



The Patriot's Pitchfork and other Misadventures with Nationalism

Four activities for teaching about 'love of country' in the classroom

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Introduction

The following activities can either be taught as a single unit, or separately. They are designed to challenge the expectation that there should be a unified belief about one's country – itself a form of oppression. The activities create an awareness of diverse views about patriotism. They also examine the assumption that educating people to love their country will lead to a stronger, more moral society. The first is an easy introductory activity designed to examine how important love of one's country is in relation to other important aspects of human society. It is important that students don't know what the topic is before they start, as this may affect the results.

(1) Love of Country Ranking Activity

If you have a multicultural class, you can generate insightful discussions by comparing how students rank things. In my experience, Japanese students rank love of country fairly low. This activity reflects my own process of realization: while I do have some love for my country, and my adopted country, it is not nearly as important as peace, justice or in fact, most other things on the list. (If teachers from other countries want to share results, we could create an online comparison on the GILE SIG webpage: www.gilesig.org).

1. Which of the following are most important to you? Rank them by number (1 – 16)

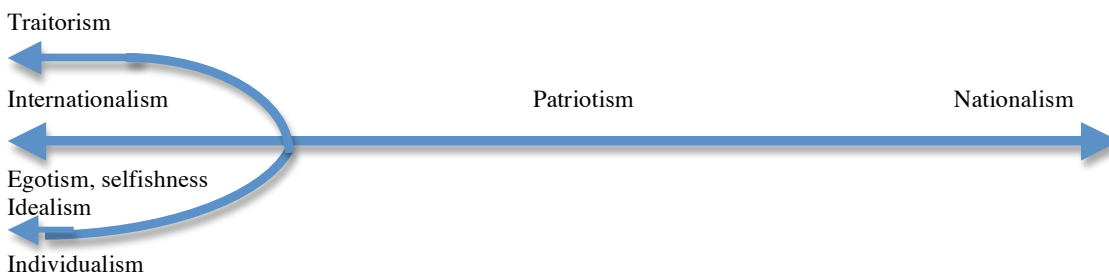
- _____ love of one's parents
- _____ love of one's country
- _____ love of all humanity
- _____ love of peace
- _____ love of oneself
- _____ love of justice
- _____ love of nature
- _____ love of one's partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)
- _____ love of all children
- _____ love of money
- _____ love of equality
- _____ love of God
- _____ love of one's children
- _____ love of life
- _____ love of the universe
- _____ love of _____.

2. The Patriot's Pitchfork

I based the following activity on the idea that patriotism ('love of one's country') and nationalism ('my country is better than any other') form part of a continuum of possible ways of thinking about one's country and about international society. I asked students to draw the following line as a continuum on a piece of paper, and to identify the word that would go on the left-hand side where the question marks are:



Like all good classes, things almost immediately went wrong! In addition to identifying internationalism, globalism or various manifestations of these, students produced egotism, traitorism, individualism, selfishness and enemies of the state. Once the dust had settled, we were left with a chart that looks like this – a pitchfork:



The pitchfork shows how easy it can be for a person who defines themselves as loving international society to be labeled as a traitor. Similarly, those who say they love peace, justice, or humanity regardless of nation, can also be labeled as selfish or as hopeless idealists.

(3) Using the Pitchfork

Groups of students are then given a pack of 26 cards labeled A-Z (below) each with a person and a belief or behaviour. Each group is asked to label the pitchfork (e.g. F could be nationalism, C could be internationalism). At the end, students place themselves on the pitchfork in relation to other behaviours. The main insight of this activity is that some problems connected with nationalism are not caused by love of country, but by not accepting that others may feel a different way. This activity can be used to show that a diversity of beliefs.

A	A raises the flag outside her/his house every morning
B	B supports his/her nation's sporting teams
C	C believes that it is important to live in another country to really love your own country
D	D wants to run for political office to stop immigration from countries of people who have a different skin color.
E	E wants to serve her/his country in the military
F	F is prepared to die for his/her country if necessary
G	G cries when the national anthem is played.
H	H thinks her/his country is the best in the world.
I	I often supports sporting teams from countries where victory would most help the local people or benefit the sport.
J	J wants to create a multicultural society where all people can live freely according to their beliefs. He/she is willing to fight anyone who says it isn't.
K	K wants the government to build a strong military so that the country won't have to depend on others for defense.
L	L refuses to stand up for the national anthem, and does not accept the legitimacy of the flag.
M	M believes that the country has already given up too much sovereignty to the United Nations and other international bodies

(4) Discussion

At the end of the class, I distribute one of four readings to students. These describe nationalism in Japan and China, plus attempts by the Abe administration to promote patriotism in schools, and those who oppose it. These can be found at:

1. Sitting out but standing tall : <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fl20080219zg.html>
2. Animosity toward Japan is again the rage in China: www.usatoday.com/news/world/2005-02-23-china-japan_x.htm
3. Right Wing Rising: www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2001/07/10/MN211532.DTL
4. Abe to play hardball with soft education system: <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20061027f1.html>

N	N thinks that true patriotism means the government of the country should always be supported when it is attacked by foreigners (even if he/she doesn't like the government)
O	O thinks true patriots always question their government when it is doing the wrong thing.
P	P believes that his/her country is not perfect
Q	Q supports the country's soldiers while they are serving in another country. Q wants her/his country to be self-reliant.
R	R thinks most wars are unnecessary, and that it's right to question using the country's forces in other countries, but loves it all the same.
S	S thinks that we need a new international system to replace national governments
T	T believes that patriotism and nationalism are both dangerous and can lead to war.
U	U believes that his/her country has helped protect the world from tyrants, and deserves to be upheld as a symbol of justice.
V	V always goes to see movies from her/his country to support the local film industry.
W	W believes strongly in the military, but believes it should only be used for defense.
X	X attacks supporters of other sporting teams, particularly when his/her country's team loses.
Y	Y feels sad when sporting teams from his her country lose.
Z	Z believes that people who want to live in her/his country should pledge allegiance to the country.

The following lesson, the students summarize the articles for their other group members, before launching into a discussion, which may be based on the following questions. Alternatively, students can

generate their own list of questions.

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- What do you think about the policy of teaching students to love the flag?
- Do you think that patriotism can be taught?
- Do you think Japan's problems with youth can be solved by teaching 'moral' education?
- Did any of the teachers at your school ever choose to make a personal statement opposing patriotism (like Kimiko Nezu in Tokyo)?
- If you were a teacher in a high school, and the government decided to introduce a policy of patriotic education, what would you do?
- How do you feel when you see nationalist trucks driving through Japanese cities and towns playing patriotic songs?

- Would you ever consider joining a nationalist group? Why?
- Why do you think young people are attracted to nationalist groups?
- Do you think nationalist groups will continue to grow in strength in future in Japan?
- How did you feel when anti-Japanese riots erupted in China? Do you feel that the riots were justified? Why (not)?
- How do you feel about Nationalism in China? Do you think the Chinese or Koreans feel the same way about Nationalism in Japan?
- Do you think patriotism and nationalism can lead to war?



Quotes About Patriotism And Nationalism



My Country

My country, right or wrong. - Stephen Decatur

The peace and welfare of this and coming generations of Americans will be secure only as we cling to the watchword of true patriotism: "Our country -- when right to be kept right; when wrong to be put right."
- Carl Schurz

"My country, right or wrong" is a thing no patriot would ever think of saying except in a desperate case. It is like saying "My mother, drunk or sober."
- G. K. Chesterton

What do we mean by patriotism? I suggest that what we mean is a sense of national responsibility... a patriotism which is not short, frenzied outbursts of emotion, but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime.
- Adlai Stevenson

Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. - J. F. Kennedy

Patriotism, Loyalty and Conscience

Patriotism means unqualified and unwavering love for the nation, which implies not uncritical eagerness to serve, nor support for unjust claims, but frank assessment of its vices and sins, and penitence for them.
- Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The highest patriotism is not a blind acceptance of official policy, but a love of one's country deep enough to call her to a higher plain. - G. McGovern

Our country is not the only thing to which we owe allegiance. It is also owed to justice and to humanity. Patriotism consists not in waving the flag, but in striving that our country shall be righteous as well as strong.
- James Bryce

Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone.
- Edith Cavell

You're not supposed to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who says it.
- Malcolm X

We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty. When the loyal opposition dies, I think the soul of America dies with it.
- Edward R. Murrow

Never do anything against conscience even if the state demands it.
- Albert Einstein

Each man must decide for himself what is right and what is wrong, which course is patriotic and which isn't. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide against your conviction is to be an unqualified and excusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country, let them label you as they may.
- Mark Twain

Moral cowardice that keeps us from speaking our minds is as dangerous to this country as irresponsible talk. The right way is not always the popular and easy way. Standing for right when it is unpopular is a true test of moral character.
- Margaret Chase Smith