

Winston Churchill: Political Philosophy through Maxims

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Lesson Objectives

- Students will understand the term maxim and understand its importance in persuasive writing and oration.
- Students will understand the importance of using primary sources.
- Students will understand the beliefs and ideals of Churchill and the impact that it had on his political decisions.
- Students will then apply similar philosophical principles to current world events (i.e. – War in Iraq).

Timeframe

1, 50-minute class period

Connection to Curriculum

This lesson could be used as an introductory activity for a larger unit on World War II and Churchill's influence on key decisions of the war. Although not all of the maxims pertain directly to World War II, the philosophy of war is the important factor. This lesson will be a springboard to introduce strategy and motivation of Churchill in his attempt to defeat Germany during World War II. These discussions can also jumpstart discussion on the current war in Iraq. This lesson pertains to both history and language arts in that it does make historical reference yet relies on key language arts techniques in the analysis and interpretation of language.

Activity 1 – Maxim Warm Up

- Student will be introduced to the term maxim.
 - “A maxim is a short statement that offers advice on how to live and reveals insight into the beliefs of the speaker.”
- Students will then be given a series of maxims from famous writers and philosophers that reveal an insight about life.
 - i.e. – Benjamin Franklin, Shakespeare, Lincoln, Socrates
- After a discussion of these short phrases, the focus will then shift to the words of Winston Churchill and the ways in which his words reveal his political beliefs.

Activity 2 – Churchill Maxims and Quotes

- Students will be given a series of maxims pertaining to Churchill's view of war on the SmartBoard.
 - “In war, the clouds never blow over; they gather unceasingly and fall in thunderbolts.” – *The World Crisis*
 - “War, disguise is as you may, is but a dirty, shoddy business, which only a fool would play at.” – *The Caged Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill*
 - “Never, never, never, believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides.”

- “War attracts me and fascinates my mind with its tremendous situations. What vile and wicked folly and barbarism it all is.”
- “What we need now is cool heads, without cold hearts or cold feet.”
- In groups of four to five, students will assemble and study a selected quote. Each group will be given a different quote. The students must be able to discuss the following questions in the group:
 - What is being said in the quote?
 - How is it significant to what he believes about war?
 - How does it relate to beliefs about war today?
- Students will then designate a speaker for their group who will then reiterate the comments of the group to the rest of the class.
- The class as a whole will then discuss/debate what they believe to be Churchill’s key philosophies on war based on these maxims. Students will then have the opportunity to agree or disagree with the proposed statements.

Activity 3 – Assessment: Extending Maxims

- As a final activity, students will then be asked to write a maxim on something that they strongly believe in. The topics should focus on something that is applicable to their lives.

Bibliography:

The Quotable Winston Churchill. Ed. Richard Mahoney and Hera Dalin. Churchill Memorial Library: Fulton, MO, 2005.

Churchill Maxims

1. “In war, the clouds never blow over; they gather unceasingly and fall in thunderbolts.” – *The World Crisis*
2. “War, disguise is as you may, is but a dirty, shoddy business, which only a fool would play at.” – *The Caged Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill*
3. “Never, never, never, believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides.”
4. “War attracts me and fascinates my mind with its tremendous situations. What vile and wicked folly and barbarism it all is.”
5. “What we need now is cool heads, without cold hearts or cold feet.”

Maxim # _____

1. What is being said in the quote?

2. How is it significant to what he (Churchill) believes about war?

3. How does it relate to beliefs about war today?
