

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title – The 1920s: “It was the best of times; It was the worst of times...”

Grade - 10/11

Length of class period – five class periods, including one 90 minute block, & homework

Inquiry – Was the decade of the 1920s truly “roaring” and prosperous; a bright point in U.S. history or was it a period of contrasts with dark undertones and conflicts that left many Americans disillusioned and unable to share in the cultural, technological, and economic advancements of the period?

Objectives -

Content/Cognitive:

1. Students will gain knowledge about the changing lifestyles of many Americans due to the cultural, technological, and economic advancements of the 1920s
2. Students will develop an understanding of the contrasts that existed in American society during the 1920s

Skills:

1. Students will improve their analytical (compare/contrast) skills
2. Students will work cooperatively in small groups
3. Students will improve their ability to support a point of view both orally and in writing

Materials - 1920s Jackdaw

The following websites on the 1920s:

www.angelfire.com/co/pscst/
http://www.geocities.com/flapper_culture/
www.snowcrest.net/jmike/20sdep.html
faculty.pittstate.edu/~knichols/jazzage.html
kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/decade20.html
www.authentichistory.com/1920s.html

Poster board, scissors, glue sticks, colored markers

Activities –

1. Day 1: **Initiation** (20 minutes)
 - a) Put the Dickens' quote above on the board (Yes, it's from the French Rev., but it works here for the 1920s.) Ask students how a time period could be the best and the worst.
 - b) Students will brainstorm what they know about the 1920s. Put list on board. They will likely come up with terms like Jazz, "Roaring Twenties", Prohibition, Women's vote, Flappers, etc.
 - c) Hand out list of "Jazz Age" vocabulary with definitions. Have students read and discuss. What terms do we still use? What did they find interesting? Funny? Can they use these words in conversation?
 - d) Ask students whether or not they think the 1920s would have been a good time to live. Would they have wanted to live during that decade? Why or why not? Tell them we will come back to this question at the end of the unit.
2. Days 1, 2, & 3: **Poster Project** (170 minutes - include one block period)

Break class into groups of four. Explain poster project. Each group will use primary source materials (Jackdaw resources and websites listed above) to discover the positive and negative aspects of American society during the 1920s. They will create a colorful and attractive poster that shows both the "Bright" side and the "Dark" side of the 1920s. Each group's poster must include a minimum of ten points for each side and should include social, cultural, economic, political, and technological developments during the 1920s.
3. Day 4: **Analyzing Life during the 1920s** (50 minutes)
 - a) Class will discuss as a group what they discovered about life during the 1920s. They should present anything that surprised them and things that they did not know before they began their poster projects. Ask them if anyone has changed their minds about wanting to live during the 1920s. Was it a good time to live? Did it matter who you were? (15 minutes)
 - b) Put students back into their poster groups. Assign each group a specific type of person who would have lived during the 1920s. Each group must use the information that they included on their poster to decide if their person would have thought living in the 1920s was the "Best of Times" or "The Worst of Times". They will prepare a brief list of arguments to present to the class for why their person would have felt this way. (15 minutes)

People assigned to groups:

White upper-middle class Bostonian woman, age 22
Black sharecropping family from South Carolina
Wealthy New York City bank manager
Male Russian immigrant factory worker
17 year old high school student, son of a farmer in Ohio
U.S. Senator from California
Black jazz musician living in Harlem

- c) Have groups report to the class on their particular person and discuss why some people would view the decade very differently from others. (20 minutes)

4. Day 5: **Essay Assignment** (50 minutes, complete for homework)

The 1920s is often described as an era of major change in the United States, sometimes considered a period of social and cultural revolution. Depending on one's opinion the changes of the 1920s are seen as either positive or negative.

Consider your project that you completed on the "Bright" vs. "Dark" side of the 1920s as well as the presentations you saw in class, the reading you did, your notes, and our class discussions on the 1920s and write a five paragraph essay on life in 1920s America using one of the themes below.

The 1920s: An Exciting Time to Live

The 1920s: A Period of Contrasts

The 1920s: The Truth Behind the Glitter

Your essay will be graded on:

Proper format and style: 10 points

Introduction with a strong thesis statement: 20 points

Supporting information (including primary sources) that proves your thesis: 50 points

Conclusion that ties your thesis and ideas together: 20 points

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

See essay assignment on day 5. Students will also receive a class participation grade for the project as well as a project grade for the posters they create. Posters will be graded based upon accuracy in use of primary sources and including information on each of the required areas (see days 1, 2, & 3).

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- gather historical data from multiple sources
- use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives
- evaluate data within the historical, social, political and economic context in which it was created, testing its credibility and evaluating its bias