Context: The Caste System in Ancient India for World History I – 9th grade

Caste System Characteristics:

* A complex social system that is a feature of Hinduism
* People are born into their caste
* A person’s caste is tied to their occupation
* People cannot change their caste
* People cannot marry or socialize outside their caste

Definition: A caste system is a complex social system in Hindu culture. It is based on a person’s occupation and birth. The person can only marry and socialize within their caste, which cannot be changed.

Overview:

This course is World History I, which covers the time period from Early Man through the Renaissance. At the time of this lesson, the class is studying ancient India. This lesson will help students to understand the caste system in India. This is an important objective because many students have trouble understanding the difference between the caste system and class structures in other societies. A major difference is how closely the caste system in India is tied to the religion Hinduism. The link between the concept of caste and Hinduism will be stressed in this lesson, as well as how the caste system is different from class.

The chart of examples is designed to help students pull out relevant information from the text. This will help students to develop note taking skills and reading skills. The information gathering sheet will help students to develop definitions which are comprehensive. These ninth grade students have difficulty extending their thoughts beyond a few words or just one sentence. This activity will help students to expand on their initial ideas and form them into sentences.

The caste system is a very complex and intricate social system that determines social status. There are five Varnas or social orders created by the Hindu god Brahman, which is the classification of people for the caste system.

1. Brahmins or high priests - These priests have the responsibilities to provide the spiritual and intellectual needs of the society.
2. Kshatriyas or the warriors and the rulers - These warriors and rulers have the responsibility to protect the society.
3. Vaisyas or the merchants and the land owners - These people were entrusted by Brahman for the agriculture and commerce of the society.
4. Sudras or the laborers and the artisans - These people are commissioned to do and perform all the human labor for the society.
5. The Untouchables - This is the lowest class with all the dirty jobs relating to bodily decay and dirt.

Instructional Model:

The concept formation model allows students to develop the characteristics of a concept for themselves and then come up with a definition. Ideally, the concept should tie into an overarching theme and/or other lessons that the students have learned. In World History I the students will return to India a few times throughout the year, and the caste system is the social structure in India each time the class returns to this country. This lesson is taught using the concept formation model because it is important for students to understand the difference between the caste system and the more familiar concept of class. Students have difficulty understanding the differences, so it will be useful for them to look more closely at the concept of the caste system in a systematic way that includes examples. This lesson is designed for a 55 minute block.

During this lesson students will see examples and non-examples of the Hindu caste system. They will not know what the concept is at this point. They will build the concept for themselves through the examples given. Individually, the students will answer a series of questions about each example. In pairs, they will list differences and similarities among the examples. We will go over these as a whole class. This will lead them to develop a list of characteristics of the concept. The characteristics will be discussed with the whole class, and the class will come up with a definition. From the definition, the students should be able to guess what the concept is; the caste system.

We will then go over the caste system in India in slightly more detail. I will introduce the levels of the caste system with a short video (link below). Then I will show the caste system pyramid on a PowerPoint slide, so the students have a visual for the concept. (This image is provided at the end of the lesson plan.) The students may wonder if there is any way to have social mobility in this system. The answer that they need to know is that a person in the lower castes can only change castes by fulfilling the duties of their present caste in this life and become reincarnated into a higher caste. This will lead into a review of Hinduism. After this, the students will see non-examples of the caste system. In other words, they will see examples of class. They will identify why these are not examples of caste.

[**http://videos.howstuffworks.com/discovery/29748-discovery-atlas-indian-caste-system-video.htm**](http://videos.howstuffworks.com/discovery/29748-discovery-atlas-indian-caste-system-video.htm)

Objectives:

* The students will be able to identify the characteristics of the caste system in India. (WHI.4b)
* The students will be able to recognize how the caste system differs from the concept of social class in our own society. (NCSS, culture, time/continuity/change, and people/places/environments)
* The students will develop their note taking skills, specifically in terms of pulling out relevant ideas from a text and expanding their explanations beyond a few words.

Students will show that they know the difference between the caste system and class by completing the chart of non-examples, which we will go over as a whole class at the end of the lesson. At that point, students should be able to explain why each non-example is not an example of the caste system using multiple reasons. The information gathering sheet will help students to accomplish the last objective. Students will be called on to share their definitions to make certain that they are creating definitions which are comprehensive.

Students will demonstrate that they have accomplished the first and third objectives at the end of class and/or at the beginning of the next class through a review discussion. They will also take an end of the unit test on ancient India and China later on.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on their answers on the charts of examples and non-examples, the characteristics list, and the definition. These answers will be assessed based on the thoughtfulness that students put into them, not necessarily if they get all the correct answers on their own. I will not be collecting and grading these sheets. The sheets are for the students to have notes on the caste system. I will walk around the room while students fill them out to assess if anyone is struggling. Students will receive feedback during the lesson as I walk around to the groups and during the section when the whole class comes together to decide on a definition. Students will be called on to share their answers, so this will also be an opportunity to assess where the class is as a whole. I will want to determine the level of confusion that students are having with the concept and the instructional model so that adjustments can be made during class and for future teachings of this topic. We will go through the non-examples chart as a whole class at the end of the lesson. This assessment is formative.

A summative assessment will be given in the form of a test at the end of the entire unit on ancient India and China. Questions on the caste system will be included. At this time, my cooperating teacher is creating and administering this test, so I will inquire into how students did on this portion of the test to see if the lesson worked.

Content and Instructional Strategies:

1. **Hook:** **Video Clip** **on YouTube** - Lunchroom scene from the movie Mean Girls [**http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZ\_qXmxdgGM**](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZ_qXmxdgGM) Students will be asked what they see in the clip and if this scene is an example of anything. This clip will be discussed again as a non-example of the caste system after students successfully identify the concept and before they move onto the non-examples sheet. Effectively, it will be the non-example that we go through together before they practice on their own. This should take less than 5 minutes. **Plan B: If the video fails to work, at this point just the fact that I am teaching instead of my CT is a hook, and I will give a good description of the type of lesson we will be engaging in. I will tell students what the clip was and we can talk about it if most of them know the scene.**
2. **Chart of Examples**: (My CT was clear that all examples must come from Hinduism, but they are in different countries and time periods.) This chart is included at the end of the lesson plan. First, I will explain the Concept Formation instructional model so that students understand how the lesson will unfold. The chart sheet is below the lesson plan. **Students will fill out this sheet individually or in pairs if they seem to have trouble.** This should take about 10-15 minutes.
3. **Differences, Similarities, Characteristics, and Definition Sheet**: This sheet is included at the end of the lesson plan. **The students will work in their pairs to come up with the differences and similarities.** These will be based on what they read in the examples and their answers in the chart. **These will be discussed as a whole class and characteristics will be developed as a whole class. Students will try to come up with a definition on their own, and then we will put together a class definition from students’ input.** This should take about 10-15 minutes.
4. **Mini-Lecture**: After students identify the concept as the caste system, there will be a short lecture on caste system and Hinduism to make sure that students have heard all of the important aspects of the topic. **This will begin with a short video (link above).** Afterwards, I will hand out the pyramid sheet so that students do not need to replicate this image in their notes, but instead pay attention to the material being presented. This pyramid is a visual representation of the material presented in the short video and part of the lecture. This should take about 10-15 minutes. **Plan B: If this video fails to work, I have the video transcript and I will read it to them and describe the various occupations and activities that they would have seen.**
5. **Non-Examples Sheet**: This sheet is included at the end of the lesson plan. First, we will revisit the clip seen at the beginning of the lesson, and discuss why the high school in Mean Girls is not an example of the caste system (beyond just that the students are not Hindu). **Students will fill these out individually, and then we will go over them as a class.** Students should provide multiple reasons for each non-example. The reasons will be based on the notes they took of the characteristics and definition that they developed earlier. This is the section when students will show what they know. Their reasoning should be based on the reading and notes that they have done throughout the lesson. This is a section where students can use their prior knowledge of what they learned about ancient Egypt and ancient Mesopotamia previously in the course. They should recognize and point out the differences and similarities of those cultures versus ancient India based on the examples and non-examples. This will help them to realize and remember that the caste system is unique to India/Hinduism. This activity should take about 10-15 minutes.

Resources:

* **Computer with Internet and PowerPoint - The students will not see the two slides with links; those were just on there because this was the easiest way to send the links to my CT so that they would be available to me for teaching. That way I will not use up time to search the Internet after the lesson begins. I will click through the slides to show each sheet as we are working on that sheet. This will help students to know what they should be working on, and when we have moved on to another activity. The last few slides are for the non-examples sheet for when we go over that sheet as a whole class. The PowerPoint has pictures of the non-examples which should bring students’ attention back to the whole class and if they recognize any pictures, they may get excited to share their answers.** **Plan B: If the PowerPoint fails to work, I will just have to make sure that students understand the lesson, which sheet they should be working on, and I will need to get their attention in another way. It will be a much dryer lesson without the visuals, especially towards the end.**
* Examples chart, Differences/Similarities sheet, Non-examples sheet – copies for each student (included at end of lesson plan)
* Copies of pyramid for each student
* Usual classroom set up, pairs
* White board and markers

**Differentiation and UDL**:

This lesson includes visuals in the forms of video clips and a PowerPoint image. It also includes text. Students will work as individuals, in pairs, and together as a whole class. They will discuss their ideas with pairs, and they will also use their notes to write the definition sentence(s). This lesson works for learners who need visuals, learners who like the organization of charts, learners who like to discuss their ideas, and learners who need to have information written down. This offers students a variety of ways to take in the information and share what they know.

This lesson challenges students because they will construct their own knowledge on the topic as they go through the steps of the concept lesson. However, there is enough scaffolding to lead students to the correct concept. This is a good thing for ninth graders that do not engage in this type of lesson very frequently.

Potential Issues:

The students do not engage in this style of lesson often, so I am concerned about some frustration on their part. I am particularly concerned about the initial examples. I tried to make them simple enough to clearly relate to the characteristics, but they may come off as too hypothetical sounding. Students should know that this was a real social system practiced for a long time. However, these types of examples seemed like the best option for having variety in the examples while still having them show all the characteristics. To assuage some of the frustration, students will have read the section in their textbooks about ancient India prior to this lesson. The caste system is mentioned in the textbook, but not in detail so this should not have students guessing the concept too early.

There may also be some issues with switching from individual work to pairs and coming back to the whole class. This lesson will be taught early in the fall, and I have not yet developed a relationship with many of the students because I have not been in my placement long. Positive relationships is the basis of my cooperating teacher’s classroom management style, and I agree with this approach but am concerned that I have not had the time to develop this as yet. If nothing else, I can work during this lesson to improve my relationship building with the students.

Reflections:

In general, this lesson would work without the technology, but it would be dryer and less engaging. It would require me to take a different approach to classroom management, hooking the students, and providing them with images of the people in different castes. The technologies that I used were simple, but they were chosen for specific reasons and purposes. In this way, they add value to the lesson. I wanted to ground this lesson in reality, so I used technologies that are available in my student teaching placement.

This lesson addresses the UDL principles. It includes visuals and audio in the form of video clips and a PowerPoint. It also includes text. I have also provided students with the video transcript so they can see the explanation in writing as well. This provides students with a variety of ways to obtain information. Students will work as individuals, in pairs, and together as a whole class. They will discuss their ideas with pairs, and they will also use their notes to write the definition sentence(s). This lesson works for learners who need visuals and/or audio, learners who like the organization of charts, learners who like to discuss their ideas, and learners who need to have information written down. This offers students a variety of ways to take in the information and share what they know.

The technology connects with the content focus through the use of the Discovery Atlas video on the caste system. This video explains and shows the various levels of the caste system and their related occupations. Students will hear the vocabulary from a native speaker, and they will see Indian people portraying the various castes. Seeing this video prior to the short lecture on the caste system will allow students to recognize what I am saying and already have a visual in mind of what I am talking about. The Mean Girls clip will help students to recognize how seemingly rigid social systems in our own culture are very different from the caste system. Typically students have difficult time conceptualizing the difference between caste and class. Using an example that they will be able to relate to in order to show the difference will be a good use of technology to achieve content goals. These two videos will help students to see examples of continuity and change over time and cultures which is an overall curriculum goal. The PowerPoint will help me to make sure that students are understanding the lesson and learning the content when we go through the similarities, differences, characteristics, and definition together. The pyramid slide will also help me to deliver content in an understandable manner that will be easier to remember.

This was the first lesson that I taught, so I was concerned about classroom management, time management, and making sure that the students understood the content. I used technology to help me with all three of these issues. The videos allowed me to hook students in and deliver content in a short amount of time. The caste system video allowed me to deliver content to students in an engaging manner that utilized the UDL principles. The PowerPoint helped me to deliver content and manage the classroom. By putting the worksheets on the projector screen, it will minimize questions and confusion on what students should be doing. By including the pictures at the end, I will be able to focus students on the task at hand and engage them in answering the questions. The pictures will allow students to notice immediately that we have switched to another task or example. It should also gain their attention is a positive way if they recognize some of the people.

The content, pedagogy, and technology all fit together in this lesson because I included technology with specific objectives in mind that relate to engaging the students, delivering content, making certain that students understand that content, and managing the classroom. The use of technology in this lesson was thought out and actually achieved all of the goals that I wanted it to. Each piece of technology was chosen and used for multiple reasons that worked together.

The advantage of using the Mean Girls clip as a hook is gain students’ attention. Many of them will be familiar with the movie and the specific scene in the clip. This should get the students to wonder what we will be doing in class that day and how Mean Girls will relate to the topic. The video explaining the caste system is an advantage because the video will show examples of the occupations of each caste. It will also have a native speaker pronouncing the words, so students will hear the words before they see them and they can be certain of the pronunciations. So students will hear the names of each caste and their associated occupations, learn their relative positions in society, and see examples of the occupations being performed.

The PowerPoint adds a few advantages. There is a blank slide which I will use to work with the class on the differences/similarities, etc. I will use the stylus to write students’ responses on the PowerPoint (or if no stylus is able to be used, I can just stop the slide show and type in the responses). This is a section that will be gone over with the whole class, so it will be perfect to have up large on the projector screen. It makes sense to do this on the PowerPoint itself rather than bother with turning off the projector, raising the screen, and writing on the board. I would have to reverse the process to go back to the PowerPoint. Other than that section, the PowerPoint is simple and mainly used for classroom management. There are a number of worksheets used in this lesson. To speed up the process, I will hand out all the sheets in the beginning of class, but then students may become confused as to which sheet we are on. The PowerPoint will be up to show them exactly which sheet they should be working on at the time. The pyramid slide will be printed and handed out to all students, but having it up on the projector screen will be useful while I give the short lecture on the caste system. Students will be able follow along easier as I am able to point to the different caste levels and descriptions. The end of the PowerPoint slideshow is for when we will go through the non-examples sheet as a class. By the end of class students are starting to become restless and lose motivation. The pictures will cue them to see that we are coming back together as a whole class and to see which example we are discussing. I actually taught this lesson, and the PowerPoint worked exactly as planned. It helped the students and me to stay on track. Everyone knew what they should be working on. The pyramid gave them a solid and easy visual to remember the castes. Many students even used the pyramid in a subsequent lesson as their example when my cooperating teacher asked them to draw something that would help them remember the caste system. The end of the PowerPoint got students excited as they recognized certain faces. They were willing to read the examples aloud and share their answers, more so than during parts of the lesson which did not have pictures.

These technologies are simple and available. I wanted to be realistic and use what is actually available in the school that I will be student teaching in. The PowerPoint is perhaps overly simple, but it is not meant to be the heart of the lesson. It is meant to be a tool to help the students focus and to keep myself on track. The videos were meant to excite students, hook them in, and provide them with visuals and audio other than just the lecture. The technology is straight forward, but it fit into my lesson well, worked properly, and accomplished exactly what I wanted it to.

**Chart of Examples**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Does the person’s social status change?  Yes/No | What religion are the people? | What determines the person’s place in society? | Do they marry or socialize with people who are different from themselves? Yes/No |
| Many rulers in ancient India practiced Hinduism. After a ruler’s death, the oldest son would take his father’s place as ruler and marry a woman who was from another ruling family. The other sons would become warriors. Warriors were seen as the defenders of the society and deserving of influence and power. They would all spend their lives in the upper levels of society. |  |  |  |  |
| Giri is a person living in India. People in the upper levels of society in India insist that Giri has bad Karma. Why else would he, like his ancestors, be born an Untouchable, if not to pay for his past lives? He is a leatherworker, and Hindu law says that working with animal skins makes him unclean, someone to avoid and scorn. |  |  |  |  |
| Ravi lives in the United States. His parents moved here from India, and they practice Hinduism. Ravi’s father is a doctor. Ravi will grow up to become a doctor, and he will marry the daughter of a doctor. \* |  |  |  |  |
| 80 percent of people in Nepal are Hindu and many of them adhere to the traditions of Hinduism. The Nepalese Brahmins (priests) are high in the social order and will be respected. They must marry someone of the same social status. Their children will follow the same path. |  |  |  |  |

\*This is an example. Not all Hindus in the U.S. today will continue this practice.

**Information Gathering Sheet**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Differences:



Concept Characteristics:



Definition:

Similarities:



**Class vs. Caste**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Why are these NOT examples of the caste system? List all reasons.

1. After the pharaoh Tutankhamen’s death, the royal vizier, Ay, married Tut’s widow and took over the throne. Ay was succeeded by the formal general, Horemheb. Neither Ay nor Horemheb were royal by birth.
2. **Sue Sylvester**: “High school is a caste system. Kids fall into certain slots. Your jocks and your popular kids up in the penthouse. The invisibles and the kids playing live-action out in the forest: bottom floor.”  
   **Will Schuester**: “And… where do the Glee kids lie?”  
   **Sue Sylvester**: “Subbasement.”
3. Oprah Winfrey was born in rural Mississippi, and she spent her early years living in poverty on her grandmother's farm. She went to live with her father in Tennessee. Oprah landed a job in radio while still in high school and began co-anchoring the local evening news at the age of 19. Her emotional ad-lib delivery eventually got her transferred to the daytime-talk-show arena, and after boosting a third-rated local Chicago talk show to first place, she launched her own production company and became a billionaire.
4. Sargon of Akkad (2334-2279 BCE) was raised by a man who was a gardener. Eventually he managed to become a prominent member of the royal court of Kish. He claimed the throne of Akkad and conquered ancient Mesopotamia.

**Video Transcript**

For centuries, caste division lay at the heart of Hindu life. At one time, the caste that a person was born into dictated their position within society. According to tradition, only those born into Brahmin castes could be priests and scholars. Kshatriya castes were the rulers and warriors, and Vaisya; the merchants and artisans. You could only enter one of these groups by being born into it. Below these three upper castes was a fourth group known as the Sudras, who were laborers and farmhands. And below them was a group that in less tolerant times was called the Untouchables; a group that once had no rights within society who carried out the most unpleasant work simply by dint of their birth.

**The Textbook**

Ellis, E.G. & Esler, A. (2011). *World History: Volume 1*. Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson Education, Inc. (pages used: 77-78)