

The Rape of Nanking: Moral Accountability in a Time of War

Grade Level:

9-12

Objectives:

1. Students will demonstrate reading comprehension skills.
2. Students will demonstrate, through written and verbal communication, a working knowledge of four social sciences concepts- Moral Accountability, Deindividuation, Dehumanization and War Crimes.
3. Students will assess the conduct of the Japanese Army during its invasion of China.
4. Students will build written and verbal fluency.
5. Students will engage in civil, academic discussion.

Methods:

1. Critical Reading
2. Writing
3. Small-group discussion

Essential Questions: Upon completion of this lesson students will answer all of the following questions with references to specific details from their experience with the activity.

1. Why did the Japanese soldiers conduct themselves in such a barbaric way? If you were in the Japanese army at the time, would you have behaved similarly?
2. What examples of dehumanization and deindividuation can be found in this passage? Explain.
3. What justice, if any should be applied to the Japanese soldiers who participated in these acts? Does the existing context of WWII play a role in your decision? Explain.

Activity:

1. Students will review four key concepts in a large group environment- Moral Accountability, Deindividuation, Dehumanization, and War Crimes.
2. Students will be given an excerpt from Iris Chang's The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of WWII.
3. Students will review a series of questions regarding the reading.
4. Students will read the excerpt from The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of WWII.
5. Students will write one paragraph on each of the three 'Essential Questions'
6. Students will return to class with their answers written. At this point they will form groups of 3-4 and discuss their answers.

7. Some students will present the ideas of their group members to class for large-group discussion.

Assessment:

1. Three separate paragraphs will be collected from each student. Each should contain a connection between derogatory labels, physical abuses (both methods of dehumanization) and the ability of Japanese soldiers to carry out acts of violence against civilians.
2. Paragraphs should include a link between the widespread acceptance and encouragement of the violence and deindividualization. Many students might write 'everyone else was doing it,' or 'mob mentality.'
3. Students should provide anecdotal support for each of their arguments.
4. Students will use "moral accountability" and "War Crimes" in an attempt to apply justice to the soldiers who participated in the events of the passage. Naturally, students' have a wide range of moral systems- some developed more than others. Simply attempting to weigh-in on the events in terms of justice is sufficient as long as the student uses the terms properly and supports their claim with evidence from the text.
5. Discussions will be conducted in an organized fashion in that all group members will be able to describe the ideas of their peers when prompted by the teacher.
6. Students will review and assess their peers' judgments when prompted.