

GlobalTribe Educational Curriculum

South Africa Lesson
Robben Island: Political Prisoners Across Borders and Time

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www.pbs.org/globaltribe

GlobalTribe is a PBS series that combines the spirit of travel with a meaningful exploration of the global issues that affect us all. On our journeys to remote corners of the world, we seek to understand in human terms the universal struggles of our planet: from healing racial wounds to saving the environment to improving the lives of the poorest among us. Our quest is also to find solutions and to meet the unsung heroes in every country who offer us hope and a path to a better tomorrow.

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Introduction / Pre-viewing

1. Before viewing GlobalTribe:
 - Ask students to describe apartheid. What was it? When and where did it occur?
 - Who is Nelson Mandela? Why is he important?
 - Other than apartheid and Nelson Mandela, what other associations do students have with South Africa?

Robben Island: Political Prisoners Across Borders and Time

Objective: Students will become familiar with political prisoners from different geographic and chronologic periods, finding similarities in their experiences and characters.

Time: Lesson can be adapted to 3-8 in-class hours.

Grade: 9-12

1. Provide students with a list of political prisoners from various points in history and parts of the world. Consider the following as a starting list, but invite students to add others: Galileo Galilei, Martin Luther King, Jr., Kim Dae-jun, Bobby Sands, Emma Goldman, Socrates, Mahatma Gandhi, Aung San Suu Kyi, Aleksander Solzhenitsyn
2. Working individually or in small groups, students should locate information about the listed political prisoners. For each person they should find the following:
 - Dates of birth and death
 - Country where imprisoned (note if different than country of origin)
 - Reason imprisoned
 - Activities while in prison
 - Achievements before and after imprisonment
 - Photo (from the web if possible)
3. Create a single class chart of bulletin board-size on which students can compile their findings.
4. Next, tell students that there are many political prisoners in the world today. Ask each student to find a prisoner whose story they would like to share with the class. Amnesty International, which features three victims of human rights violations every month as well as others through their ongoing campaigns, is an excellent starting point. Students might also find ideas through local churches which are often connected with various human rights campaigns.
5. Have students create a dossier about the person they have chosen. It should include:
 - Biographical information
 - A synopsis of the present political situation in the person's home country
 - Newspaper articles about the country, especially the political situation

Assessment

Have students write a reflection about what they've learned about political prisoners. Their writing should include connections between past and present prisoners and basic human rights issues which most of them face.

Extending

1. Ask students to write a short compare-contrast essay (three pages maximum) identifying similar characteristics in the people on the chart, the political prisoners of Robben Island, and the contemporary prisoners. What goals do they share in common? How do they behave both in and outside of prison? What characteristics do these people share that makes many view them as heroes?
2. Encourage students to write a letter to their prisoner and to start a campaign in his or her behalf, raising consciousness about this person's situation and the political issue(s) for which he or she stands.

Resources

Amnesty International
<http://www.amnesty.org/>

Amnesty International's Worldwide Appeals
<http://web.amnesty.org/web/wwa.nsf>

Amnesty International's Human Right's Links
<http://web.amnesty.org/web/links.nsf>

Standards

Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns
(<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=3&StandardID=1>)

Understands the historical perspective
(<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=3&StandardID=2>)

Understands long-term changes and recurring patterns in world history
(<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=6&StandardID=46>)

Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts
(<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/Benchmark.asp?SubjectID=7&StandardID=7>)
