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Creating Law and Order: A Content-Centered Manifest Destiny Activity

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Creating Law and Order: A Content-Centered Manifest Destiny Activity

Introduction

“If you want to build and maintain a small mining town, you must enforce the laws. The last thing anyone wants is crime and disorder to ruin everything,” suggested Alexis, a United States history student, who was a member of a group activity on improving the living conditions, economic struggles, and social problems associated with the mining town of Bodie, California. Alexis and her peers struggled in small groups as they analyzed, prioritized, and compromised various proposals to combat crime, social welfare, and immigrant assimilation and discrimination often associated with the concept of Manifest Destiny and early mining boomtowns throughout the American West. Occasionally considered a controversial topic, Manifest Destiny is often studied superficially in secondary education classrooms. Students are often exposed to the concept’s meaning and impact on the nation’s development. The conversation on Manifest Destiny in a classroom typically comes to a halt after students analyze the political and economic effects this ideology had on the country, including the Mexican American War, the Compromise of 1850, and the California Gold Rush.

Nevertheless, most curriculum-driven opportunities lack depth in analyzing the social effects beyond the Euro-American narrative and often fail to promote cooperative learning and inquiry (Shear et al., 2015). As current and former social studies teachers, we often find that students do not fully comprehend the social effects of expansion and mass migration on the development of the western region of the United States. We implemented a content-centered learning approach to foster students’ understanding of the social effects and differences among early western migrants. By exploring Manifest Destiny’s influences on early boomtowns in California, students could research, analyze, and prioritize governmental actions to minimize criminality and social division among settlers.

Aim and Purpose for a Manifest Destiny Negotiation Activity

For this activity, the lesson ‘Creating Law and Order’ was designed to investigate the social factors that negatively impacted the development of early mining boomtowns in California. Students, incorporating Robert Stahl’s four phases of thinking and decision-making, analyzed, evaluated, and prioritized a content-centered negotiation activity that required students to determine which local governmental measures might counteract the unlawfulness and social division associated with early mining boomtowns in California. Such an activity encourages students to address three essential questions: 1) To what extent did the nation’s territorial expansion westward lead to cultural diffusion and conflict between various groups? 2) In what ways is the Rule of Law necessary for peaceful coexistence? 3) When does the government have the right to interfere with social inequities, violence, and discrimination?

Historical Background of Early Mining Boomtowns

In 1844, John O’Sullivan’s manifest destiny ideology motivated James K. Polk to run for the presidency on a Democratic expansionist platform. The assumption under this belief was that God destined the United States to expand its territory across the North American continent. In

1845, Polk won the presidency on this platform and spent most of his time as President fulfilling his expansionist agenda. The following years after the election, the United States and Mexico were in a land battle over the Mexican-American border and the annexation of Texas. In 1848, the United States and Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, officially ending the Mexican-American war and granting the United States an enormous amount of western land, including the territories of California, Nevada, and Utah. Simultaneously, James Marshall discovers gold at John Sutter's Mill in California, prompting a mass migration of men from the Americas, Europe, and Asia-Pacific region to gain financial prosperity (Ngai, 2015).

From 1848 to 1941, after the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, hundreds of thousands of gold prospects swept to the western territories of the United States (Ngai, 2015). What arose was a "diverse and dynamic society" that was mainly made up of immigrants with which "transplanted peoples came into contact as part of an emerging settler society" (Chang, 2009). These emerging settler societies were initially established and coined as boomtowns because of their rapid population growth based on the hopes of becoming prosperous. The primary influence creating these towns was an "economic dream; the potential of vast wealth, available to all" (Hostetter, 2011). Boomtowns developed across the western United States and continued to see an influx of migrants worldwide.

Boomtowns were a place to call home for new settlers taking the journey to the western territories in search of gold. Nevertheless, these towns were not sustainable and were not well equipped enough to withhold the large influx of settlers migrating to the area. In these places, natural resources were scarce, economic disparities were prevalent, racial tensions were increased, and violence erupted from the inadequacy of law and order. Bodie, California, was a boomtown that experienced economic prosperity alongside social conflict and disorder. In 1859, placer gold was discovered in Bodie, California, encouraging a mass movement to the area. In 1880, the boomtown had approached its peak production in gold and reached a population of 12,000. The town would produce 90-100 million from gold and silver mining (Cody, 1956). The financial wealth of the town was increasing alongside social disorder and the absence of governmental intervention.

Bodie's population was diverse and included a multitude of nationalities. It accommodated settlers of Cornish descent alongside the Chinese, Italians, Jews, Mexicans, Germans, and Irish (Lachman, 1994). It was a boomtown that catered to a diverse population, and as a result, it often faced social conflict, including racial tension, economic disparities, violence, and concern over natural resources (Smith, 1925). Racial tensions tended to be a primary concern for Chinese immigrants and minorities that faced discrimination and unfair economic policies. Economic disparities erupted as settlers were poorly housed and not provided sufficient supplies for stability. The violence appeared as gambling and gun fighting were permitted. Moreover, concern over natural resources was ignited when there was a lack of water and lumber needed for survival. The social conflicts faced by boomtowns, including Bodie, could be traced to the absence of law and order in the area.

In the late nineteenth century, Bodie had no official governing body beyond the Bodie Mining Union, which met in the Union Hall. This town, along with others, primarily governed itself based on mining policies and gave little thought to social and civic disorder. This spiral

affected the violence, crime, and discrimination erupted in boomtowns as settlers lived without law and order. Boomtowns became a “refuge for the lawless” (Smith, 1925). However, local governments were essentially nonexistent. There was some government interference from the state and national governments. In 1850, the California legislature passed the Foreign Miners’ Tax. This tax required miners from foreign countries to pay an additional monthly fee for the right to mine in California (Swope & Gregory, 2017). This enactment would further nurture discrimination policies in boomtowns, as it was mainly enforced only towards minority groups, including the Chinese.

The Four Phases of Values Decision-Making

The notion of asking students to analyze, evaluate, and defend values-based historical and social dilemmas is not new. The concept of moral/value dilemmas was mainstreamed as early as the 1960s with the New Social Studies Projects designed to foster new and innovative content-specific curricula for grades K 12. Of particular interest was the Harvard Social Studies Project (HSSP). The Harvard Social Studies Project, viewed as groundbreaking with its emphasis on active student participation, encouraged students to become active learners, agents, and participants in history and modern life. According to Oliver & Newmann (1969), activities found within the Harvard Social Studies Project did not provide ready-made right or wrong answers to social problems or persisting issues in history. Instead, HSSP materials and activities challenged and engaged students to develop their positions and address and resolve conflicting views that faced citizens in a free society.

As the 1960s progressed to a new decade, most New Social Studies Projects faded and regulated filing cabinets or storage closets to collect dust. The backlash was directed toward the New Social Studies projects as a perceived progressive attempt to thwart young minds and introduce new curriculum strategies without proper teacher training and full educational support. As social studies sought to redefine itself in a new era of accountability, researcher and college professor Robert Stahl focused on the state of learning with social studies. Robert Stahl and colleagues, such as J. Doyle Casteel and Ronald Vansickle, believed the curriculum used within schools’ social studies classrooms across the United States was ineffective for learning. Students were primarily subjected to content transmission, which limited the use of higher-order thinking skills associated with the construction of knowledge. Systematic use of low-level thinking skills and tasks led to creating of a decision-based content-centered curriculum. The decision-making curriculum, designed on popular attributes from public issues-based New Social Studies Projects such as the Harvard Social Studies Project, provided a foundation for the critical values and decision-based analysis of content-specific curriculum.

One unique characteristic of the content-centered curriculum was the integration of cognitive psychology. Robert Stahl (1995) contended that “human knowledge, whether personal or associated with a field or discipline, is constructed internally within and by each human” (p.7). Stahl claimed that authentic learning was a result of the construction of knowledge. The term construction denoted a process of building that supported the “perspective claim that individuals spend their lives constructing or inventing their meanings, ideas, views and conceptions of the actual and imagined worlds, and interpretations of the phenomena they encounter” (p.14). As a result, students interpreted, analyzed, and enacted their values, allowing them to take ownership

of the decision-making process. By 1973, Robert Stahl and colleague J. Doyle Casteel analyzed decision-making activities and phases students encountered and developed a framework of comprehension and reasoning. Coined as content-centered learning and student-centered activities, this strategy focused on value clarification and moral development. According to Stahl (1997), students engage in four phases of inquiry during a content-centered activity and instruction: conceptual, relational, valuation, and reflective.

The first phase of thinking in the decision-making process occurs at the conceptual level. The conceptual level emphasizes student comprehension as explanatory questions such as who? Where? When? What? How much? and how many apply to content? According to Stahl (1979), students who engage in conceptual thinking attempt to create meaning and interpretations of information as they determine the premise or focus of the situation, the information given, or the problem.

The second, or relational, thinking phase focuses on the formation, relevancy, and connection to content materials used in the classroom. In this phase, the teacher may help students participate in moral reasoning by applying and analyzing studied content. The application and analysis of data and material stimulate a synthesis between the two elements, which, in turn, conjoins learned material with new meanings, connections, concepts, and possibilities (Stahl, 1995).

The moral-reasoning or valuation phase occurs when students engage in moral reasoning based on a fictional or non-fictional event or situation. Students employ moral criteria to examine, contemplate and select consequences they desire to attain or protect. The consequences might include which measures were used, how requirements or criteria were applied, which policies were followed, which situations were considered moral, and which courses of action were implemented. During the moral-reasoning phases, students are encouraged to utilize ethical criteria in potential decisions or judgments and justify such effects.

The final reflective phase occurs after the other stages are presumed complete. In the reflective phase, students examine the consistency of how they used moral criteria, how moral judgments were rendered through a declaration or public statement of the final decision, and the rationales for arriving at the situation. Questions such as: How consistent were the criteria for making decisions? How was time spent determining the appropriate conclusion? How were the ideas or options presented in the activity?

Content-Centered Learning

Predicating the four phases of decision-making is the foundation of content-centered learning. The premise of content-centered knowledge supports attaining value clarification and moral development. Indicatively, value clarification refers to desired patterns of students' statements, which measure engagement in comprehending, conceptualizing, and clarifying values (Stahl, 1979). To promote both values clarification and moral development, content-centered learning is succinct to one of the following types of dilemmas: 1) a neutral issue or context which a student may react to or consider in terms of moral belief (e.g., the building a local prison); 2) a value or moral issue which is conceivable in its extreme forms (e.g., a person

being either lawful or unlawful, or honest or dishonest); 3) a value or moral issue in conflict with another value or moral in a decision-making situation (e.g., fighting for racial justice, or spending money on spending money to combat climate change while exploring for oil); 4) a value or moral issue which causes dispute because it recognizes for two or more possible choices (e.g., a person who believes in freedom of speech having to decide how to act when there is a peaceful march of the American Nazi Party); and 5) a situation where two or more values or moral dilemmas are appropriate and may conflict (e.g., divorcing a spouse to marry another individual).

Stahl, Corbett, and Gasche (1978) contend that content-centered activities ensue from either a situation or event found in social studies content in concurrence with one or more of the five types of dilemmas. Once an event, historical dilemma, or controversial element is identified, the teacher may select from five distinct decision-making formats that students can employ. Such strategies, developed by Robert Stahl, empower students to solve conflicts and problem-solving for the appropriate action or response. In the end, the rank-order, force-choice, negotiation, invention, and exploration strategies impart higher-order thinking possibilities for students in conjunction with unique opportunities to foster critical pedagogy provided the given context, conditions, and specific needs of the situation (Stahl, 1995).

Designing the Negotiation Activity

Considering the four decision-making phases, content-centered learning characteristics, and the unlawfulness associated with Manifest Destiny, the authors incorporated the negotiation decision-making strategy. The negotiation strategy, according to Casteel & Stahl (1997), is designed “to help students develop ways to make decisions where they must surrender one group of options to obtain a group of options they value more highly” (p.139). Furthermore, the negotiation strategy provides students with various situations where individuals must accept unwanted iniquity to avoid possible despair. The negotiation strategy includes four essential elements. First, a story provides a context where individuals or groups confront the need to select highly valued options. Second, a list of nine or more options from which a student or group must choose the third of available options most preferred and the third of opportunities surrendered. Third, a decision sheet in which a student or group records both preferred and undesired options ensures the first group of options is obtained. Fourth, a series of questions indicates the questions raised during the follow-up discussion.

Individual and group decision sheets give students a structure to complete the final decision tasks. Decision sheets aid students in critically examining the basis for their choices, actions, and consequences. Students are often instructed to list the positive effects of their preferred options and the adverse effects that might result from rejected options. When a student or group has completed the decision sheets provided, they have generalized that three options are best and three are less desirable. Students or group members list the probable consequences of each of these decisions.

Procedure and Preparation for the Teacher

For the Teacher

It can be challenging to incorporate curriculum-driven opportunities that promote cooperative learning and inquiry when studying westward expansion's social, economic, and political effects due to the assertion of surface-level state-mandated social studies standards. When teaching events connected to Manifest Destiny, topics such as the Mexican American War, the Compromise of 1850, and the California Gold Rush are briefly covered. This negotiation activity provides students with a decision-laden situation about the California Gold Rush and various governmental actions pursued by early mining boomtowns that sporadically developed during the late 19th century. This lesson advances students' cooperative abilities and fosters growth in decision-making skills by utilizing characteristics expected in the four decision-making phases.

Step One: Introduction

Set the negotiation activity in the context of what is studied and establish a purpose. To set the stage for this activity, the teacher should introduce students to the concept of Manifest Destiny and its impact on the nation's development, including the causes and consequences of the Mexican-American War, the discovery of gold in California, and the significant migratory movement westward. In addition, a brief discussion on the social and economic impact of the California Gold Rush on mining towns provides students with relevant background information before the implementation of the activity.

Step Two: Negotiation Activity Distributed

Students examine the negotiation activity individually or in small groups with critical questions about law and order, conflict and criminality, sustainability, and resourcefulness, with students explaining and analyzing possible action choices. Provide students with a personal decision sheet (Appendix A) or a group decision sheet (Appendix B). Students analyze a list of proposals used by local governments in California mining boomtowns to establish law and order, either individually or in groups. Each government proposal deals with a unique solution to the problem depicted in the situation. Students will examine the solutions and determine which three should be prioritized based on their relevance and significance. Establish a time limit for the activity and inform students of how much time will be allotted to analyze, evaluate, and prioritize the potential government proposals.

Step Three: Comprehension Development

The student synthesizes and evaluates the information provided. Provide an opportunity for students to analyze each government proposal and then have the individual student or groups assign and justify the three proposals that should be given the highest priority and three proposals that should be given the lowest priority. Students must determine each proposal's relevance, importance, and resourcefulness to defend their decisions.

Step Four: Reinforcement/Extension

Students transfer the learning of the topic with questions for review and reflection. Advise each student or group to identify and explain the top three options while justifying their reasoning for each choice. Furthermore, students will answer individually or in groups taking

part in a class discussion or providing a written rationale for review and reflection (Appendix C). The teacher may ask the following questions. What are the roles and responsibilities of the government? What would happen if we had no government? Why do we have rules and laws? To what extent did the nation's territorial expansion westward lead to conflict between various groups? When does the government have the right to interfere with social inequities, violence, and discrimination? Why might the Gold Rush be called a 'time of exploitation'? What choices did gold prospectors face in the mining towns and on their journey to the gold fields? What criteria did the student or group use in evaluating the importance, value, and effectiveness of each proposal?

Teacher-led questions are utilized to implement an inquiry-driven approach to promote active learning among students. They are expected to incorporate background knowledge and the historical context and analyze how historical events connect with modern society. The activity enforces the negotiation format and encourages students to become active participants in decision-making by developing a justification for their responses individually and as part of a group, either through the activity or discussion.

For the Student

The Date is August 1879, and the location is Bodie, California. Bodie, California, is a remote, barren town best known for its vast amount of gold. To the east of town, the mighty mines drive economic riches into the town. In the center and south of town, a lively business district emerges, edged to the west by the homes of mine management and business owners. The northern end of the town comes to life in the evenings as the dozens of saloons, gambling halls, and brothels entice miners with their expensive, immoral habits. After leaving your job as a blacksmith in Philadelphia, you migrated to Bodie in April. The thought of becoming prosperous off mining for gold was your primary motivation in relocating west. Since then, you have spent most of your time and money searching for gold deposits and surviving the harsh physical, social, and economic conditions.

The Situation: As you journey towards the bustling Bodie mine, it is a warm and dry Monday morning. You leave your tent every morning just as the sun rises above the horizon and walk a quarter of a mile to the town's gold field. You spend approximately 14 hours daily mining for gold, a strenuous, exhausting, yet financially fulfilling job. After steadily laboring all day, you leave the mine and head back to your temporary shelter. The light of the moon guides you on your walk, as there is no electricity in Bodie. On this trek, you pass many saloons, gambling halls, and brothels. You hear shouting, arguing, and the occasional gunshot sound that stems from the firing of a pistol. Your mind is racing as you try to understand what two men are quarreling about when you hear their conversation, but you give up as you realize they are not speaking in a familiar language. You begin to miss the quiet and peaceful walks you used to have back home. You stop by the local general store to pick up a meal that is double the price it would have been back home. As you enter to purchase your food, you see a 'Chinese Not Welcome' sign on the front door. The anti-Chinese signage is quite common in the town, and you have grown used to seeing discriminatory practices enforced by the vigilante group that runs the streets in Bodie. As you finally return to your tent, you plop down on your makeshift bed with a shabby quilt. Before living in Bodie, you would take a nightly bath and peruse the daily

newspaper. Unfortunately, your routine has been interrupted due to Bodie's lack of water resources and electricity. You are starting to realize that Bodie is too good to be true. Although the town is profitable, social disorder is prevalent due to the absence of a local government and the unsustainability of living conditions. Bodie is struggling to provide for and keep up with the vast influx of new settlers, including yourself.

It is now Tuesday morning, and you awaken earlier than usual to have time to grab a meal on your way to the mine. Walking to the local general store, you see a newspaper distributed at a stand. The front cover displays the image of Bodie's Union Hall and states that a local government is being formed to enforce law and order in the town. The newspaper calls for public input on the first proposals that should be prioritized to improve living conditions, economic struggles, and social problems that have plagued Bodie for some time. A public assembly will happen at the Union Hall on Friday, where a voice vote will occur. Later that evening, you sit down near a bonfire and examine the government proposals stated in the newspaper.

Student Options

Proposal A: Build a Methodist Church in the center of town to recruit missionaries to create religious unity among settlers of different faiths and backgrounds.

Proposal B: Build the Bodie Railway & Lumber Company that runs through the eastern part of town and connects to the mountains in the North, where natural resources are plentiful, including lumber and coal. Lumber is desperately needed for powering stoves, mills, and businesses.

Proposal C: Build a Bodie Police Department in the northern part of town near the saloons, gambling halls, and brothels to deal with criminal complaints and lawlessness, including gunfighting, stage robbing, murder, illegal gambling, and alcohol and drug abuse.

Proposal D: Create a ban on vigilante justice in Bodie to aid in the attack on non-white settlers, specifically Chinese and Latin American migrants. Involvement with vigilante justice would be made illegal.

Proposal E: Build a Bodie Jail in the northern part of town near the saloons, gambling halls, and brothels to house criminals for felonies and misdemeanors, and assist in making Bodie a safer place. The jail would provide accommodations for two 8x8 cells, costing approximately \$800 to build.

Proposal F: Enforce an anti-discriminatory law in Bodie that would restrict businesses from displaying unfair signage based on race. All businesses must enforce the new policy and take down discriminatory signage. Businesses that fail to comply will result in a \$100 fine.

Proposal G: Build Green Creek Power Plant approximately 12 miles out of town. The power plant would provide Bodie with new jobs and hydroelectric power for its mines, mills, and businesses. Other effects may include deforestation, damage to wildlife habitats, and reduced water flow.

Proposal H: Start a local court system at the Bodie Union Hall in the center of town led by a recent migrant, Pat Reddy, an attorney at law. Patrick Reddy is known as the best lawyer in the west, with a strong emphasis on criminal law.

Proposal I: Enforce a prohibition law that would ban the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages on Sundays. Businesses (saloons, gambling halls, and brothels) that fail to comply will result in a \$100 fine. Persons who fail to comply will be arrested and a \$25 fine.

Discussion

The authors identified a common theme among secondary social studies educators: their expressed desire for students to have more opportunities in the classroom to experience inquiry-based decision-making. Also, teachers favor self-identifying decision-making phases as a natural and necessary component of knowledge construction. Secondary U.S. History teachers reported their desire to incorporate this approach more often. This desire to facilitate opportunities for decision-making and higher-order thinking is aligned with Robert Stahl's foundational concept of the four phases of decision-making (Stahl, 1995). As a cognitive approach, Robert Stahl advocated that cognitive psychology was necessary for teaching and learning. Cognitive approaches in instruction support the theory that no one is born with previous knowledge and understanding, yet they acquire knowledge based on observation of their surroundings. Robert Stahl's decision-making phases focus on the complex processes within the brain during the cognitive stimulation of knowledge construction. The authors posit that understanding this cognitive psychology informs classroom practice and can be applied across grade bands and subject areas for positive learning outcomes.

The lesson 'Creating Law and Order' was designed to investigate the social factors that negatively impacted the development of early mining boomtowns in California. Students, incorporating Robert Stahl's four phases of thinking and decision-making, analyzed, evaluated, and prioritized a content-centered negotiation activity that required students to determine which local governmental measures might counteract the unlawfulness and social division associated with early mining boomtowns in California. Rebekah, a U.S. History teacher desiring to find more opportunities to create values-based decision-making opportunities, said,

I think decision-making opportunities are meaningful because education is very politicized right now. There is all this talk about what content is in the textbooks and threats to ban books from libraries, and people want this sort of total control for their political agendas. I want to think that, at some point, we will get a generation of human beings who can move beyond this kind of attack culture that we see in politics. And that is another reason I want people to feel empowered to express their opinions in a way they are respected by others- to move to more productive discourse. That is foundational in a content-centered lesson like 'Creating Law and Order.'

When asked to reflect on the lesson and negotiation activity, Austin, an 11th-grade U.S. History student, conceded, "This was one of the most difficult things I have had to do in a long time. I do not have any brothers or sisters, so I normally get my way. I realized today how much literal

negotiation goes into coming to a working conclusion.” Another student in Austin’s group said, “Yeah, you have to listen to your group mates and understand where they are coming from before you can decide what is best. It made me think about the positive and negative consequences from different people’s points of view.

While this decision-making lesson was written for a particular topic addressed in U.S. History classrooms, the authors advocate for using decision-making materials as a cross-curricular resource. The negotiation activity created for this lesson incorporates a format usable within all aspects of social studies and other core content areas. The negotiation decision-making format stresses the weighing of choices and the criteria for selecting such options. Negotiation’s essential function is to aid students in developing how to make decisions where they must surrender or give up options to gain or obtain options they believe hold a higher value. This format can provide students with practice coping with societal situations where an individual must accept certain negatives to avoid greater negatives. The negotiation format is one of six different decision-making lesson structures formatted by J. Doyle Casteel and Robert Stahl (1997).

Conclusion

Implementing content-centered activities that encourage students to assess decision-laden situations by emphasizing the weighing and importance of options advances students’ cooperative abilities and promotes growth in decision-making skills by utilizing components involved in Robert Stahl’s four phases of thinking and decision-making. This activity follows the negotiation approach, aiding students in developing decisions where they must concede one group of options to acquire a group of options they value more highly (Casteel & Stahl, 1997). In this activity, students analyzed, evaluated, and prioritized government proposals based on social division and unlawfulness associated with Bodie, California, an early mining boomtown, emphasizing each proposal’s relevance, importance, and resourcefulness. Thus, while students investigated the situation and developed a set of highly valued options, students participated in problem-solving to determine the consequences of their choices.

In an era of high-stakes testing, social studies state standards are becoming briefer and less specific, resulting in a less thorough study of the content area. Often, teachers do not spend a sizable amount of instructional time on inquiry, exploration, cooperative learning, and critical thinking, translating into a loss of engagement and higher-order thinking opportunities for students (Shear et al., 2015). Although this activity is a brief look into the genuine hardships migrants faced during their assimilation into western life during the Gold Rush, it promotes problem-solving, questioning, and open-mindedness among its participants as students analyze the social effects and differences among early western migrants. By exploring Manifest Destiny’s influences on Bodie, California, students research, analyze, and prioritize governmental actions that would benefit the town while practicing coping with societal situations (Casteel & Stahl, 1997). With the expressed need to increase discourse, and higher-order thinking in the secondary classroom, this activity provides students with a meaningful way to approach a historical event, typically only touched on at the surface level in state standards.

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Appendix A

Creating Law and Order – Personal Decision Sheet

Directions: For this exercise, you must assume the following conditions are real.

The Date: August 1879

The Location: Bodie, California

Introduction: Bodie, California, is a remote, barren town best known for its vast amount of gold. To the east of town, the mighty mines drive economic riches into the town. In the center and south of town, a lively business district emerges, edged to the west by the homes of mine management and business owners. The northern end of the town comes to life in the evenings as the dozens of saloons, gambling halls, and brothels entice miners with their expensive, immoral habits.

After leaving your job as a blacksmith in Philadelphia, you migrated to Bodie in April. The thought of becoming prosperous off mining for gold was your primary motivation in relocating west. Since then, you have spent most of your time and money searching for gold deposits and surviving the harsh physical, social, and economic conditions.

The Situation:

It is a warm and dry Monday morning as you journey towards the bustling Bodie mine. You leave your tent every morning just as the sun rises above the horizon and walk a quarter of a mile to the town's goldfield. You spend

Approximately 14 hours per day mining for gold is a strenuous job that is exhausting yet financially fulfilling. After steadily laboring all day, you leave the mine and head back to your temporary shelter. The light of the moon guides you on your walk, as there is no electricity in Bodie. On this trek, you pass many saloons, gambling halls, and brothels. You hear shouting, arguing, and the occasional gunshot sound that stems from the firing of a pistol. Your mind is racing as you try to understand what two men are quarreling about when you hear their conversation, but you give up as you realize they are not speaking a familiar language.

You begin to miss the quiet and peaceful walks you used to have back home. You stop by the local general store to pick up a meal that is double the price it would have been back home. As you enter to purchase your food, you see a 'Chinese Not Welcome' sign on the front door. The anti-Chinese signage is quite common in the town, and you have grown used to seeing discriminatory practices enforced by the vigilante group that runs the streets in Bodie. You finally make it back to your tent and plop down on your makeshift bed with a shabby quilt.

Before living in Bodie, you would take a nightly bath and peruse the daily newspaper. Unfortunately, your routine has been interrupted due to Bodie's lack of water resources and electricity. You are starting to realize that Bodie is too good to be true.

Although the town is profitable, social disorder is prevalent due to the absence of a local government and the unsustainability of living conditions. Bodie is struggling to provide for and keep up with the vast influx of migrants, including yourself.

It is now Tuesday morning, and you awaken earlier than usual to have time to grab a meal on your way to the mine. Walking to the local general store, you see a newspaper distributed at a stand. The front cover displays the image of Bodie's Union Hall and

states that a local government is being formed to enforce law and order in the town. The newspaper calls for public input on the first proposals that should be prioritized to improve living conditions, economic struggles, and social problems that have plagued Bodie for some time. A public assembly will happen at the Union Hall on Friday, where a voice vote will occur.

Later that evening, you sit down near a bonfire and examine the government proposals stated in the newspaper.

Proposal A: Build a Methodist Church in the center of town to recruit missionaries to create religious unity among settlers of different faiths and backgrounds.

Proposal B: Build the Bodie Railway & Lumber Company that runs through the eastern part of town and connects to the mountains in the North, where natural resources are plentiful, including lumber and coal. Lumber is desperately needed for powering stoves, mills, and businesses.

Proposal C: Build a Bodie Police Department in the northern part of town near the saloons, gambling halls, and brothels to deal with criminal complaints and lawlessness, including gunfighting, stage robbing, murder, illegal gambling, and alcohol and drug abuse.

Proposal D: Create a ban on vigilante justice in Bodie to aid in the attack on non-white settlers, specifically Chinese and Latin American migrants. Involvement with vigilante justice would be made illegal.

Proposal E: Build a Bodie Jail in the northern part of town near the saloons, gambling halls, and brothels to house criminals for felonies and misdemeanors, and assist in making Bodie a safer place. The jail would provide accommodations for two 8x8 cells, costing approximately \$800 to build.

Proposal F: Enforce an anti-discriminatory law in Bodie that would restrict businesses from displaying unfair signage based on race. All businesses must enforce the new policy and take down discriminatory signage. Businesses that fail to comply will result in a \$100 fine.

Proposal G: Build Green Creek Power Plant approximately 12 miles out of town. The power plant would provide Bodie with new jobs and hydroelectric power for its mines, mills, and businesses. Other effects may include deforestation, damage to wildlife habitats, and reduced water flow.

Proposal H: Start a local court system at the Bodie Union Hall in the center of town led by a recent migrant, Pat Reddy, an attorney at law. Patrick Reddy is known as the best lawyer in the west, with a strong emphasis on criminal law.

Proposal I: Enforce a prohibition law that would ban the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages on Sundays. Businesses (saloons, gambling halls, and brothels) that fail to comply will result in a \$100 fine. Persons who fail to comply will be arrested and a \$25 fine.

Directions: On the lines below, record your decision for each statement.

1. The three proposals that should be assigned top priority are:
 - a)

 - b)

 - c)

2. The three most important reasons why these three proposals were selected as being the *most crucial* for immediate implementation are:
 - a)

 - b)

 - c)

3. The results of these proposals that I would hope for are:
 - a)

 - b)

 - c)

4. The three proposals that should be assigned the least priority are:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)

5. The three most important reasons why these three proposals are considered the *least crucial* of all the options are:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)

Appendix B

Creating Law and Order – Group Decision Sheet

Directions: For this exercise, you must assume the following conditions are real.

The Date: August 1879

The Location: Bodie, California

Introduction: Bodie, California, is a remote, barren town best known for its vast amount of gold. To the east of town, the mighty mines drive economic riches into the town. In the center and south of town, a lively business district emerges, edged to the west by the homes of mine management and business owners. The northern end of the town comes to life in the evenings as the dozens of saloons, gambling halls, and brothels entice miners with their expensive, immoral habits.

After leaving your job as a blacksmith in Philadelphia, you migrated to Bodie in April. The thought of becoming prosperous off mining for gold was your primary motivation in relocating west. Since then, you have spent most of your time and money searching for gold deposits and surviving the harsh physical, social, and economic conditions.

The Situation:

It is a warm and dry Monday morning as you journey towards the bustling Bodie mine. You leave your tent every morning just as the sun rises above the horizon and walk a quarter of a mile to the town's goldfield. You spend approximately 14 hours per day mining for gold, a strenuous job that is exhausting yet financially fulfilling. After steadily laboring

all day, you leave the mine and head back to your temporary shelter. The light of the moon guides you on your walk, as there is no electricity in Bodie. On this trek, you pass many saloons, gambling halls, and brothels. You hear shouting, arguing, and the occasional gunshot sound that stems from the firing of a pistol. Your mind is racing as you try to understand what two men are quarreling about when you hear their conversation, but you give up as you realize they are not speaking a familiar language.

You begin to miss the quiet and peaceful walks you used to have back home. You stop by the local general store to pick up a meal that is double the price it would have been back home. As you enter to purchase your food, you see a 'Chinese Not Welcome' sign on the front door. The anti-Chinese signage is quite common in the town, and you have grown used to seeing discriminatory practices enforced by the vigilante group that runs the streets in Bodie. You finally make it back to your tent and plop down on your makeshift bed with a shabby quilt.

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states that a local government is being formed to enforce law and order in the town. The newspaper calls for public input on the first proposals that should be prioritized to improve living conditions, economic struggles, and social problems that have plagued Bodie for some time. A public assembly will happen at the Union Hall on Friday, where a voice vote will occur.

Later that evening, you sit down near a bonfire and examine the government proposals stated in the newspaper.

Proposal A: Build a Methodist Church in the center of town to recruit missionaries to create religious unity among settlers of different faiths and backgrounds.

Proposal B: Build the Bodie Railway & Lumber Company that runs through the eastern part of town and connects to the mountains in the North, where natural resources are plentiful, including lumber and coal. Lumber is desperately needed for powering stoves, mills, and businesses.

Proposal C: Build a Bodie Police Department in the northern part of town near the saloons, gambling halls, and brothels to deal with criminal complaints and lawlessness, including gunfighting, stage robbing, murder, illegal gambling, and alcohol and drug abuse.

Proposal D: Create a ban on vigilante justice in Bodie to aid in the attack on non-white settlers, specifically Chinese and Latin American migrants. Involvement with vigilante justice would be made illegal.

Proposal E: Build a Bodie Jail in the northern part of town near the saloons, gambling halls, and brothels to house criminals for felonies and misdemeanors, and assist in making Bodie a safer place. The jail would provide accommodations for two 8x8 cells, costing approximately \$800 to build.

Proposal F: Enforce an anti-discriminatory law in Bodie that would restrict businesses from displaying unfair signage based on race. All businesses must enforce the new policy and take down discriminatory signage. Businesses that fail to comply will result in a \$100 fine.

Proposal G: Build Green Creek Power Plant approximately 12 miles out of town. The power plant would provide Bodie with new jobs and hydroelectric power for its mines, mills, and businesses. Other effects may include deforestation, damage to wildlife habitats, and reduced water flow.

Proposal H: Start a local court system at the Bodie Union Hall in the center of town led by a recent migrant, Pat Reddy, an attorney at law. Patrick Reddy is known as the best lawyer in the west, with a strong emphasis on criminal law.

Proposal I: Enforce a prohibition law that would ban the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages on Sundays. Businesses (saloons, gambling halls, and brothels) that fail to comply will result in a \$100 fine. Persons who fail to comply will be arrested and a \$25 fine.

Directions: On the lines below, record your decision for each statement.

1. The three proposals that should be assigned top priority are:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
2. The three most important reasons why these three proposals were selected as being the *most crucial* for immediate implementation are:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
3. The results of these proposals that we would hope for are:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)

4. The three proposals that should be assigned the least priority are:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)

5. The three most important reasons why these three proposals are considered the *least crucial* of all the options are:
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)

Appendix C

Questions for Review and Reflection

Suggested follow-up questions to focus and guide inquiry, reflection, and learning.

1. What is the group's primary problem(s) to resolve in this situation?
2. What is the significant difference between your best proposal and worst proposal?
3. What criteria did you or your group use in evaluating the importance, value, and effectiveness of each proposal?

Extension Questions:

- What are the roles and responsibilities of the government?
- What would happen if we had no government?
- Why do we have rules and laws?
- To what extent did the nation's territorial expansion westward lead to conflict between various groups?
- When does the government have the right to interfere with social inequities, violence, and discrimination?
- Why might the Gold Rush be called a 'time of exploitation'?
- What choices did gold prospectors face in the mining towns and on their journey to the gold fields?