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Mandate of Heaven

Early China Review



About the author

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Welcome to *Mandate of Heaven!*

Covers early Chinese history from its origins to the fall of the Han Dynasty. Student teams compete to eliminate the others' supporters through a series of "combats" in which two teams answer questions until one gets one wrong. The last remaining team gains the Mandate of Heaven and becomes the new ruling dynasty.



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Preface

A couple of years ago, I found myself frustrated as a teacher. I wanted to push my students into deeper levels of thinking; however, they were not acquiring the basic knowledge they needed to get there. Most of my students know little of the world outside of inner-city St Louis, and little motivation to learn about people such as Julius Caesar, Simon Bolivar, or Saladin. So my task was to find a way to motivate them to learn while directing them towards a deeper way of thinking.

To solve this, I began to rely on my Peace Corps experience. Three years prior, I spent two years in Thailand teaching English. As in St. Louis, the students of Rong Rien Plu ta Luang were less than enthusiastic about learning English—especially the boys. To engage them, I began to use different “learning games.” These were simple, but pulled the students into the lesson and energized the material for them. The students became motivated to know the material so they could “win” the games. By playing the games regularly, the students began to learn the material in spite of themselves.

Using these experiences I was convinced that introducing review games into my classes would help increase the energy, motivation, and retention of my students. I began (as most teachers do) with the typical Jeopardy! and other such games available on the Internet. While these were effective at first, the novelty wore off quickly and I found myself back at square one.

I then decided to try and develop games of my own. Having a background in computers as well as history, I started simply, using PowerPoint as my means of delivery. Simple hyperlink games such as basketball and volleyball seemed to hold my students’ interest longer, especially when used in a “tournament” style game, but students’ enthusiasm for these games also waned after a while.

Realizing the problem was that the students wanted something unique, I began developing games for each period of time we covered. My idea was to maintain the enthusiasm and anticipation the students had for each new game. I also began to reapply my programming experience from college, opening up a new world of possibilities through PowerPoint. Now, while we studied the Romans, the review game put the students in the roles of generals vying for the throne of Emperor. When we studied the Middle Ages, students jousting against each other as knights. In addition, I began shuffling the slides so the questions would repeat throughout the game. This change allowed repetitive learning of basic facts without the struggle of rote memorization.

Introduction

The Zhou dynasty established the idea of the Mandate of Heaven, which claimed that the Emperor of China ruled through approval from the gods. If the ruler became unjust or corrupt, the gods could take away that power. When people perceived that a dynasty had lost the Mandate of Heaven, rival factions attempted to take control and become the new ruling dynasty. To do this, they had to get rid of all the supporters of rival factions.

Mandate of Heaven is a review game that covers early Chinese history from its origins to the fall of the Han Dynasty. Students will compete against each other to eliminate opposing supporters. Once all opposition has been eliminated, the last remaining team gains the Mandate of Heaven and becomes the new ruling dynasty.

Preparation

Materials:

- Interactive whiteboard
- projector
- computer with PowerPoint®

The best way to run the lesson is to have an interactive whiteboard with a projector. This allows maximum class involvement and removes the teacher to the role of judge. When opening the PowerPoint®, be sure to enable macros in order to allow the objects to move and random numbers to be rolled. If you don't have an interactive whiteboard, you can still use the PowerPoint® on a computer attached to a projector but the impact lessens to a degree. If you don't have a projector then you can use a regular whiteboard or a chalkboard, but you will have to draw the map on the board prior to class.

Divide the class into six factions (teams) before starting the game.

The Main Board

1. **Question Button:** This button connects the main board to the individual questions. Pressing it will bring up a random question on Chinese history, including philosophy and culture.
2. **Supporter icons:** Each prospective dynasty has eight supporter icons. To move these icons during the game click on the top icon and then on the box to which you want to move it.
3. **Opposition boxes:** These are spaces to move supporters to when trying to convince them to abandon other dynasties (see rules on page 6).
4. **Random Number:** To decide who will go first in each round, click the random number button. This will reveal the faction in the box below.
5. **Discard areas:** Once a team loses a supporter, click the supporter icon to move it to the discard area box that corresponds to that team. When moving icons, be sure to click inside the box and not on an icon already discarded.