Class: 10th Grade World History II, 1500-present

Topic: Totalitarianism

Instructional Model: This lesson will help high school World History II students understand the concept of totalitarianism through the process of concept formation. Concept formation lessons allow students to develop their own understanding and definition of the concept in a structured and guided way. Students look at some examples of the concept, find the critical attributes of the concept and combine them to form a definition of the concept, and then apply their knowledge to identify examples and non-examples. Concept formation lessons allow students to form a more personally meaningful and applicable understanding of abstract concepts.

Overview: Students will likely be introduced to the concept of totalitarianism when learning about the period between the World Wars. During this time, especially in Europe, people were suffering from the repercussions of World War I and a global depression. This led to the rise of strong leadership in several countries, and with new technologies available such as mass media capability, states could intervene and control far more aspects of its citizens’ lives. Powerful leaders used this to their advantage to consolidate control, stifle political opposition, and maintain power, establishing very controlling and manipulative governments. These governments would be defined as totalitarian regimes.

Rationale: The concept of totalitarianism is a natural fit for a concept formation lesson. This is an abstract concept students may struggle to understand, especially since they will likely be learning about fascism and the Soviet Union’s implementation of communism around the same time they will learn about totalitarianism. Also, totalitarianism is a concept that applies to future governments in the curriculum, and a firm understanding of totalitarianism will help prepare students for government classes. A concept formation lesson is a great way for students to define an abstract concept in a very structured and guided way by looking at examples, determining critical attributes, forming a definition, and applying their own definitions to identify incidences of their concept. Students will be able to gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the concept through the use of a concept formation lesson.

Objectives:

- After the lesson, students will be able to identify the critical attributes of the concept of totalitarianism.
- After the lesson, students will be able to distinguish examples of totalitarianism from non-examples.
• After the lesson, students will be able to meet SOL Standard WHII.11b and WHII.11c, which mandates that students should be able to cite causes and assess the impact of worldwide depression in the 1930s and examine “events related to the rise, aggression, and human costs of dictatorial regimes in the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy, and Japan.”

• The lesson will help students meet NCSS Standards 3, 4, and 5 for Era 8, which require students to understand the search for peace and stability in the 1920s and 1930s, the causes and global consequences of World War II, and major global trends from 1900 to the end of World War II.

Assessment:

• Students’ responses during whole class discussion will be monitored. As the critical attributes are mentioned, favor those responses and frame their responses so the critical attributes are clearly highlighted.

• At the end of the lesson, students will complete a short worksheet that has a list of 4 examples and non-examples. Students will be asked to distinguish examples from non-examples and point out why non-examples fail to meet the criteria. To ensure that students can clearly differentiate, examples will be given from varied time periods and locations.

• Students will be asked to find two real examples of totalitarianism or to find one example and to create a fictional example to test their mastery of the concept.

Content and Instructional Strategies:

I. The Concept Definition: Totalitarianism is the practice of a centralized government that is intolerant of other political parties and opinions, rules with a single-party system, and controls all aspects of citizens’ everyday lives through state-controlled mass media, personality cultism, economic control, regulation of speech, mass surveillance, and/or the use of terror.

Critical Attributes:

• Intolerant of other political parties and opinions
• Centralized single-party government
• Government that controls all aspects of citizens’ everyday lives through state-controlled mass media, personality cultism, economic control, regulation of speech, mass surveillance, and/or the use of terror

II. Hook: To spark student interest and thought about totalitarianism, a brief 1-minute video clip from YouTube’s “Joseph Stalin: Red Terror” video will be shown (the introduction). The video discusses Stalin’s use of terror and execution on political opponents and imagined enemies even within his own party. Students will be asked to compare Stalin’s government to a democracy, such as that of the U.S. This will start the concept formation process because students will have to recognize some differences between a totalitarian government and a non-totalitarian one. At
At this point, explain to students that they will be doing a concept formation lesson. Explain that the point of the concept formation lesson is to have them construct their own definitions of a term after identifying critical attributes which they get to apply. Explain that concept formation lessons help to gain a more personal and deeper understanding of the concept.

III. Data-Retrieval Chart and Example Analysis (9-12 minutes):

- Hand out the worksheet, explaining to students how they should fill out the chart (worksheet is last page of the lesson plan). (1 minute)
- They should first fill out the chart individually. (5-8 minutes)
- As a class, walk through the answers in the chart. Make sure the “right” answers are clear, or future steps will be significantly more difficult. (3 minutes)

IV. Defining and Labeling the Concept (26-28 minutes):

- With a partner, have students jot down at least 3 differences between the examples in the chart on their worksheet. (5 minutes)
- As a class, have students share their responses to the group. Write down student responses, framing their answers to be in line with the concept. For example, put less emphasis on differences that are irrelevant to the critical attributes and more emphasis on more relevant answers. (5 minutes)
- With a partner, have students jot down at least 3 similarities between the examples on the chart. (5 minutes)
- With the chart’s help, students should be able to describe some similarities fairly quickly. As a whole class, have students share their similarities with the group. Again, write down student responses on the board framing their answers in a way that correlates with the critical attributes. (3 minutes)
- Ask students to choose 3 critical attributes of the concept out of the similarities. These should be the 3 most important similarities. Again, during this process it is important to scaffold student responses and guide them towards the “right” critical attributes so they can write a good definition and understand the main ideas. Students should write the final 3 attributes on their own paper. (3-5 minutes)
- Have students write a definition using these critical attributes on their own paper. Give an example of how to combine the attributes to form a definition so students clearly understand what they are being asked to do. (3 minutes)
- Have the class try to guess what the concept is labeled. If they fail to guess it correctly, label it for them. (2 minutes)

V. Classifying (20 minutes):
• Handout the second worksheet and ask students to identify the examples from non-examples. For non-examples, have students identify which critical attribute the example fails to meet. (10 minutes)
• On the back of the second worksheet, have students either identify two historical examples of totalitarianism or to find one historical example and to create a fictional example. Students can use their textbooks to find examples. They should briefly describe how each example meets the critical attributes. For example, they would write about how Hitler and the Nazi regime were a totalitarian government. They would then explain that he used extensive propaganda and mass terror, which meets the critical attribute about how the government maintains influence over its people. They would explain how that government then meets the rest of the critical attributes. (10 minutes)

**Resources:** Promethean board or other projector with video/audio capability, blackboard with chalk, 25 copies of both worksheets, World History textbook

**Differentiation:** Students will mostly be following a uniform process until the “Classifying” stage, where students will be allowed to find their own examples or create one of their own examples. This gives creative students an option that allows them to apply the concept creatively. Also, I will be using a brief video for visual learners, and the use of an example chart will help visual learners as well.

**Adaptations:** With a few ADHD students in class, I will ensure that they are partnered with focused students to help keep them on task. Also, the very organized and structured nature of this lesson will help students to focus and stay on task.

**Reflection:** One area of concern is the use of multiple transitions. Students will go from individual work to partner work to whole class discussion and back again. These transitions could be problematic from a classroom management perspective, so I will attempt to use a routine to get students quiet and focused quickly. I will have students raise their hand and be quiet when I raise my hand.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does one party have all political power, or are there multiple and competing parties?</th>
<th>Is the government tolerant of differing opinions?</th>
<th>How much control does the government have?</th>
<th>Does the government use terror, media control, surveillance, propaganda or a personality cult to maintain influence?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saddam Hussein ruled Iraq as a member of the controlling Ba’ath party from 1979 to 2003. His government took control of the Iraqi economy and resources and used propaganda and terror. In 1988, he ordered a poison gas attack on a village he suspected of disloyalty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Nazi party in Germany took power during the 1930s and consolidated all political power. Hitler and the Nazis used propaganda and mass media to influence the people. Additionally, they imprisoned political opponents in concentration camps where they often died from starvation, exhaustion, disease, or maltreatment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Communist party ruled the Soviet Union as a one-party government. Joseph Stalin seized control of the economy, attempting to build heavy industry and improve agriculture. Stalin’s regime used propaganda, media censorship, and attacked religion to maintain control. When peasants resisted his reforms, he had them sent to labor camps, where thousands died from overwork or were killed.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Differences:
1.
2.
3.

Similarities:
1.
2.
3.

Critical Attributes:
1.
2.
3.

Definition:

Concept Name:
Totalitarianism Worksheet

Part I: Identify whether or not the following cases are examples or non-examples of totalitarianism. If you find it a non-example, explain which critical attribute the case fails to meet.

1. Under Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt, who held the U.S. Presidency from 1933 to 1945, the Democrat-controlled Congress passed the New Deal, which gave the government far more control in everyday life than ever before. The government created jobs, regulated the stock market and banks, and created Social Security to provide pensions for the elderly. Critics resented the expansion of the role of the government. While Roosevelt seemed all-powerful, his efforts to “pack the Court” to try to get more Democrats in the Supreme Court were thwarted, and the Supreme Court was still controlled by conservative justices. After narrowly defeating the Republican candidate in the 1944 election with 53% of the popular vote, Roosevelt died from a stroke in 1945, and Harry S. Truman became president.

2. Considered an absolute monarch, King Louis XIV worked to increase royal authority, even claiming “L'état c'est moi,” or “I am the state.” He never consulted the Estates General, or the council of representatives from each social class, so this legislative body played no role in checking royal authority. Louis XIV expanded the bureaucracy, or government officials, and built up the French army. He regulated trade with mercantilist policies, bolstering the economy. While Louis XIV exerted great control, he never censored the arts or media; instead, he was considered a great patron of the arts, trying to build French culture.

3. Mussolini came to power with the Fascists in 1925, and he suppressed rival parties, rigged elections, imprisoned or murdered political opponents, and used censorship of the press to maintain control. The state was considered all-important, and much propaganda was used to influence the people to work in accordance with state goals. Fascist youth groups were formed to influence children to obey strict military discipline, parading around and chanting slogans such as “Mussolini is always right.” The Fascist party seized control of the economy, controlling industry, agriculture, and trade.

Part II: On the back of this sheet, find and briefly describe two real examples of totalitarianism that meet the critical attributes OR find one real example and create a fictional example. Make sure you describe how each example fits the critical attributes.