

Leisure Pioneers Up, Up and Away

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Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that an understanding of the past is fundamental to an understanding of the present. However, historical inquiry is not simply a presentation of facts but to search for an interpretation of the past. The study of history is vital to a recreation education. It is our challenge as educators to seek not only to explain historical causality--how and why change occurs within societies and cultures, but also try to account for the endurance of tradition, understand the complex interplay between continuity and change, and explain the origins and evolution of human development, as well as the decline of institutions and ideas.

Virtually every introductory recreation course includes some part of recreation's history. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to turn these learning experiences from a teacher-centered approach to one that engages students in the complexity of historical interpretation. It is the goal of this exercise to transcend the traditional lecture approach to a more student-center approach by incorporating public speech and group decision-making processes is a unique series of debate activities. The intended result is the opportunity for focused and participatory discussion about the significance of individual recreation pioneers, as well as the key developments across different fields of recreation study and practice.

Learning Outcomes

The "Leisure Pioneers Up, Up and Away" activity is a fun and interactive way to foster critical thought and respect for the historical foundations of recreation and leisure. Personal and group reflection should always accompany active learning. The facilitator should provide opportunities for students to illustrate connections to course content and to share their own learning outcomes. In general, debate activities

enhance student learning through active engagement and classroom participation. First, classroom debates develop important professional communication skills through the incorporation of persuasive argument, public speaking opportunities, group problem-solving scenarios, and critical decision-making processes. Second, debate offers opportunities for non-traditional teacher feedback and peer evaluation. The role of discriminative and evaluative listening, as well as questioning and deliberative discussion, becomes important to every member of the classroom. Third, debate is a fun (and academic way) of practicing teamwork and conflict resolution skills. In addition, the peer-competition and public speaking often motivate students to excel in the mastery and application of key concepts. And finally, debate provides opportunities for students to move from dualistic to more relativistic frames of evaluation. Grasping the role of dialectical knowledge-construction is essential to understanding both democratic and historical processes. The activity below relies on the cooperation, modification, and negotiation implicit in the process of argumentation as an avenue for interpreting recreation history.

Learning Activity

Each student should be assigned or self-select an influential recreation and leisure pioneer from a particular field. A fairly exhaustive list of pioneers can be found in *Leisure and Life Satisfaction: Foundational Perspectives* by Edginton, Jordan, DeGraaf and Edginton. For the purposes of group work, it is important that the selected pioneers be easily identified with a particular recreation field. A possible categorization might include Community TR, Clinical TR, Commercial Rec., Tourism, Municipal and City Parks, Camp Management, Outdoor Rec., and Non-profit Rec. Here is a possible list of pioneers by context:

Municipal and City Parks – Jane Adams, Virgil K. Brown, Luther Gulick, Joseph Lee, Marie E. Zakazewska

State and National Parks – Robert Marshall, Stephen Mather, John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, Theodore Roosevelt

Outdoor Recreation – John Dewey, Kurt Hahn, Paul Petzoldt, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, Henry D. Thoreau

Therapeutic Recreation – Jane Addams, Florence Nightingale, Edith Onians, Phillippe Pinel, Benjamin Rush

Commercial Recreation – Walt Disney, Ernst Hermann, Sondre Norheim, Charles Thompson Seton, George Williams

Camp Management – Lottie (Charlotte) Gulick, Fredrick W. Gunn, Laura Mattoon, George L. Meylan, Charles R. Scott

Beyond the logistics of this activity, such a categorization provides an excellent opportunity for the facilitator to discuss the characteristics of and distinctions between recreation and leisure fields. The facilitator should encourage students to consider the web of interrelated institutions, values, and beliefs that influence recreation and leisure contexts.

As a written homework assignment, each student is required to develop a 2-3 page biography describing the influence of their pioneer during their particular culture and era. Students should be instructed to draw conclusions as to how and to what degree the accomplishments of their pioneer defined contemporary recreation and leisure practices and study. To help facilitate the debate activity for the next class period, students should also be given the following scenario:

Imagine that you are all pioneers of leisure and recreation who have been living on a deserted island call Recgri-la. Until today, no one in the world has heard of or participates in recreation. A hot air balloon capable of holding 5 people washes up on shore, and the pioneers have collectively agreed that one person should be selected from each field of recreation to escape the island. Why should your pioneer represent his/her field in educating the whole world on the benefits of recreation and leisure?

Tell the students to think of the biography as collecting evidence for their case that their pioneer should be represented on the balloon. In addition, the facilitator may want to require an outline for a 2-minute persuasive case to be given by each pioneer the following class or require role-playing during the debate.

On the due date of the biography, students should be put into groups (by field) to decide on who gets to represent their field of study on the hot air balloon. The groups should be instructed to give each pioneer in their group 2 minutes to present their persuasive case. Each group will then deliberate and collectively agree on a pioneer to represent them on the balloon. The representative pioneers should be announced to the class accompanied by an explanation for each group's decision.

In the next class, assemble the representative pioneers and announce the following scenario:

The balloon is losing air, and now it looks like only one individual will be able to stay aboard. Why should your pioneer (and field of study) deserve to continue on the balloon and educate the whole world on the benefits of recreation and leisure?

Give each representative 10 minutes to work with their group to build a case justifying the merits of their individual, as well as their field. The representatives then take turns presenting their 2-minute case speeches to the whole class. This

should be followed by 5 minutes of open cross-examination by the audience. Audience members should be prompted to use cross-examination questions as a method for constructive refutation and feedback, as well as to illustrate the weakness of arguments. To determine who will stay on the balloon and represent the whole field of recreation, the facilitator should call out each of the representative's name as students, with their heads down, vote by a show of hands for the winning pioneer.

Facilitators could easily extend the debate by voting off only one representative at a time. This option adds some competitive excitement to the activity by providing more refutation and rebuttal opportunities between the representative pioneers, as well as the audience. In this case, the vote (following the initial case speeches and audience cross-examination) should be to remove someone from the balloon, rather than to designate a winner. The exercise continues by following each elimination vote with a series of one-minute speeches by all the remaining representatives (followed by audience cross-examination), until only one pioneer remains.

Recommendations for Use

Developing a communication ethic appropriate for a debate context is an important element of facilitation success. A kitchen timer or timing device can be helpful in keeping students on task. Facilitators should clearly present the activity format and strict timing, explaining that an equitably structured debate demands that every person be provided an opportunity to speak uninterrupted. Before breaking into groups, ask them to provide their own list of rules for discussion, including respect for other's opinions, avoiding disparaging or loaded language, and engaging in active listening. The facilitator should also encourage respectful and cooperative group work, emphasizing the importance of utilizing problem-solving skills and conflict resolution in collective decision-making.

In addition to developing a class debate ethic, the facilitator can prepare students by discussing the skills of argumentation. Many of the significant learning outcomes from this activity result from the processes of argument composition, public speaking, deliberative group work, active listening and questioning, and critical decision-making. The facilitator should remind students to participate with intent by explaining the value of these processes to personal skill development. For example, while explaining the written activity, the facilitator could explain the importance of providing evidence and using sound reasoning to support historical claims. In addition, one could easily prepare students for composing their initial case speeches by discussing the possible criteria used to justify their position on the balloon, as well as elements of good persuasive speaking. Facilitators should demonstrate the importance of direct refutation in relating, supporting, and implicating their arguments in relation to others.

Possible class briefing discussion questions might include:

- What is the historical lineage of the study of recreation and leisure?
- What are the key differences between the fields of recreation? Similarities?
- Can you identify any significant historical trends in theory and/or practice?
- What environmental, cultural, economic, and social contexts influenced these trends?
- In what way does history influence contemporary recreation and leisure?
- Imagining the balloon scenario was true, what would the profession look like today?

References

Edginton, C.R.; Jordan, D. J., DeGraaf, D. G., & Edginton, S.R. (2002) *Leisure and Life Satisfaction: Foundational Perspectives*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill