

Title of Session: Social Studies Forum - PBS Avoiding Armageddon

Moderator: Michael Hutchison

Guest Speaker: Anne Harrington, WETA

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MichaelH: Everyone... welcome to tonight's Social Studies forum session.... a first for us....

MichaelH: Because we are now utilizing the NEW TAPPED IN 2 system!!!!

MichaelH has his fingers crossed and is hoping everything works A-OK

MichaelH: tonight's topic is a good one, and very topical with the current world situation

MichaelH: we have a special guest tonight, who will be discussing a very interesting PBS series

MichaelH: But, first, as always, let's open with some introductions....

MichaelH looks to see who in the assembled multitude would like to say hello and introduce themselves

RobM: Rob Morris, Teacher, Alternative High School, Green Bay, WI. (Social Studies Teacher on hold)

KathleenP: I'm Kathy and I'm a substitute teacher and grad student almost finished in NYC

EricR: Eric Reed and a tech ed credential class. We're exploring Tapped-in 2.

MichaelH is a soon to be former social studies teacher and soon to be Technology Curriculum facilitator in a school district in southwestern Indiana)

MichaelH looks to Anne and Brian

AnneGuest1: Anne Harrington, I work at WETA the public broadcasting station in Washington, DC.

BrianS: I'm a mathematics teacher with an interest in medieval history of Europe

MichaelH: as I mentioned, tonight's session is a good one, in particular with the current world situation...

MichaelH: Anne is going to discuss with us this evening, an upcoming PBS series called "Avoiding Armageddon"....

MichaelH: Anne, would you like to give us a little background on the series?

AnneGuest1: Avoiding Armageddon, the first production from Ted Turner Documentaries, examines the threats posed by nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and brings the viewers face-to-face with the people racing to use them. It looks at the explosive connection between terrorism and these weapons. Hosted by Walter Cronkite with panels moderted by Frank Sesno, the series will air next week April 14-17 at 9pm on PBS stations nationwide. (ok, that's the press release....)

MichaelH: Anne, interested persons should check their local listings for times, right?

AnneGuest1: The goal of the series is to create a nation wide dialogue on issues surrounding weapons of mass destruction. Kind of a scary topic for the classroom, but one that needs to be addressed. Yes, you should check local listings but pretty much all stations are airing "on feed" at 9pm.

MichaelH: Of course, with the current Iraqi situation, the issue of WMD (weapons of mass destruction) has been a major one in the news lately

MichaelH: Anne, there is a companion web site, right?

AnneGuest1: Yes, but also the series goes deeper than Iraq and takes a look at the root causes of terrorism...

AnneGuest1: and the very timely issues involved with the UN role in the world and "nation building"...

AnneGuest1: the web site is www.pbs.org/avoidingarmageddon

MichaelH: that's true... looking at one of the releases I have, it also includes issues in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and in other nations in the Middle East

MichaelH: Everyone, lets take a minute and look at the web site... we do things a little differently in TI2

BJ . o O (a reminder that the url is hyperlinked. Click on it to open a new window)

AnneGuest1: The producers traveled to about 20 countries collecting footage and amazing stories

MichaelH: if you look in the upper window, you'll note that the web address Anne posted is a hyperlink. Click on it, and you'll go to the web site

AnneGuest1: If you click on "Get Involved" you'll see the classroom materials

MichaelH checks to see if everyone can access the web site

BrianS: Got it.

MichaelH . o O (anyone having trouble?)

RobM: Got it. I'll look at it.

MichaelH: Anne, let me type the "Get Involved" link, so it will be in the transcript, too....

MichaelH: Ok, it's

http://www.pbs.org/avoidingarmageddon/getInvolved/involved_00.html

MichaelH: And, of course, there are resources such as lesson plans which can be used....

KathleenP: I'm sorry I'm looking and can't find it

MichaelH: Kathleen, click the link I just typed above... let me know if you can't find it, and I'll type it again

MichaelH . o O (don't worry we're ALL newbies tonight :))

MichaelH: http://www.pbs.org/avoidingarmageddon/getInvolved/involved_00.html

AnneGuest1: The classroom materials were designed for upper high school but I think can be adapted for lower grades. We've spent a lot of time looking at how these issues are presented in the classroom....and tried to present plans that are useful. I would love to have feedback on how these issues are really being taught in classes. Do you talk of war? and weapons?

MichaelH: Anne, I think there's some concern with the high school students I teach, but I wonder if they are complacent because they believe the military can just go in and stop a dictator before he uses WMDs

KathleenP: I got it thank you

BrianS: We have an ELD (English learner) social studies teacher at my school who does a unit on war and genocide, including the Holocaust.

AnneGuest1: We've tried to come up with some "solutions" based activities... things that will show them they have a say...

BrianS: He'll certainly be interested in the series and materials.

KathleenP: I think talking about weapons of mass destruction would absolutely frighten kids to death. I don't know if parents would like it. It all depends on how it is presented

MichaelH agrees with Kathleen, but knows it's an issue that needs addressing...

MichaelH: Kathleen, it's similar to what we grew up with in the Cold War....

AnneGuest1: I agree also...it scares me too....but really the more informed you are the more control you feel you have.

KathleenP: I think it needs addressing also. In hs we had a Holocaust course but I couldn't bear to take it personally.

KathleenP: I'VE SINCE EDUCATED MYSELF.

MichaelH: Brian, does the teacher in your school address the current situation in various parts of the Middle East, or in the Sub Asian area?

BrianS: I don't know. I do know that another one of our teachers addresses the India-Pakistan conflict.

AnneGuest1: Are these issues that are perhaps better addressed in an after-school or voluntary setting?

MichaelH: Anne, I think they need addressing in a classroom setting.... students need to know... need to understand

BrianS: They're so much in the news right now that some form of discussion helps to clarify to students what the issues (and dangers) are to them.

MichaelH: Brian is right... I keep reading that students need to be reassured in this conflict, similar to what they needed after 09/11

WilliamC: Apart from being a social studies teacher I was also in the military for 10 years. I find the language around "WMS" to be vague and emotional. What we were trained to expect in the military was less emotionally charged than what is covered in the media. Fact based discussion on the specific weapons themselves would likely decrease the fear.

AnneGuest1: The news can be soooo overwhelming. We felt it was absolutely necessary to present issues in a way that was informative but not frightening....

MichaelH: Anne, are there suggestions on the web page about how to adapt the materials and lessons for younger students?

RobM: Discussions of the very real danger of weapons of mass destruction used by any organization/country are imperative. I've found that these discussions, however, need to be closely mediated just because of the classroom protocol.

AnneGuest1: Yes to William...the goal of this show is to present the issues as they are. Yes, the threat is there but there is a HUGE reality check that goes along with it.

AnneGuest1: Do you find students are quite emotional about these issues?

RobM: This mediation can be student-led effectively.

KathleenP: Kids need to know that they can be part of the solution like Ann was saying. Showing children that they can help and be a part of a bigger picture is very helpful to them. I live down the block from where the Dominican flight went down on 11-12-01 and we were houses away I calmed my screaming kids down by showing them how to help others that needed us in their time of need. That was after 9-11 and my husband having to escape the city. These kids should have been shell shocked but we worked through our fears and talked a lot. talking is good.

MichaelH: Anne, I haven't seen a lot of emotion... but definitely a lot of interest

MichaelH: Our National Guard unit was mobilized, and several students have family and friends sent to the war zone

RobM: And yes, there is an emotional involvement, especially with youth with siblings/relatives directly involved with war.

BrianS: In a sense, the original WMD was the "atom bomb", which conjures up a specific image. The phrase WMD now refers to a whole category of weapons including chemical agents and germs. It's a nebulous category that carries the emotional impact of an atom bomb.

AnneGuest1: It has taken a lot of time and research for the producers to cover today's WMDs.

AnneGuest1: There is a lot that is unknown....

RobM: There is also the element of indifference in more of the students. When anti-war students begin to square off with pro-war students, a section of the classes usually "unplug."

AnneGuest1: Is that from the parents? Or information overload.

KathleenP: Probably both

MichaelH: I wonder if part of the "indifference" is because of the media coverage... based on what I've seen... we can't do anything wrong... laser guided bombs, advanced technology, and the other side doesn't have a chance, so some kids don't really see any sort of threat at all.

WilliamC: I really appreciate how mixed student's feelings are. I think it is great. They are so honest about it and acknowledge the contradictions. Very few are overly invested in one way of looking at the present conflict. Good material for discussions.

AnneGuest1: By the way, on my journey with this project, I have learned a great deal about weapons of mass destruction . If you have any specific questions I'll do my best to answer. Michael-- do you think more media literacy based lessons are an answer?

RobM: Yes, Michael. There is a sense of protective insulation here in the upper Mid-West.

KathleenP: I think students definitely see the threat in very real terms but are too frightened and it comes off as complacency

RobM: I agree with you Kathleen. Complacency and peer pressure (to not appear ignorant).

MichaelH: Anne, I certainly think that is true... my wife and I were watching one of the Centcom briefings this morning on CNN... and certainly it would be interesting to compare what we're seeing news-wise to what the Iraqi press is reporting

MichaelH: Anne would you like to show the lessons which accompany the series?

KathleenP: Me and my children actually have an emergency plan if we are attacked. It is very real to NYC children.

RobM: Or the news from Syria/Palestine/Egypt/etc.

MichaelH: Rob, even in sunny southern Indiana, we have contingency plans for dealing with anthrax and what to do in a "code red" terror alert

AnneGuest1:

yes...http://www.pbs.org/avoidingarmageddon/getInvolved/involved_02_01.html

RobM: The threat of intruders is more prevalent here.

AnneGuest1: The Indiana public broadcasting station is airing a local production in conjunction with the show. Something else that is covered in the series is America's stockpile of weapons and how to get rid of them.

MichaelH: Anne, is that the PBS affiliate in Indianapolis?

RobM: ?How to get rid of them."???

AnneGuest1: Yes, I want to tell you it's WNIN but I'm not sure...

MichaelH is not too far from the nation's supply of VX gas....

MichaelH: Anne, that sounds right.... my eldest is a student in Indianapolis... maybe I can get her to tape it for her dear old dad?

AnneGuest1: In Anniston, AL for example is the nations largest stockpile of chemical weapons...they are leaking into the ground...

KathleenP: Maybe educating our children about this will help change the future for the better.

MichaelH hopes Kathleen is right :)

AnneGuest1: there is a debate as to how to get rid of the chemicals. Incineration is proposed by the gov't but not such a bright option to the town-- in which the residents have been given duct tape and gas masks for the procedure. Kathleen- we hope so!

KathleenP: That is scary and sounds absurd to do for that poor town. Who knows the long term effects of such exposure

MichaelH: Anne, it seems like we have a lot of interested/concerned people with us this evening... what sorts of resources are there on the site for community involvement and for discussion (along with the lesson plans)?

AnneGuest1: Thanks for asking...there is also a Discussion Leaders' Guide available for download on the site.

MichaelH: http://www.pbs.org/avoidingarmageddon/getInvolved/involved_02_05.html

AnneGuest1: http://www.pbs.org/avoidingarmageddon/getInvolved/involved_02_05.html

AnneGuest1: and lots of resources

MichaelH . o O (whoops)

MichaelH sees a lot of great resources on the site that can be reviewed and used in about any subject area or any grade level

KathleenP: The site looks like a great resource to open discussion with students and with our own children

AnneGuest1: anyone with feedback or questions can email me at aharrington@weta.com

MichaelH: Anne, I should know this, but what are the copyright rules on teachers recording and using the series in the classroom?

AnneGuest1: The taping rights are PBS standard 1 year. But you can download lessons and the guide at will.

MichaelH: and is the series available for sale?

AnneGuest1: Of course the PBS police have never come to a school and taken a show off the shelf =)

BrianS: ...and will there be a hardcopy book available at some point?

AnneGuest1: Yes, it is available for sale (VHS and dvd) through PBS home video.

AnneGuest1: So sorry, yes there is a companion book also available through PBS home video.

MichaelH: Anne, is the book available now for sale?

AnneGuest1: Yes. It is in bookstores nationwide.

AnneGuest1: and the usual online distributing.

MichaelH: It certainly sounds like an interesting, timely series that we should all see

AnneGuest1: Thanks everyone!

MichaelH: Anne, just a couple of housekeeping chores for me first....

RobM: Thank you Anne and all. Interesting evening.

KathleenP: Ann what age to you think is good for children to be able to watch this

AnneGuest1: You know, parts are kind of graphic. I would recommend 10th grade and up but only if you watch with them...

KathleenP: Thanks and thank you Anne for an interesting discussion!

MichaelH: Anne, I would guess that if you taped the series or got the DVDs you could view selected chapters...

MichaelH: wait a sec... before we quit for tonight... :)

AnneGuest1: Yes, that would be the perfect thing to do?

MichaelH: a couple of things...

MichaelH: first, let me tell all of you about the Social Studies forum listserv and how to get a transcript of our session tonight

MichaelH: if you would like to join the listserv, here's the address for it:

MichaelH: <http://www.tappedin.org/mailman/listinfo/ssf>

MichaelH . o O (it will be deleted from the transcript)

MichaelH: and then I want to tell everyone about our next session...

RobM: I appreciate the effort made tonight. Thank you!

MichaelH: Rob, glad you could join us :)

MichaelH: let me tell everyone about April 23....

MichaelH: We have a powerful session scheduled for that date... and one that is worthwhile for teachers and students on all grade levels...

MichaelH: I'm particularly looking forward to that session, and hope you can all pencil in that date to be here

RobM: What's on?

MichaelH: We'll have a session on a upcoming PBS film entitled "Fate Did Not Let Me Go"

MichaelH: It's a powerful film... and will be very moving... I'll let you all look at the web site, and I'll be sending you all more information about it over the weekend...

MichaelH: <http://www.fatedidnotletmego.org/main.html>

RobM: OK, Michael. Best wishes on your new job.

MichaelH: Stephen Ollendorff will be our guest for that session.....

MichaelH: Thank you, Rob....

MichaelH: time for the session will be 8 p.m. Eastern, 5 p.m. Pacific

BJ . o O (here in TI2)

MichaelH: Right, BJ!

MichaelH: I hope you'll all take a moment to look at the "Fate" website... it's great