



Unit: Soldiers

Lesson 1.4: The Draft (Part 3): Draft Simulation Activity

Aim: To simulate the experience of being drafted in New York in 1863.

Objective: Students gain an understanding of the draft process and New Yorkers' reactions to it by experiencing it themselves.

Materials:

1. A small slip of paper (the original names were written on pieces measuring 6" x 1", which were rolled up with rubber bands) with each male student's name on it. Arbitrarily choose several exempt names and write explanations such as:
 - Mentally or physically unfit
 - Only son of widow or elderly/sick parent
 - Wealthy—buy exemption for \$300
 - Non-voter*
 - Pay a substitute \$200 (if you can find one!)
2. Box or bingo cage
 - *African-Americans were not eligible to vote or, consequently, to be drafted. Teachers can either tell all African-American students that they are exempt (like the girls) or arbitrarily assign one or two non-voters.

Procedure:

1. Explain to class that today you will be reenacting the draft as it occurred in Brooklyn approximately 140 years ago.
2. Place all names in a box and shake well (a revolving bingo cage might lend authenticity).
3. Blindfolded, the teacher or designated student chooses names one by one. Write names of eligible draftees on the board in the order they are chosen. Explain that the first chosen will be the first to serve.
4. Allow students to reflect on the process, first in whole class discussion, then in writing. How did the girls feel? The African-American students? The exempt students? Was it fair? Why or why not? How would they change the procedure so that it was more equitable?