

Title: Iran Hostage Crisis (1979-1981)

Author: Valerie Schrag

Course: Survey U.S. History II

Time Frame: one 90 minute seminar period

Subjects:

Primary Source Analysis, Iran Hostage Crisis

Grade Levels:

11

Classroom/Homework Activity to be performed:

- This lesson is a cooperative learning activity about presidential decision-making in a time of crisis. The students will read primary source documents related to the Iranian Hostage Crisis and, as advisors to President Carter, make recommendations about how he should respond.

Rationale:

- I believe that it is important for students to interact with primary source documents to understand the nuances of presidential decision-making in a time of crisis. President Carter's decisions regarding the hostage crisis differed from those of previous presidents and have shaped the negotiating tactics of those presidents who served after him.

Lesson objectives - the student will:

- Analyze primary source documents to draw conclusions about the Iran Hostage Crisis.
- Engage in decision-making discussions in small groups regarding the actions President Carter should take in response to the Iran Hostage Crisis.
- Assess how the students' recommendations compared with those actually taken by President Carter in 1979 and 1980.

District, state, or national performance and knowledge standards/goals/skills met:

- Kansas State Social Studies Standards – High School World History – Benchmark 4, Indicator 3: “Describes the emergence of the Middle East as an influential region in world politics (e.g., creation of the state of Israel, emerging Middle Eastern post WWII nationalism: Suez Crisis, petroleum-based interdependence).”
- Kansas State Social Studies Standards – High School U.S. History - Benchmark 5, Indicator 3: “Uses primary and secondary sources about an event in U.S. history to develop a credible interpretation of the event, evaluating on its meaning (e.g., uses provided primary and secondary sources to interpret a historical-based conclusion).”

SHOW ME STANDARDS

6. Relationships of the individual and groups to institutions and cultural traditions

7. The use of tools of social science inquiry (such as surveys, statistics, maps, documents)

Secondary materials (book, article, video documentary, etc.) needed:

- The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century (McDougal Littell) – Chapter 24, Section 3
- Introduction to “444 Days: Understanding the 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis” – available from the Presidential Timeline website (<http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/>). Click on the “Educators” link, and then click on “Educational Activities” and scroll down until you see the title of the online lesson. The introduction gives the appropriate background information for the hostage crisis.

Primary materials (book, article, video documentary, etc.) needed:

- The documents mentioned below can be accessed from the Presidential Timeline website (<http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/>). Click on “Launch the Interactive Timeline” at the Presidential Timeline home page. Next, click on the “Gallery” link. All documents can be found by using search terms “Jimmy Carter and Iran” and “Iranian Hostage Crisis.”
 - “The Gulf Arabs and Iran,” 8 December 1978
 - “The U.S. Stake in Iran,” 12 November 1979
 - “Executive Order – Blocking Iranian Government Property,” 14 November 1979
 - “Dangers if the Shah Leaves the US,” 21 November 1979
 - “Proposed International Tribunal on US-Iran Relations,” 11 December 1979
 - “U.S. Actions Against Iran,” 7 April 1980
 - “Hostage Rescue Attempt in Iran,” 25 April 1980
- Interview with President Carter on the Iranian Hostage Crisis - The online video clip can be accessed as a part of the Presidential Timeline website (<http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/>). Click on the “Educators” link and then click on “Multimedia” and scroll down to the last interview listed under President Carter.
- Excerpt from an Iran Hostage’s Diary – The diary of Robert Ode can be accessed from the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library’s website (<http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/documents/>). Use the diary entries from November 3 to December 31, 1979.
- The following documents were obtained at the 2010 Truman Library Teacher Conference.
 - memorandum for the president entitled “Iran Demonstrations,” 31 October 1979
 - letter from the American Foreign Service Association, 5 November 1979
 - letter from President Carter to the Ayatollah Khomeini, 6 November 1979
 - memorandum from Bob Beckel entitled “Congressional Reaction Iran,” 8 November 1979

Full description of activity or assignment:

1. Prior to the start of the primary source analysis, divide the students into groups of 4-5 students.
2. Engage in a review of U.S.-Iranian relations in the mid-20th century. Remind the students of the CIA activities in Iran in 1953, and discuss the importance of Iran for the U.S. both with regard to energy and to Cold War politics and alignment.
3. Distribute a printed copy of the introduction to “444 Days: Understanding the 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis” to each group. The introduction can be accessed from the Presidential Timeline website (<http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/>). Click on the “Educators” link, and then click on “Educational Activities” and scroll down until you see the title of the online lesson. The introduction gives the appropriate background information for the hostage crisis.
4. Once the students understand the situation, distribute a complete set of the primary source documents (see above) to each group. The only document that should NOT be distributed at this time is the document entitled “Hostage Rescue Attempt in Iran.” The students should read the documents individually, making notes on a separate sheet of paper of key facts to consider in deciding how the United States should respond to this crisis. Their notes should attempt to answer two key questions: What information does President Carter need to make a

decision regarding the hostage crisis in Iran? What action would you advise President Carter to take in response to this crisis?

5. After the students have been given sufficient time to read the majority of the documents, they should discuss their findings in their small groups. As a group, the students need to come to a consensus on their recommendation to President Carter. As a part of their discussion, the students must consider both the positive and negative consequences of their recommendation.
6. Each group should report their recommendation to the entire class.
7. Listen to President Carter discuss the Iran Hostage Crisis and the alternatives he faced. The online video clip can be accessed as a part of the Presidential Timeline website (<http://www.presidentialtimeline.org/>). Click on the "Educators" link and then click on "Multimedia" and scroll down to the last interview under President Carter.
8. Distribute the document entitled "Hostage Rescue Attempt in Iran." Discuss why President Carter chose this response. Also discuss the resolution of the crisis with the release of the hostages on January 20, 1981.

Full explanation of the assessment method and/or scoring guide:

- Each group will hand in the following:
 - their recommendation with a list of the positive and negative consequences of their proposed course of action
 - each student's individual notes on the documents
- Individual student grades will be calculated with a 50% weight toward the recommendation and 50% weight toward their individual notes.