

LESSON PLAN: THE ROLE OF EMBASSIES

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Subjects: Government/civics, international law, current events

Time: This lesson is intended to take one - two class periods.

Objectives:

1. Students will read the “Mission Briefing” for “Midnight Rescue”.
2. Students will identify the services provided by U.S. embassies abroad.
3. Students will understand the role U.S. ambassadors and embassies play in carrying out U.S. foreign policy and protecting American interests.

Overview: In this lesson, students will read to understand the mission they will undertake at the Space Center. That mission involves rescuing the staff and refugees of the Earth Embassy on a planet called New Earth. They will examine U.S. embassies and the work they do in order to better understand why they are sometimes targets of terrorist attacks. Students will consider the role embassies play and how this role sometimes varies depending on the host country. This lesson is especially relevant in a government or civics class but may be used in any social studies class in which current events or international relations are discussed.

Teacher Introduction and Background: (Prepare to teach the lesson)

In foreign relations terms, an embassy can refer both to a permanent diplomatic mission and the building in which that mission is housed. Embassies are an important part of foreign relations, since they serve as a contact point between the visiting and host nation. Through an embassy, countries can reach resolutions to problems ranging from trade tariffs to political tensions before they escalate. Typically, an embassy is staffed by representatives of the foreign service of the visiting nation, and it is housed in a permanent structure which includes staff housing, offices, and spaces for public functions.

Three primary types of staff can be found in an embassy, along with administrative support staff. Consular officers deal with things like issuing visas and handling issues which arise for travelers while they are abroad. Political officers are responsible for following the political climate in the host nation and issuing reports to their home government. Economic officers handle economic negotiations such as disputes over

taxes, tariffs, and patent negotiations. Together, the staff of the embassy is headed by an ambassador.

An ambassador is typically an appointed political figure. Most ambassadors have foreign service training, and receive additional training before they are deployed to ensure that they act as responsible representatives of their governments. In addition to members of the foreign service, embassies often use staffers from other agencies. Staff from other agencies may provide supplemental information or support to the embassy. For example, most national embassies are guarded by representatives of the military. A limited number of embassy staff may come from the host nation as well.

The diplomats or envoys which make up an embassy enjoy special privileges because of their status as political negotiators. Most nations, for example, do not attack diplomats from visiting nations. These privileges are also extended to embassies, which are usually accorded extraterritoriality, meaning that the host nation cannot enter the premises of the embassy without being specifically invited. Many refugees take advantage of this to evade persecution and prosecution in the host nation of an embassy.

In order to work for an embassy, employees must generally pass background checks and receive extensive training. Since diplomats are living representatives of their home nations, spotless characters and manners are required of embassy personnel. Typically, a diplomat is deployed for a period of several years, ensuring that he or she establishes connections in the local community and contributes to the enrichment of relations between the two countries.

American Embassies can be local targets for terrorists to express their feelings on American foreign policy. Give your students the following background on recent bombings.

August 7, 1998 the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania were bombed, killing 231 people. Four alleged operatives of Osama bin Laden were convicted of planning and executing the bombings. These bombings raised the issue of security at all U.S. embassies.

May 12, 2003, three suicide bombings hit residential housing where many Westerners lived in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, killing 25 plus the nine attackers and wounding over 200. U.S. and Saudi officials accused al-Qaida of planning the attacks. The U.S. Embassy and consulates in Saudi Arabia were temporarily closed due to threats of more attacks.

Procedures

Lesson Step 1.

Read the Mission Briefing for "Midnight Rescue" provided on the website. It provides a foundation for the mission your students will be involved with. It

introduces your students to the problem they will be solving ; it explains the world in which the story takes place and help them understand the plot, characters, and setting.

- A. Ask your students why they think American embassies and Americans living abroad are sometimes the targets of terrorism.

- B. What should the U.S. do to protect its embassies and citizens living and working abroad? Inform your students that a new, large embassy is being established in the newly sovereign Iraq. Certainly, security will be a major concern. Tell them they will now learn more about the role embassies play around the world in order to better understand why they might be targets.

For more information: African embassy bombings

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/africa/embassy_bombing/ Saudi embassies close

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/alert_05-20-03.html

Lesson Step 2:

Discussion: The Role of U.S. Embassies. Discuss the role American Embassies play abroad. List the roles on the board.

The role of a U.S. Embassy

U.S. embassies abroad fall under the head of the State Department and in general serve as diplomatic liaisons between the United States and the host country. The United States has about 250 "missions" or embassy offices around the world, and staff generally include the ambassador who leads the embassy, the deputy chief of missions who handles daily operations, and commercial, economic, agricultural, political and administrative staff.

The State Department lists the following tasks as some of the responsibilities of its embassies: prevention of war; advancing democracy and human rights; establishing economic opportunities for Americans; promoting the safety of Americans abroad; and helping refugees.

Embassy staff also issue passports, provide travel information, help if a U.S. citizen is arrested or dies abroad, and evacuate U.S. citizens from areas of conflict, according to the State Department's Web site.

Lesson Step 3:

Find the Web sites of specific embassies worldwide and information about the services they provide:

<http://www.embassyworld.com/>

<http://travel.state.gov/links.html>

<http://usembassy.state.gov/>

Have your students separate into pairs and select a specific country. Using the internet look at that country's embassy web site to the United States. The following link will be helpful in finding the web sites:

<http://www.embassyworld.com/>

Write down two things the people of that country want you to know about them in the following categories:

1. Economy and Industry
2. Government and Politics
3. History and Culture
4. People and Society
5. Travel and Leisure
6. Diplomatic Relations

Only use that country's web site to gather the information.

Present:

Have the student present their findings to each other. This could be a good starting point for doing a full country report.