

Reformation Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question: *Why did Luther challenge the Catholic Church?*

Materials:

- Reformation PowerPoint
- Copies of Documents A and B
- Copies of Reformation: Guiding Questions
- Copies of Corroboration Table

Plan of Instruction:

1. Use PowerPoint to establish background knowledge on Catholicism and indulgences and introduce the inquiry:

Establish that:

- Slide 3—16th Century Europe: The Reformation. *In 1517, Europe was uniformly Catholic, but by 1545 large sections of Europe were Protestant. The shift was part of the Reformation, spurred by the writings of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, drafted in 1517.*
- Slide 4—The Selling of Indulgences. *Prior to 1517, the Catholic Church had begun selling indulgences. Indulgences allowed people to “buy their way into heaven.” Given the right amount of money, the Church would forgive a person’s sins.*
- Slide 5—Luther’s Ideas. *Martin Luther, a Catholic monk, was troubled by the practice of indulgences and wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Mainz to explain his position. The Pope considered Luther’s position to be heretical and excommunicated Luther from the Catholic Church. Luther gained support from a group of German Princes who protected Luther and helped him spread his ideas.*

Introduce Inquiry:

- Slide 6—Luther’s Different Accounts
 - *Often, historians find two opposing accounts of the same event, and sometimes, they are even written by the same person. During his life, Luther gave different accounts of his break with the Catholic Church.*
 - *To figure out what really happened, they use the skill of sourcing to determine when, where, and why a document was written. They also use corroboration to compare accounts and look for similarities and differences.*
 - *Today, we are going to explore two documents attributed to Luther than illustrate different motivations for separating from the Catholic Church. As we go through the documents pay close attention to the time and place each document was written as well as to the*

similarities and differences between the two accounts. On what details do they agree? On what details do they differ?

- Slide 7—Central Historical Question. *Through reading the two documents, we will try to explain the differences between the documents and decide which one is a more reliable answer to our question: Why did Martin Luther challenge the Catholic Church?*

2. Hand out Document A and Guiding Questions.

- Students read documents and answer Guiding Questions
- Share out responses

3. Hand out Document B and Guiding Questions.

- Students read documents and answer Guiding Questions
- Share out responses

4. Corroboration: Students fill out chart of differences based on their answers to the Guiding Questions:

	1517	1535
Tone	<i>Luther has a submissive tone.</i>	<i>Luther has a more aggressive tone.</i>
Place in life	<i>He was a young monk writing at the beginning of his career.</i>	<i>At this time, he was nearly twenty years older and the leader of a revolutionary religious movement.</i>
Disagreement with the Church	<i>His disagreement over the church seems to be over a small matter of religious doctrine. Luther wants a clarification and doesn't seem to be trying to start a revolution</i>	<i>His disagreement with the church seems to be about much broader, political issues that cut to the center of what Catholicism and Christianity are all about.</i>

5. Discussion:

- What were the similarities and differences between these documents? Which one did you find more trustworthy?
- Why do you think Luther challenged the Catholic Church?
- What evidence did you find to support your claim?

- What other sources would you investigate in order to further answer this question?

Citations

Document A

Martin Luther's Letter to the Archbishop of Mainz, 1517. From, *The Works of Martin Luther*. Ed. and trans. Adolph Spaeth, L.D. Reed, Henry Eyster Jacobs, et al. Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915, Vol. 1, pp. 25-28. Retrieved from:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/lutherltr-indulgences.asp>

Document B

Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources* (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907), Vol. V: 9th to 16th Centuries, pp.119-127.
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1535luther.asp>