research the documentary as a genre of source, and to reflect on how the source and funding of the documentary affected its content and presentation. It serves as a gateway to a Project Based Learning activity in which students do self-directed research on a part of Cuban history/society referenced in the film. Students will produce an annotated bibliography, visual aid, or paper that discusses the sources s/he used to her/his research.</p> <p>Essential Questions: Why is it important to consider the origin of the source? Why is being apolitical or politically neutral every possible? What is the relation between perspective, bias, and political neutrality when studying Cuba?</p>		
Standards	<p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6</u> Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8</u> Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.</p> <p><u>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9</u> Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.</p>		
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the significance of perspective, bias, and political neutrality• Develop a more nuanced understanding of Fidel Castro and social/political aspects of Cuba• Become a more thoughtful researcher and reader	Materials	
Time		Vocabulary	

PROCEDURE

This lesson could occur at the beginning, middle, or end of a unit on Cuban history. This could also be a lesson on things to consider when conducting research.

Things to Consider:

- Have students conducted research before? If so, what are their research skills like? If not, what needs to be taught/modeled/scaffolded?
- How much do students know/have studied regarding Cuba?
- What kind of technology is accessible?
- How much time do you have (more time = more sources reviewed)?

Opening Activity: Show only the opening “American Experience” clip from the PBS Fidel Castro film (can be found on YouTube). Have students consider and discuss these questions: What do you notice about the opening clip? Based off of what you know about Cuban history, how does this opening clip shape your thoughts on the documentary?

Scaffolding Activity: The objective for this activity is to define, provide, and discuss examples of perspective, bias, and political neutrality.

Students will create in groups on selected terms to present to the class and post on the wall. They can add images, wordles, quotes, etc. Students will then discuss these terms as a class.

Jigsaw Activity: The class discussion could also be a jigsaw activity in which the students leave their groups and move to tables where each word has one representative. They then act as the personified version of that word. Students can then have debates within their groups about the idea of political neutrality? Is it ever possible? How does this affect their research?

Research Topic After the initial activity, students will watch the entire Fidel Castro film and choose a topic of Cuban history to research from multiple perspectives. Possible Topics: -Cuban education -Cuban health care -Cuban race relations -Cuban political system -Soviet/Cuba relationship -Other topics that students find interesting

EVALUATION

End Product:

- Annotated bibliography, chart, paper or visual
- Piece addresses the following aspects of a source:
 - What is the context (date, author, country of origin, etc.) of the text? What perspective is being presented? What is the author’s relation to Cuba? What does the source claim? What is NOT said or addressed? How does the source compare to other sources? What conclusions can be drawn from the source?

Students will present their findings to the class and come back to the question of whether political neutrality can exist and how that affects their research. A similar activity can be conducted before a research unit in all content areas.

Varied Sources

For this lesson, it is important that students have access to and use a varied range of perspectives. Some examples:

- Documentary: Fidel Castro Created by PBS “American Experience” program
- Assita Shakur interview Black American woman exiled from America and lives in Cuba
- Excerpts from “History Will Absolve Me” Speech from Fidel Castro
- And so on! What’s important is that there are a range of perspectives being examined