



“You be the Judge?”

This activity helps students develop historical empathy by engaging in evaluative discussions. While it is acceptable to judge the past, students must be mindful of avoiding presentism—applying modern values to historical events and figures.

Step 1: Introduce the Essential Question

- Present students with an evaluative question related to a historical figure or event.

Step 2: Analyze the Sources

- Provide students with a set of primary and secondary sources related to the topic.
- Encourage students to analyze perspectives, consider biases, and think critically about the context.

Step 3: Small Group Preparation

- Divide students into small groups and assign each group to a section of the room to develop their arguments.
- Groups should discuss their stance and gather historical evidence to support their position.

Step 4: Present and Debate

- Each group presents their argument to the class.
- While listening, students take notes on each group's argument, considering the strengths and weaknesses of their claims.

Step 5: Final Verdict - Exit Ticket

- Students cast their final vote on the essential question.
- On an exit ticket, they justify their position using evidence from the sources and the discussion.

This activity, which you will see in many thinking nation units, strengthens critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and historical empathy, helping students engage deeply with the past.