

Op-Eds: Educating Others about the EU

Introduction:

This lesson is intended to culminate students' study of the EU. Students examine and discuss several quotations about the European Union, considering on what points the speakers/writers disagree and which quotation most closely reflects their own views. They then select a quotation about the EU and write an essay designed to inform others why this quotation provides particularly useful insight into the EU. The essays are written in the format of op-ed columns.

Objectives:

- Analyze quotations about the EU, identifying disagreements among the quotations and selecting one that represents their own view.
- Write an essay that highlights their knowledge of the EU and current issues that it faces.

Materials and Preparation:

- Enlarge the 10 quotations about the EU provided with the lesson to poster size and post them around the classroom for the gallery walk.
- Post or project the analysis questions under step 1 in the Procedure.
- Make copies of the Writing an Op-Ed on the EU handout for all students.
- Gather some op-ed columns for students to use as reference in writing their essays.

Teaching Time: 1-2 class periods

Procedure:

1. Display the 10 quotations around the classroom. Have students work in pairs, walking around the room in a gallery walk; as they read the quotations, they should think about the following questions:
 - Is there a common topic for these quotations?
 - What are the major areas of disagreement among the speakers/writers?
 - Which quotations did you find most interesting? Why?
 - Did you disagree with any of the quotations?
 - Which quotation represents a view closest to your own?
 - Do you have a favorite quote about the EU?

Alternatively, students could work in small groups, each focusing on the questions above.

2. Conduct a class discussion in which students explain their responses to the above questions. Ask students if some quotes are mentioned more frequently than others. For

which questions? Ask students to hypothesize reasons for some quotes being mentioned more frequently than others.

3. Tell students to look at the quotations again to select one that they will use as evidence for an op-ed on the European Union. Ask students if they know what an op-ed is. Where does it appear in a newspaper? Pass out the Writing an Op-Ed on the EU handout and go over the instruction with students. Provide examples of op-eds from recent newspapers for students to reference as they work on their essays.

Writing an Op-Ed on the EU

Your assignment is to write an op-ed column educating others about the European Union and one of the issues it faces. You are to use one of the quotations about the EU as a starting point or evidence for your op-ed.

What Is an Op-Ed?

Op-ed are newspaper columns. The term op-ed stands for “opposite the editorials”—where these columns are located in the newspaper.

Op-eds are usually written by people with expertise or credibility on a given topic or issue. Some op-eds are provocative introductions to an important issue. Indeed, the opinion pages of the news are very often the most-read sections of a newspaper, whether in print or online. Op-ed writers call attention to issues that are in the headlines. Frequent topics are international relations, economic issues, and politics. In selecting which op-eds to print, opinion editors prefer articles that are provocative and have a point of view.

Tips for Writing Op-Eds

- Focus on one issue.
- Keep your op-ed in the neighborhood of 500-750 words.
- Try to grab readers’ attention in the opening sentence.
- Make your main point in the first or second paragraph. Present your selected quotation.
- Provide supporting details and factual information in the following paragraphs.
- Close your essay with a paragraph that draws the piece together and links back to your selected quotation. End the piece with another strong or thought-provoking line
- Give your op-ed a catchy title that emphasizes your central message.
- Include a brief one-sentence bio, along with a small picture and email address at the bottom of your op-ed.

1

There is no real peace in Europe, if the states are reconstituted on a basis of national sovereignty. They must have larger markets. Their prosperity is impossible, unless the States of Europe form themselves in a European Federation.

Jean Monnet, 1943

2

The EU has a flag no one salutes, an anthem no one sings, a president no one can name, a parliament (in Strasbourg) no one other than its members wants to have power (which must subtract from the powers of national legislatures), a capital (Brussels) of coagulated bureaucracy no one admires or controls, a currency that presupposes what neither does nor should nor soon will exist (a European central government), and rules of fiscal behavior that no member has been penalized for ignoring.

George F. Will, "European Union: A Coalition of Irresponsibility," *Washington Post*, May 16, 2010.

3

Unlike past states and empires whose origins are embedded in the myth of heroic victories on the battlefield, the European Union is novel in being the first mega governing institution in history to be born out of the ashes of defeat. Rather than commemorate a noble past, it sought to ensure that the past would never again be repeated. After a thousand years of unremitting conflict, war, and bloodshed, the nations of Europe emerged from two world wars with their population maimed and killed, their ancient monuments and cities lying in ruins, their worldly treasures depleted, and their way of life destroyed. Determined that they would never again take up arms against each other, the nations searched for a political mechanism that could move them beyond their ancient rivalries.

Jeremy Rifkin, "The European Dream," *Utne Reader*, September/October 2004,
<http://www.utne.com/2004-09-01/the-europeandream.aspx?page=5#ixzz1bZ3l8Epr>.

4

A day will come when all the nations of this continent, without losing their distinct qualities or their glorious individuality, will fuse together in a higher unity and form the European brotherhood. A day will come when the only battlefield will be the marketplace for competing ideas. A day will come when bullets and bombs will be replaced by votes.

Victor Hugo, French playwright, address to International Peace Conference, Paris, 1849.
http://www.ellopos.net/politics/eu_hugo.html

5

What does it matter whether two nations are separated by rivers or mountains, or that they speak different idioms? Europe is but one province of the world: when we make war, we make civil war. I should have liked to have made of these peoples one single and uniform national body.

Napoleon, quoted in *Time Magazine*, October 6, 1961, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,827795,00.html>.

6

There will be no peace in Europe if the States rebuild themselves on the basis of national sovereignty, with its implications of prestige politics and economic protection. The countries of Europe are not strong enough individually to be able to guarantee prosperity and social development for their peoples. The States of Europe must therefore form a federation or a European entity that would make them into a common economic unit.

Jean Monnet, address to the National Liberation Committee, Algiers. August 1943,
<http://www.historiasiglo20.org/europe/monnet.htm>

7

It is to re-create the European Family, or as much of it as we can, and to provide it with a structure under which it can dwell in peace, in safety and in freedom. We must build a kind of United States of Europe. In this way only will hundreds of millions of toilers be able to regain the simple joys and hopes which make life worth living.

Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister,
speech at University of Zürich, September 1946,
http://www.uzh.ch/about/portrait/history_en.html.

This is crossing the Rubicon, after which there will be no more sovereign states in Europe with fully-fledged governments and parliaments which represent legitimate interests of their citizens, but only one State will remain. Basic things will be decided by a remote “federal government” in Brussels and, for example, Czech citizens will be only a tiny particle whose voice and influence will be almost zero. ... We are against a European superstate.

Czech President Vaclav Klaus, September 2003,
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0JZS/is_19_20/ai_n25096617/.

I am the first to say that on many great issues the countries of Europe should try to speak with a single voice. I want to see us work more closely on the things we can do better together than alone. Europe is stronger when we do so, whether it be in trade, in defense, or in our relations with the rest of the world. But working more closely together does not require power to be centralized in Brussels or decisions to be taken by an appointed bureaucracy.

Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister,
speech in Bruges, Belgium, September 1988,
<http://www.brugesgroup.com/mediacentre/index.live?article=92>.

10

The end of the European dream of integration would be the end of the free world as we've known it. It sounds dramatic, but it's true. The European Union, a peaceful bloc of 500 million people rebuilt from the ashes of two catastrophic wars, has exemplified the best kind of globalization....Europe has the power to do things—to take the lead in liberating Libya, to push forward efforts to curb climate change, to help the U.S. defend liberal democracy...if Europe fails, we do too.

Rana Foroohar, "Why Care About the Euro?"
Time Magazine, November 7, 2011.