NCSS Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

_The Impossible Patriotism_

by Linda Skeers

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This lesson seeks to delve into the minds of 3rd- and 4th-grade students for their grasp of the concept of patriotic symbols. Reading _The Impossible Patriotism Project_ by Linda Skeers is beneficial for students as they compare and contrast their own emotions and processes of learning associated with the concept and usage of patriotic symbols to those of Caleb, the book’s main character. Students conduct research using the Internet to find patriotic symbols representing views of patriotism in various countries, such as China, Japan, Australia, England, France, or Canada. In the writing assignment, students will discuss their definitions of patriotic symbols and why the symbols are important to them. Students design and present their patriotic symbols to the class and explain their choices of design. Two rubrics have been designed and for assessment purposes: Rubric One assesses students’ written knowledge of patriotic symbols, and Rubric Two assesses students’ methods of arriving at what patriotic symbols are through artistic, visual, and creative models.

**Book Title**


**Book Summary**

In this colorful picture book by Linda Skeers, we observe Caleb struggle with the concept of patriotism as he and his fellow students prepare their class projects for display at Parents’ Night the next evening. In this lesson designed for grades 3-5, students explore the meaning of patriotism through observing Caleb’s struggle to identify a patriotic symbol that makes sense to him, as well as through their own exploration and discovery of what patriotism means to them. The students research and locate symbols of patriotism for other nations on the Internet, then formulate their own meanings of patriotism through the completion of a patriotism project.

Caleb listens intently as Mrs. Perkins assigns a patriotism project to his class in honor of Presidents’ Day. The projects are due the next day and will be displayed at Parents’ Night the following evening. His classmates become excited and immediately begin discussing what they will create for their assignments. Caleb struggles to find the true meaning of patriotism and wishes his father was there to help him with the assignment.
Suddenly, it all becomes clear for Caleb. The next day, Caleb proudly displays his patriotism project to his teacher, classmates, and the parents present for Parents’ Night. To Caleb, patriotism is best represented by his father, who wears the uniform of a soldier and serves his country proudly.

**NCSS Standards**

**Power, Authority, & Governance**

d. recognize how groups and organizations encourage unity and deal with diversity to maintain order and security

g. explore the role of technology in communications, transportation, information-processing, weapons development, or other areas as it contributes to or helps resolve conflicts

h. recognize and give examples of the tensions between the wants and needs of individuals and groups, and concepts such as fairness, equity, and justice

**Civic Ideals & Practices**

1. locate, access, organize, and apply information about an issue of public concern from multiple points of view

g. examine the influence of public opinion on personal decision-making and government policy on public issues

**Materials**

Along with a copy of *The Impossible Patriotism Project*, materials needed include the following:

1. Internet access
2. Crayons
3. Scissors
4. Markers
5. Pencils
6. Glue
7. Notebook Paper
8. Chart Paper/Pen
Objectives

Students will –

• discover how they identify with Caleb’s struggle to construct personal representations of patriotic symbols
• name what symbols people use to represent patriotism
• describe patriotic symbols as including the characteristics of respect, loyalty, and devotion to one’s country
• construct their own appropriate model, via a project, of patriotism

Procedures

Exploration/Introduction

1. Ask students to orally give symbols that they think describe patriotism.

2. Record students’ responses on chart paper.

3. Next, have students list all patriotic symbols they can think of on a piece of notebook paper.

4. Share listings. Add any new symbols to the existing list on the chart paper that were not given previously.

Development

1. Tell students that now we have identified patriotic symbols, so let’s draw two symbols you think are most patriotic.

2. Encourage students to share their drawings with the whole class and again, add any new symbols to the existing list on the chart paper that were not given previously.

3. Ask students how easy/difficult it was for them to identify patriotic symbols. Tell students, “We are going to read a story about a boy who personally struggled with identifying patriotic symbols.”

4. Read The Impossible Patriotism Project by Linda Skeers.

5. Discuss Caleb’s struggle in defining patriotism through the use of patriotic symbols.

6. Discuss critical characteristics of patriotic symbols that include the following:
Assessment

Students will creatively design their own patriotic symbols using any materials they choose. Cloth, paper/crayons, clay, or any other materials may be used for this project. Students will present their patriotic symbols to the class, explaining why they designed their symbols as they did and how they represent patriotism. Use Rubric Two — Design Your Own Patriotic Symbol.

Suggested Extension Activities

1. Students can plan a Parents’ Night to display and present their own patriotism projects.

2. Students can choose a person, event, or object they wish to honor and draw a patriotic symbol of it.

Additional References


Development (Continued)

7. Assist students in understanding the three characteristics of patriotic symbols through class discussions, real-life examples, and the construction of a whole-class definition for each characteristic.

8. Have students again orally describe patriotic symbols, comparing these responses to those given by the students at the beginning of the lesson.

9. Students will review the important patriotic symbols identified by the class by reviewing the student-created lists of patriotic symbols made earlier in the lesson.

10. Students will, as a whole group, arrive at a class description of patriotic symbols that include the three characteristics, and the importance of them.

Expansion

1. Students will conduct research on the Internet to find patriotic symbols that represent views of patriotism in various countries. Students will look for patriotic symbols that represent nations such as China, Japan, Australia, England, France, or Canada.

2. Students will complete a writing assignment, describing how they define patriotic symbols and discussing why patriotic symbols are important to them. Use Rubric One — Defining Patriotic Symbols.
Additional References


Web links


Rubric One - Defining Patriotic Symbols
http://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?b=%25%C5%2B%2F0R%5D%28%20%0A&sp=yes&

Rubric Two - Design Your Own Patriotic Symbol
http://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?b=%25%C5%2B%2F0RMP%20%0A&sp=yes&

About the Author

Sarah Hartman is currently the Technology Coordinator and Computer Teacher (for grades K-4) at Shiloh Elementary School in the Dallas County School System located in Selma, AL. She has taught one year of kindergarten and two years of fifth grade. Before that, Mrs. Hartman taught preschool and/or HeadStart to three- and four-year-olds for about ten years. Mrs. Hartman is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Elementary Education at the University of Alabama. Her foci/research interests include social studies, research, and teacher training.

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