

Lesson Plan: Exploring Power and Authority in a Historical Fantasy World

Title: Power and Authority in Community – Exploring Advantages and Disadvantages

Grade Level: High School

Duration: 45 minutes (15 minutes whole-class instruction/discussion, 30 minutes group/individual work)

Source Text: *Benjamin's Choice* (Historical Fantasy Novel excerpt)

Objective:

- Students will analyze different types of power or authority as represented in the novel.
- Students will explain the advantages and disadvantages of these various powers in a community.
- Students will collaborate to synthesize their ideas in creative formats (charts, puzzles, or skits).

Materials Needed:

- Copies of selected excerpts from *Benjamin's Choice* (focusing on leadership interactions and power struggles)
- Whiteboard/Smartboard and markers
- Printed worksheets featuring guided questions, a chart template, and a power puzzle activity
- Paper, pencils, and highlighters
- Optional: Internet access for research on historical examples of leadership authority

I. Introduction and Anticipatory Set (5 minutes)

A. Teacher's Opening (2 minutes)

– Greet students and provide a brief review of the reading, highlighting key characters (e.g., Benjamin, An-Shona, Jonadab, Chuma, Siloam) who represent different types of power and authority.

– Pose the essential question aloud:

“How do different types of power—political, personal, and traditional authority—influence the well-being of a community?”

B. Connect to Prior Knowledge (3 minutes)

– Ask: “Can you think of examples in real world or history where leadership styles had both benefits and drawbacks?”

– Encourage a few quick responses to build context for today's discussion.

II. Direct Instruction & Guided Discussion (15 minutes)

A. Mini-Lecture (7 minutes)

1. Define Key Terms:

- Power, Authority, Leadership, Legitimacy
- Examples from the novel:
 - Traditional or ritual leadership (e.g., the role of the Anah, the tanninim's leader)
 - Command authority resulting from strength (e.g., characters like Jonadab or Chuma who represent forceful leadership)
 - Servant leadership and mentorship (e.g., Benjamin's nurturing role)
- 2. Advantages and Disadvantages:
 - Advantages of centralized or traditional authority: clear order, preservation of customs, legitimacy
 - Disadvantages: potential for abuse, inflexibility, exclusion of alternative voices
 - Advantages of more participatory or compassionate power: inclusivity, responsiveness to community needs
 - Disadvantages: potential lack of decisiveness, vulnerability to manipulation
- 3. Use examples from the text (short quotes or paraphrases) to illustrate how characters interact and how their power impacts their community.

B. Guided Discussion and Questioning (8 minutes)

- Ask the following questions and record student ideas on the board:
 1. In *Benjamin's Choice*, which characters show power that benefits the community, and why?
 2. Which characters' authority creates division or conflict?
 3. How do traditional power structures compare with the more modern or personal forms of leadership seen in the novel?
 4. Can you identify situations where a leader's personal flaws undermine their ability to serve?
- Encourage variety of opinions and ask students to reference specific scenes from the text.

III. Independent/Group Activities (30 minutes)

Instructions:

Divide students into small groups (3–4 students per group). Provide each group with a worksheet packet containing the following components. They may work collaboratively and then share their findings with the class if time allows.

A. Activity 1 – Leadership Org Chart (15 minutes)

Task: Create a comparative chart that lists at least four types of power/authority presented in the novel.

- Column 1: Identify the type of power (e.g., Traditional/Ritual, Military/Force, Servant/Mentorship, Charismatic/Personal)
- Column 2: Provide examples of characters from the text who represent that power
- Column 3: List advantages (e.g., stability, legitimacy, unity)
- Column 4: List disadvantages (e.g., inflexibility, potential for abuse, conflict)

Discussion Prompt: "Which type of authority do you think is most beneficial for a community like Great Zimbabwe? Explain your choice."

B. Activity 2 – Role Play/Puzzle (15 minutes)

Option 1: Role Play (if space/time allows)

- Each group selects one scenario from the text (for example, the confrontation between Jonadab and Chuma, or Shona’s intervention in a conflict) and crafts a short skit (2–3 minutes) that illustrates the advantages and disadvantages of the leadership shown in that scenario.

- Discuss afterwards: “How did the leaders’ methods impact the way conflicts were resolved?”

Option 2: Power Puzzle Worksheet

- The worksheet will feature a puzzle:
 - A set of mixed statements regarding leadership outcomes.
 - Students match each statement to the correct type of power illustrated in Benjamin’s Choice.
 - Examples: “My decisions are questioned because my power is inherited rather than earned,” or “I unite the community to overcome a common threat.”
- Once finished, groups can exchange worksheets with another group to check their answers.

IV. Closure (5 minutes)

A. Whole-Class Discussion

- Ask groups to share one key insight from their chart or skit/puzzle activity.
- Reiterate the essential question: “What is the balance between different types of power in a community?”
- Summarize: Emphasize that while each form of authority has its strengths, they must be balanced to serve the community’s best interest.

B. Homework/Reflection (optional)

- Ask students to write a short reflection (one paragraph) on which form of power they believe best supports a healthy, functioning community. Encourage them to support their opinion with references from the text and real-world examples if possible.

V. Additional Resources

- Power and Authority in Literature: Online articles comparing traditional vs. modern leadership in historical narratives.
- For advanced students: A research mini-assignment comparing the leadership in Benjamin’s Choice to that in historical civilizations.

Note to Teacher:

This lesson plan can be adapted by modifying group sizes, adding technology integration (i.e., creating digital mind maps or charts), or providing supplemental background on Great Zimbabwe and historical power dynamics. Feel free to adjust timings as necessary for your class context.

End of Lesson Plan

(You can cut and paste this formatted document into your Word file for immediate classroom use.)