Unity in Diversity: The European Union - An Evolving Community

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For Secondary - Community College students.

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We have had 45 years of peace now. That is one of the great things we have to thank Europe for. It was what the Community's [founders] had in mind. Never again, they said, will we go to war with each other. Peace, the rule of law.

-Jacques Delors, former President of the Commission of the European Union

Rationale

January, 1995, the European Union (E.U.) opened a new chapter in its history. Austria, Sweden, and Finland joined the E.U. The initial European Economic Community (EEC), which started in the 1950s with only six member countries, is now composed of 15 states.

It has a population of 370 million people, and its territory stretches from Creta to the Arctic circle. The six billion European Currency Unit (ECU) gross national product is 10 percent higher than the United States of America and 64 percent higher than Japan. Before the end of the century, the E.U. could grow to more than 25 member states by including central and eastern European countries, as well as Malta and Cyprus.

The movement toward European integration has been an interesting case for studying how individual nation-states, through an institutional framework, engage in a continuous dialogue, trying to accommodate one another's interests and reach decisions in which none will be disadvantaged. Unity in Diversity-The European Union: An Evolving Community, designed for grades 9-12, will introduce students to the notion of community in general, and how individual entities cooperate to make decisions. Students learn about the historical events that led to the formation of the European Community, and thus will be introduced to a community in an international context.

Focusing on decision making within the European Union provides students with information and ideas to explore differing national and political interests represented by the Union. In this way, students are exposed to the institutions comprising the European Union and data on each of the Member States. With this information, students will explore the complex negotiations contributing to European integration.

Unit Goals

- to introduce students to the concepts of community, cooperation, and competition, and to help students investigate characteristics of a community
- to help students explore the need for cooperation in accomplishing a mutual goal
- to teach about Western European integration and the historical events that led to the formation of the European Union
- to help students understand the process of negotiation of key issues within the European Union, keeping in mind the different interests and perspectives of Member States and their national interests
- to introduce students to the institutional framework of the European Union as a means to demonstrate international cooperation and conflict resolution
- to recognize the tensions between national and supranational interests
- to become familiar with the political geography of Western Europe and basic information of the twelve Member States
- to develop group participation skill
- to practice analytic writing skills
- to practice examining and analyzing information
- to improve skills at negotiating, conflict resolution, debate, and logic and reasoning