

Time Travel Tournament Project

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AP European History – High School

Big Idea

Students will collectively determine which historic figure was most essential to the French Revolution. They will reach a conclusion by considering whose *absence* would have prevented the Revolution from happening.

Understandings

1. Students will evaluate the causes of the French Revolution to determine which were the most important.
2. Students will consider the main ideas that influenced the French Revolution.
3. Students will determine the most influential figures in the French Revolution.

Assessment

This project will be assessed based on students' own ideas of the most important figure as well as their ability to use their knowledge of the period to justify whether they agree or disagree with their peers' suggestions.

Instructional Approach

This project is designed to take place over the course of four days.

Project Description

While trying to create your final AP European history photo project, you accidentally increase the flux across the capacitor in your camera's flash. You hear a big "bang," which knocks you out. You wake up a few feet away from your chair several minutes... earlier? After a momentary pause of confusion, you realize what happened – you've just given your camera the ability to travel through time and space.

After a few minor adjustments, your camera transports you without knocking you out. You can even pick the rough destination/time, but bigger jumps through time and space decrease the accuracy of the destination. You're trying to figure out what to do with your invention, when you remember the purpose behind the original project: studying for the AP test. It clicks – why study from a boring textbook when you have a device at your fingertips that allows you to experience the events you're reading about in person?

You set the device to the middle of Europe in the year 1650, knowing that the actual location/time may be off by a little bit. You press the shutter button and see a bright flash of light. After several seconds of tossing and turning through a rainbow of swirls, you see another flash of light. You have just traveled through time.

You feel something sharp beneath you, and realize you're in a tall tree in an unfamiliar place. Startled by the height, you lose your balance and fall out of the tree. Fortunately, you land on something soft. Unfortunately, that something soft was a person. To make matters worse, they don't seem to be doing so well after being struck by a falling human. People start to turn in your direction. They seem confused by your clothing, the weird device in your hands, and your current choice of seating. You panic and press the "return home" button you conveniently installed on your camera.

The Twist

You return home safely, vowing never try something so risky again. You open to your textbook to resume studying the traditional way. But you notice something weird – the chapter about the French Revolution seems to be missing. As you flip through the pages, nothing from 1760 onward is familiar. You realize that the person you landed on may have been of some importance and, by squishing them, you have drastically altered the timeline.

Who did you squish and why did that prevent the French Revolution?

Research

2 days

Students will have two days in class to review/research the causes of the French Revolution to answer the question above. As they research, they will decide the person they think was most essential to the existence of the French Revolution and create a short video (1-2 minutes) in which they justify their claim. The video doesn't need to be any more than a talking head; they will only be graded on the argument.

Tournament – part 1

1 day

After the research period, students will upload their videos to a central location (e.g. Google Drive). Before class, prepare a tournament bracket for the videos. During class, students will complete the tournament. Each student will receive a pair of videos (excluding their own, if possible) from which they will determine the “winner.” They will write a short paragraph to justify their decision, which will eventually be turned in.

If there is a tie (likely in the first round), pick a random student who did not already judge that bracket to be the tie breaker. The tie breaker does not need to write a justification to speed up the process.

Keep track of the winners of each bracket so that the winning videos can advance to the next round. Repeat this process (with more students judging each pair of videos as more are eliminated) until there are only four remaining videos.

Tournament – part 2

1 day

The day after the tournament, play the four remaining videos for the class. As a whole, the class will debate which video has the most convincing argument until they have reached a consensus or there is no more time in class. Students write a reflection in which they state whether they agree or disagree with the consensus (or, if no consensus, which video they would pick as the winner) with a justification. This reflection will be turned in along with the previous justifications and videos.

Skills to be Emphasized

- Students will practice critical thinking skills to make and justify their own claims as well as evaluate the claims of others.
- Students will use creativity to support their ideas since there is no way to truly know what would have happened if something was different.

Materials Needed

- Computers/other devices for viewing/creating videos
- Recommended: tournament bracket software

If devices are not available for students to make videos, this can be done as a series of mini oral presentations. Students will write a short argument for their person (instead of creating a video). They will present these arguments in person, using the same tournament structure described above.