

12th History Cuban Materials Interview

Interviewer: Please describe the instructional materials you're using for this lesson.

Teacher: You can see the PowerPoint that guides the discussion and tells them what to do next. Also, it gives them the feedback about what did happen but then there's also the packet that has all of the primary sources in it and then the pages, which you can't see in the video, that have the questions that says something along the lines of, what you know, what the public knows, here are some options. There's always the last option is always some combination of the above, so it's a little bit open ended, but at least, I don't want them to just totally be pulling things out of thin air.

At least they have some ideas of what were his real options to go with. I've always made it the extremes, like full invasion was one down to do nothing and wait and see what happens, then variations in between. Every once in awhile they come up with some interesting thing I never thought of but at least it's there to get things started so they have some thing to talk about, that's important. Otherwise it would just take too long.

Interviewer: Why did you consider choosing these materials?

Teacher: I don't do enough primary sources, so this was a really good example where there's lots of material there and when I first was putting the project together I was nervous about what I was going to get and then I realized the primary sources themselves are not long. It was enough that we could do a whole bunch of them and have it be very authentic within one class period. The letters, I cut out the Mr. Kennedy I appreciated your wonderfulness and all the kind of niceties of the letters to get to the core part and pretty much most of the kids can read all of the stuff within the class period.

There's a few kids who are slower readers or maybe just more careful readers, where they don't finish everything and I cut it off because keeping an eye on the clock, I know it needs to finish. This is a really great chance to do a lot of primary sources.

Interviewer: What is it that you like about these materials?

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Teacher: They're authentic. I like it also, it's kind of fun and I try to bring this up in the lesson too, that they're polite but this is like a playground scrap, like these guys are going at it and they're playing with fire in a way and they're calling each other out and it sounds pretty but it's not. There's a really macho puffing out your chest thing going on below the surface there, which is really entertaining and the kids can relate once they can see it, so I like that.

Interviewer: Are there any changes you'd make to these materials?

Teacher: There's one, there's a letter from Castro to Khrushchev which talks about his point of

view and he's encouraging Khrushchev to like toe the hard line and don't give up and we're comrades and it's an interesting letter but it's not one that Kennedy had so I put it in there originally as sort of like kind of give some depth to the whole situation and help see multiple perspectives, but that's the one I always say, oh skip this one because it's not essential, because it's not essential to what they're role is as Kennedy's advisors. We used to have a little bit longer periods.

We used to have 15 minutes more in the period a couple years ago and so we could do it and now when we changed our schedule, there's no more time for that so I think at this point I have to just cut it out. The other thing I think I would do would be to try to find someway in there for them to get up and move around. Because of this period and it's getting a little late morning by the end, the kids are starting to fade. Some of them, especially the fast readers and then they're done and waiting for the others, they're starting to, you know like a little bit checking out.

I think if I can get them up moving some how and I don't know how, I got to figure out some way to do that, that possibly, I don't know if maybe I'm going to do something where I number them off and then all of the number ones shift one space so they talk to new people and get a new perspective maybe. I don't know. I'll think of something.

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Interviewer: I think those are all good ideas. How would you describe the materials as meaningful or relevant to student's lives?

Teacher: Specifically to student's lives? I don't know that necessarily the material so much, but I like doing the question at the end. This is a litmus test question now for people when they're thinking about who to vote for and who would you trust to be in this position. That's something more relevant now. Also, like trying to bring out that idea of like the playground scrap. This is something some of them can connect to. They've had that sort of argument with somebody and a showdown in a way with their brother, or a friend or I don't know, whatever it was, they can kind of see that. Once they see it and they see that these adults were playing with nice words but they were still playing the same game, I think they can connect better.