

EU Lesson Plan

Title of Lesson Plan: Are You a Euroskeptic?

Grades: 6

In this lesson, students will study the idea of Euroskepticism and Eurooptimism by exploring a portion of a 2007 speech given by British Foreign Secretary David Miliband about the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Time: 60 minutes

Objectives:

1. Students will describe how different types of governments such as democracies, dictatorships, monarchies, and oligarchies in selected areas of Europe carry out legislative, executive, and judicial functions, and evaluate the effectiveness of each.

Materials Needed:

1. Handout titled "Euroskepticism Starts in the UK." (attached)
2. Handout titled "Selected Quotes from British Foreign Secretary David Miliband's first major speech on the UK's relationship with Europe." (attached)

Background Material for Teachers:

Article: Polls Show Strong Euroskepticism:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6466887.stm>

Article: Guide to the best Euromyths:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6481969.stm>

Directions:

1. Begin by writing the word Euroskeptic on the board. Ask students to identify any root words that they can identify and to work with a partner to brainstorm a definition for Euroskeptic together. Encourage students to use a dictionary if necessary.
2. Explain that Euroskeptics are individuals in European Union member nations that are distrustful of the European Union. Emphasize that the primary concern of many Euroskeptics is that the European Union takes away the rights of individual nations. Many also worry that the European Union will become too powerful and that individual member nations will be overwhelmed by the EU in the future.

3. Ask students to work in small groups to complete the handout titled "Euroskepticism Starts in the UK."
4. Review the "Euroskepticism Starts in the UK" handout with students. Encourage students to consider both the Euroskeptic point of view (that the UK should be allowed to keep its traditional system of weights and measurements) and the Eurooptimist point of view (that the UK will benefit by switching to the metric system because it will make trade with other EU countries easier.)
5. Consider asking students to self-identify as Euroskeptics or Eurooptimists before moving forward in this lesson. Ask children to defend their decisions.
6. Explain to students that David Miliband, the British Foreign Secretary, made a speech in November 2007 to the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium that included several Euroskeptic and Eurooptimist comments.
7. Ask students to read through the selected comments included on the handout titled "Selected Quotes from British Foreign Secretary David Miliband's first major speech on the UK's relationship with Europe."
8. While reading, have students highlight comments that might be made by Euroskeptics in green and comments that might be made by Eurooptimists in yellow.
9. When finished, ask students to answer the questions following the article.
10. Review the central fears of Euroskeptics that are highlighted in this article (that the EU will strip countries of their national identities and force decisions like socialism on all countries).
11. Review the central strengths of the EU that are highlighted in this article (that the EU can be a model for regional partnerships for the rest of the world, that the EU can improve life in all of Europe by requiring nations to improve before being allowed to join.)

Assessment:

Ask students to answer the following question in a short paragraph:

After beginning to explore the differences between Euroskeptics and Eurooptimists, would you consider yourself a Euroskeptic or a Eurooptimist? Write a short paragraph that includes an opening sentence identifying your position, at least three details supporting your decision, and a closing sentence that wraps up your thinking in an interesting way.

Extension:

Ask interested students to work on the following task:

Perhaps the most famous Euroskeptics in the United Kingdom are the Metric Martyrs---a group of fish salesmen who refused to use metric weights and measures in their stores. The Metric Martyrs were eventually arrested and

sentenced to six months of parole. Their case has brought much attention to the role that the EU should play in making decisions for member nations.

Research the Metric Martyrs to find out what they're up to now---and the impact that their actions have had on the United Kingdom and the European Union.

Educational Content Standards:

This lesson addresses the following objectives of the North Carolina sixth grade social studies curriculum:

9.02: Describe how different types of governments such as democracies, dictatorships, monarchies, and oligarchies in selected areas of South America and Europe carry out legislative, executive, and judicial functions, and evaluate the effectiveness of each.

Submitted by:

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Euroskepticism Starts in the UK

While the EU continues to grow in power and influence in the world by adding new member nations, many residents of European countries do not completely trust the European Union! Such people are called **Euroskeptics**. Some Euroskeptics want their countries to leave the European Union, some want the EU to dissolve completely, and some want the EU to have less power over member nations.

The primary concern that Euroskeptics have with the EU is that the EU often limits the rights of individual member countries by passing laws that all member states must obey. Euroskepticism is the strongest in the United Kingdom, where almost 52% of those surveyed in 2007 stated that "things had gotten worse since joining the EU."

Read the selection below--adapted from the BBC News website--detailing one concern that residents of the UK have with the EU. Then, answer the questions that follow to begin thinking about Euroskepticism:

The Decimal Decree

One fear in the UK is that the EU is forcing Britain to give up its beloved imperial measurements - ounces, pounds and stones, feet and inches, miles and acres, and others. Five merchants, widely known as the metric martyrs, went all the way to the High Court of the EU to defend their right to sell food by the pound. They lost, and the EU was widely cast as the villain of the story.

But was the EU guilty? Yes and No. The UK committed itself to gradually going metric in 1972, a year before it joined the EU. But once in, the UK was obligated to change to the metric system--a system of measurement used by almost all of the other member nations. Using the metric system makes trade between EU member nations easier.

Since 1 January 2000 food in the UK has been sold in grams and kilograms--metric system units--though ounces and pounds can be listed as well until 2009. The UK is technically under an obligation to dump the mile, pint, acre and troy ounce, which are still in general use, at some point in the future.

Although the European Commission says it has no desire to force the UK to move towards the metric system any faster than it currently is, and will never stop Britons downing pints of beer, the odd EU law maker sometimes mutters that it is time for the UK to fall into line. British children already know nothing about pounds and stones, feet and inches, or degrees Fahrenheit, so for the next generation it may not be a big issue.

Questions to Consider (Answer on a separate piece of paper):

1. What is the central debate highlighted in The Decimal Decree?
2. Explain why requiring all member nations to switch to the metric system

makes sense for the EU?

3. Explain why residents of the United Kingdom are bothered by the requirement to switch to the metric system?
4. Which side of the story do you agree with? Why?

Selected Quotes from British Foreign Secretary David Miliband's first major speech on the UK's relationship with Europe:

On Euroskeptics:

Let me begin with some reflections on Britain's relationship with Europe.

"We British are as much heirs to the legacy of European culture as any other nation."

The churches, literature and language of the UK "all bear witness to the cultural riches we have drawn from Europe."

"Without the European legacy of political ideas we could not have achieved as much as we did."

"Our destiny is in Europe."

Those are not my words. They were delivered by Margaret Thatcher—former British Prime Minister—to this College in 1988 in her famous Bruges lecture. But despite these words, Mrs Thatcher's speech was haunted by demons.

A European superstate bringing in socialism by the back door. A country called Europe that stripped individual nations of their national identity. These were the demons that led her some years later to conclude that far from being vital to Britain's progress: "In my lifetime Europe has been the source of our problems, not the source of our solutions".

These demons still haunt some people. Thanks to Mrs Thatcher, "Bruges," the name of the Belgian city where we stand, has become a rallying cry of those who doubt Europe and the European Union

But I agree with my predecessor as Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd who said in 2005: "The myth that we are threatened with a European superstate is still nourished by some, but not realistic."

On the role the EU could play in the world:

There is only one superpower in the world today - the United States. There may be others on the horizon, such as China and India, but the US has enormous economic, social, cultural and military strength. In terms of per capita income alone it will remain by far the dominant power for my lifetime.

For Europeans, that should not be a source of dread: there is a great shared project for Europe and America, to embed our values and commitments in international rules and institutions.

The EU is not and never will be a superpower. An EU of 27 nation states or more is never

going to have the fleetness of foot or the economic strength to dominate. In fact economically Europe will be less important in the world of 2050 than it was in the world of 1950.

Our opportunity is different. The EU has the opportunity to be a model power. It can design a plan for regional cooperation between medium-sized and small countries. Through its common action, it can add value to national effort, and develop shared values amidst differences of nationality and religion.

As a club that countries want to join, it can persuade countries to play by the rules, and set global standards. In the way it dispenses its responsibilities around the world, it can be a role model that others follow.

Questions:

Based on this selection, which of the following best describes David Miliband:

1. He is satisfied with the European Union as it is.
2. He is excited about what the European Union could become.
3. He is doubtful that the European Union is a good idea.
4. He dislikes America.

Based on this selection, which statement is a fact:

1. "Europe will be less important in the world of 2050 than it was in the world of 1950."
2. "For Europeans, that should not be a source of dread."
3. "They were delivered by Margaret Thatcher to this college in 1988."
4. "The EU is not, and will never be, a superpower."

Based on this selection, what is the hidden message in David Miliband's speech?

1. We should fear countries that are superpowers.
2. The EU must do a better job becoming a superpower.
3. The UK must get out of the European Union.
4. Building partnerships with the world should be an important priority for countries.

What is the effect of beginning the selection with quotes from 1988:

1. The audience begins to understand the important influences that Europe has had on the UK.
2. The audience feels a sense of approval and excitement from the speaker.
3. The audience identifies that the speaker does not understand the history of the United Kingdom.
4. The audience understands that the speaker is angry about the European Union.

Which of the following statements is used by David Miliband to encourage listeners to

think about the role the European Union can play in the world?

1. "The EU is not, and will never be, a superpower."
2. "Our opportunity is different. The EU has the opportunity to be a model power."
3. "These demons still haunt some people."
4. "I agree with my predecessor as Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd"

Which of the following statements suggests the strongest bias that readers would have to consider when deciding whether or not to agree with David Miliband?

1. David Miliband has only been a citizen of the UK for a short period of time.
2. David Miliband has been openly opposed to the European Union for a long while.
3. As a father, David Miliband is nervous about the life that his children will inherit.
4. As a powerful man in politics, David Miliband probably has to support the European Union.

Which of the following questions would a member of the audience be most likely to ask David Miliband based on his message?

1. What steps can we take to make the European Union stronger?
2. How should we react to the threat of America?
3. What problems has the EU caused for the United Kingdom?
4. Have you ever met Margaret Thatcher?

What is Miliband's purpose in telling the audience, "The EU is not and never will be a superpower."

1. To help the audience realize that the EU must do things differently to succeed.
2. To scare the audience into believing the way that he does.
3. To make the audience see that the EU is weak and must be abandoned.
4. To encourage the audience to dislike America and other superpowers.

What is the main idea of this selection?

1. That the EU is something that should be feared.
2. That superpowers will rule the world and the EU should work to become a superpower.
3. That developing partnerships with other countries will make the EU stronger.
4. That the lessons learned from previous generations have been ignored.