Che Guevara and Injustice

Estimated Time: 60-120 minutes

Injustice: To harm others by applying unequal rules and damaging another's inalienable rights and dignity.

Justice: Upholding of what is fair and right. Respecting the rights and dignity of all.

Essential Question

● What is the importance of justice in a healthy civil society?

Guiding Questions

● How does justice support individual freedom and other founding principles?
● How does injustice violate individual freedom and founding principles?
● When injustice occurs, what means are necessary to combat it? How do we know that our means are productive and just?

Objectives

● Students will identify the benefits of justice in civil society by reflecting on their own ideas on just and unjust actions.
● Students will analyze a primary source and use evidence to assess Che Guevara’s Marxist ideas and his brand of revolutionary justice for Cuba.
● Students will reflect on the importance of individual freedoms in a healthy civil society.

Procedures

● The following lesson asks students to consider the importance of justice. Students will engage with the story of Che Guevara as they consider the question: What is the importance of justice in a healthy civil society?
● The main activity in this lesson requires students to read and analyze a narrative that explores how Che Guevara’s ideas on justice led to unjust choices in his leadership. If you edit the number of discussion questions, the lesson will take closer to 60 minutes than 120 minutes.
● Students will also conduct a primary source analysis of a statement written by Guevara.
The lesson ends with reflection exercises to connect the historical example of Guevara with your students' daily lives. Additionally, the lesson includes sources used in this lesson for further reading and suggestions for cross-curricular connections.

**Resources**

**Student Resources**
- [Engage: “Just or Unjust?”](#)
- [Che Guevara and Injustice Narrative](#)
- [Primary Source: “The Social Ideas Of The Rebel Army,” Che Guevara, JANUARY 27, 1959](#)
- [Extend: Justice and Injustice Across History](#)

**Teacher Resources**
- Analysis Questions
- Virtue in Action
- Journal Activity
- Sources for Further Reading
- Virtue Across the Curriculum

**Anticipate**

- **Scaffolding Note:** You may use this activity as an entry point to your lesson.
- **Action Steps**
  - Ask students to come up with a definition and/or example of justice and injustice.
  - Ask the students to share their answers with a shoulder partner or in small groups.
  - Solicit examples from the class. Ask students to come to a class consensus on the definitions of justice and injustice. Compare student examples with BRI’s definitions of justice and injustice.

**Engage**

- **Transition** to the next activity. Have students fill out their responses in the organizer [Engage: “Just or Unjust?”](#)
- **Scaffolding Note:** You may use this activity to prepare your students and introduce the vocabulary and ideas discussed in this lesson.
● Essential Vocabulary:
  ○ Injustice: To harm others by applying unequal rules and damaging another’s inalienable rights and dignity
  ○ Justice: Upholding of what is fair and right. Respecting the rights and dignity of all.
● Set and post discussion rules before leading a class debrief on the scenarios in the “Just or Unjust?” activity, such as:
  ■ Only one person may speak at a time.
  ■ If I wish to respond to another’s comment, I will raise my hand. (Keep a posted list of names if multiple students want to speak/respond to another student’s points).
  ■ I am critical of ideas, not people.
  ■ I am open to other points of view.
○ In their small groups, ask students to view other students’ responses to the last three scenarios on TikTok, minimum wage, and banning books on the Think the Vote platform.
  ■ Think the Vote is a website run by the Bill of Rights Institute. We aim to connect students with resources to think critically about the things happening around them. It will equip students with the skills and information to engage in healthy civil discourse with fellow citizens.
  ○ If students are reluctant to share with the class, have them share with a partner or in small groups. Have partners and groups look at the Think the Vote platform and identify one comment they agree with and one that challenges their thinking about the issue.

Explore

● Transition to the Che Guevara and Injustice Narrative. Students will read and analyze the story of Che Guevara to understand the complexities of fighting for justice.
● Scaffolding Note: It may be helpful to instruct students to do a close reading of the text. Close reading asks students to read and re-read a text purposefully to ensure students understand and make connections. For more detailed instructions on how to use close reading in your classroom, use these directions. Additional reading strategies are provided for other options that may meet your students’ needs.
● Essential Vocabulary:
  ○ Communism: A political theory derived from Karl Marx, advocating class war and leading to a society where all property is...
publicly owned, and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs.

- **Capitalism**: An economic and political system in which a country’s trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit.
- **Beleaguered**: In a very difficult situation.
- **Injustice**: To harm others by applying unequal rules and damaging another’s inalienable rights and dignity.
- **Justice**: Upholding of what is fair and right. Respecting the rights and dignity of all.
- **Ardor**: Enthusiasm or passion.

- **Transition** to the analysis questions. Have students work individually, with partners, or as a whole class to answer the questions.
- **Scaffolding Note**: If there are questions that are not necessary to your students’ learning or time restraints, then you can remove them.
- **Analysis Questions**
  - Why did Che Guevara turn to Marxist ideology? What solutions did it seem to offer for the inequality and repression he found traveling around Latin America?
  - What were some examples of the brutal violence carried out immediately by the Communist revolutionaries against the Batista regime? Cite specific evidence for your answer.
  - How did Guevara justify the rebels’ violence against the Batista government? How did he justify their violence against the peasants he meant to help? How did Guevara justify his violence against members of his own revolutionary group?
  - What was Guevara’s dream for Latin America, Asia, and Africa? Based upon the experience of the victorious Communist revolutions that were imposed from above, do you think that spreading the revolution elsewhere would have promoted justice throughout the world?

- **Transition to the primary source activity and** assess Che Guevara’s Marxist ideas and his brand of revolutionary justice for Cuba.
  - Use the primary source analysis document to explore Che Guevara’s story in his own words. You may use the suggested analysis questions included in the activity.
  - **Primary Source**: “The Social Ideas Of The Rebel Army,” Che Guevara, JANUARY 27, 1959
Assess & Reflect

Virtue in Action

- **Scaffolding Note:** You may use this activity to help your students reflect on and apply the content they learned about Che Guevara and injustice.
- In his Letter from Birmingham Jail, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”
  - Summarize this quote in your own words.
  - How might your actions concerning justice and injustice affect our broader society?

AND/OR

Injustice Journal Activity

- Have students self-reflect and answer the following prompt in their journals:
  - Think about your favorite dystopian book or movie in which the government has total control over people’s lives. Describe the political, economic, and cultural means the government uses to control the people and rule unjustly. Is there a hero who values individual freedom and fights against the oppressive government? What means does the hero use to fight for freedom from oppression and justice?

Extend

Justice and Injustice Across History

- You may use this activity as an extension to your lesson. It is not included in the timeframe of the total lesson.
- Throughout history, Americans work to expose injustice and create a more just society. This activity asks students to look at examples across time and issues to make comparisons and draw conclusions about how to work for change.
- Distribute the Extend: Justice and Injustice Across History organizer to students. Have them fill out the organizer and reflection questions. They may work individually, in pairs, or small groups.
Sources & Further Reading

- Explore the following list for additional sources and further reading on Che Guevara.
  - Guevara, Ernesto Che. *Guerrilla Warfare*.
  - Guevara, Ernesto Che. *The Motorcycle Diaries*.

Virtue Across the Curriculum

- Below are corresponding literature and film suggestions to help you teach about justice and injustice across the curriculum. Sample prompts are provided for the key corresponding works. For the other suggested works or others that are already part of your curriculum, create your own similar prompts.
  - *Star Wars: A New Hope* (1977), directed by George Lucas
    - In what ways were the actions of the Empire unjust? How did the Rebels fight back against the Empire?
  - *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, by J.K. Rowling
    - Consider the actions of the Daily Prophet and Dolores Umbridge toward Harry Potter after he claimed that Lord Voldemort returned. How did Harry push back against injustice? What obstacles were in his way, and how did he overcome them?
  - *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry
    - How is the government in Jonas’ Community unjust? How does Jonas fight this?

• OTHER WORKS
  - F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*
- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*
- Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*
- *Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga’Hoole* (2010), directed by Zack Snyder
- George Orwell, *1984*
- Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*
- Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*