

Meeting the Speakers on the Platform: Teaching Tips

For its time, William “Willard” Davis’ July 4th speech was radically progressive. The speech is included separately and in its entirety for teachers as part of this lesson (5 Speech of William Willard Davis). You may elect to share it with advanced students, or you may decide to share only excerpts, as suggested in the activities below.

Activities

1. Discuss/apply the italicized term, “universal suffrage,” in the Background Essay. Read and discuss these excerpts from Davis’ speech:

The right of every one to have a fair chance in the race of life, to own his own body and his own labor, to locomote, be happy and make happy, to look down at the earth and up at the sky, and say, ‘I am a man,’ to do unto others as he would that others should do unto him – this is all there is in equality – these are all the principles and doctrines of abolition.

The right to act for yourself, or to say who shall act for you, is higher than all human law, and no State can deprive a freeman of this right and be republican in fact.–
William Willard Davis, July 4, 1867.

Be sure all students understand the terms “abolition,” “freeman” and “republican” as used in these quotes. **NOTE** that the word “republican” as Davis uses it does not refer to a formal political party.

Working in small groups, ask students to discuss one or more of the following topics:

- Why is the right to vote important?
- Are there some people who are not allowed to vote in your state today?
- Why do some people choose not to vote when they have the right to do so?

Provide time for groups to share their thoughts with the class.

2. There are many ways that groups of people and individuals can attempt to change society.

A. Ask students to research the life and works of William “Willard” Davis and/or John G. Fee and come to class prepared to discuss the methods these men used and the impact these men had on history.

For information about William “Willard” Davis, go to the Davis Bottom History Preservation Project website

http://anthropology.as.uky.edu/sites/default/files/kas/KAD_web_W.Davis_L4_Full_v1_reduced_1.pdf

You also can access this same information directly from “6 William Willard Davis Biography,” which is part of this lesson.

You can learn more about John G. Fee at these websites:

<http://www.berea.edu/cgwc/john-g-fees/>

http://www.madisonhistoryky.org/Reverend_John_Gregg_Fee.php

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Gregg_Fee

B. You could begin this activity by allowing students to research the life and works of any person they admire who has attempted to change society. Students will prepare a presentation on the methods this person used to change society and the impact the person had. You can determine any parameters that suit your classroom needs.

3. Ask students to discuss in small groups:

- What is something you believe needs to be changed about society?
- How might you attempt to make that change?

An outgrowth of this discussion might be a community service class project or an experiment in democracy-in-action class project (or several group projects).

4. Show the *Speakers Platform* vignette (on page 3 or project the slide in the PowerPoint) and provide time for the students to apply visual thinking strategies to the vignette.

Discuss the artist’s use of light and dark values in this vignette to create the effect of sunlight and shadow. Show the whole picture (on page 4 or project the slide in the PowerPoint) and then ask: What accounts for the dappled effect of light and dark on the tablecloth? Based on the shadows the speakers cast, where is the sun?

5. Discuss the details the artist chose to include for each speaker: what they are wearing; any “props”; which direction they are looking; etc. What does each detail tell you about the individuals on the platform? What do the details tell us about the culture of the time? How do the details create a mood for this vignette? What is the mood?



