

CONNIE COOK: A DOCUMENTARY

Lesson Plan -- Connie Cook: A Documentary



This two-day framework is for classes with 50-minute periods (the film is 55 minutes in length). Longer class periods may do the screening and activities in one day.

DAY 1 -- Introduce the Subject, Start the Film

STEP 1: Introduce the film and the subject matter. Explain the short introductory activity, and note the class will watch half the film today, then the rest of the film the following day with a finishing activity. Activities / questions can be done in a small group setting, individually on a worksheet or with the entire class. Choose which works best in your classroom. Spend 10-15 minutes on this activity, before starting the film.

OPTION 1 - Small Group Activity: Break into small groups and have each group choose a facilitator and a spokesperson. Provide “why” questions for each group to discuss. You can give each group the same question, or give each group a different question. Allow five or ten minutes for discussion, then have the spokesperson give an overview of the groups responses.

- What is feminism? Is it important? Why or why not?
- What is Roe V. Wade? Is it important? Why or why not?
- What barriers did women face in terms of reproductive health prior to 1970?
- What is the role of politics in an individual’s reproductive health? What should it be?
- How many women are in your state’s Senate? Assembly? Town/village government?
- What is the ratio of women to men in political leadership roles? Does that matter? Why or why not?

OPTION 2 - Individual Activity: Have each student do an individual historical reflection. Provide list of questions (see below) for students to answer. Compare knowledge before and after the film.

OPTION 3 - Whole Class Activity: Use an electronic quiz or multiple choice / voting system for students to answer questions (see list below). List questions on Smartboard or projector with multiple choice answers. Students can anonymously vote, and see collective results. A free game app like Kahoot is a good tool for this activity (www.getkahoot.com).

Sample questions:

- Who was Connie Cook? When and where and how did she serve her country?
- What is Roe V. Wade?
- What year did Roe V. Wade happen?
- Which states legalized abortion first?
- What is the current legal status of abortion?
- How many women were in the NY Assembly in the 1960s? 1970s?

- How many women are in the NY State Assembly today?
- What is the ratio of women to men in political leadership roles?

STEP 2: Watch the Film -- lights out and press play! For 50-minute classes, watch the first 29.44 minutes. A good place to stop is after the segment on decriminalizing abortion in NY State at 29:44

DAY 2 --Finish the film, Final Activity, and Making A Difference

STEP 3: FINISH THE FILM

On day 2, finish the film. Do a quick review and explain that the second half of the film focuses more on women in religion and political leadership.

STEP 4: FINAL ACTIVITY

Facilitate the final activity. Once the film ends, let students delve into information-sharing dialogue. Explain that the idea is not to argue or convince, but to fully develop ideas and broaden every student's understanding of different issues and perspectives. Reserve the last few minutes of class to brainstorm ways for students to get involved, take a stance and make a difference.

Activity: Choose an activity that builds on the activity the day before. Provide similar, but more in-depth questions. Include more specific questions and note if or how perspectives changed.

Modes of Discussion

- Group conversation, socratic method
- Individual worksheets
- Kahoots, group vote/evaluation

Sample questions:

- REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH / ABORTION:
 - Why must we consider abortion laws?
 - What is the impact of abortion laws on our society and on individuals?
 - Does abortion ruin a woman's life?
 - What was it like pre Roe v. Wade?
 - What is like post Roe v. Wade?
 - Why might someone have an abortion?
 - What does having a child really mean?
 - What does it take to have a successful family? What is the cost in time and money?
 - What did women do in the past to deal with unwanted pregnancy? Historically what did they do? How has that changed over time?
 - Should politics be involved in this decision? Should religion?
 - How do we get men involved in this discussion? Why is it important to have consensus with women and men?

- POLITICS:
 - How does one change a law?
 - What would you do if you were a politician faced with a challenge such as George Michaels? What if you had to take a stance? Would you do what he did?
 - What are the issues that you would risk your political career for? What do you believe in? Can you hold to your convictions?
 - How do politicians stay true to their own moral code? How do they deal with the pressure?
 - What must it be like to go against your party?

- WOMEN IN POLITICS / LEADERSHIP, Connie Cook's historical significance
 - Why is this an important part of history?
 - Was Connie Cook a brave woman? Why should we remember her?
 - How many women are in the state assembly? Senate?
 - How do you feel about Connie Cook knowing she's from here and her contributions?

STEP 5: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Identify options for action so students can get involved, make a commitment and create change. It is important to act if you believe in something. We are proud of Connie Cook, she is part of local history; you can also make a difference.

Brainstorm ideas for action -- what can we do next?

- Register to vote, vote, get out the vote. Know your candidates and where they stand on issues.
- Talk to family and friends. It's a hard topic and the conversation needs to be gentle and respectful. Brainstorm ways to talk to family and friends. Can you talk to your family about it? Can you talk to your friends? Remind: we don't need to pass judgement; speak about choices and hardship and not passing judgement.
- Volunteer! Get involved with Planned Parenthood, health centers, religious institutions, political campaigns, elected officials, polling places.
- Join a club to work toward social justice.
- Invite local historians and politicians to speak or join the dialogue in your classroom.
- Take a field trip: visit a government office, Planned Parenthood, legislature, or other local leader.