

## TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

### *Understanding the Great Depression through Film from Scott Hurwitz*

Grade – 11<sup>th</sup> Grade (heterogeneous grouped classroom)

Length of class period – 46 minutes (Up to 4 class periods)

#### **Unit Question:**

In what ways is the Great Depression a time of progress and/or decline in U.S. history?

#### **Unit Objectives:**

Students will know and be able to evaluate the political, social, and economic impacts of the Great Depression.

Students will know and be able to evaluate the causes and effects of the Great Depression.

Students will know and be able to analyze photographs, song lyrics, political cartoons, and speeches from the Great Depression.

Students will know and be able to evaluate the strengths and/or weaknesses of the New Deal.

#### **Lesson Objectives:**

Students will know and be able to evaluate the film *Cinderella Man* as a representation of history.

Students will know and be able to analyze multiple perspectives in film, and identify perspectives that are not included.

#### **Lesson Questions:**

How do the characters change throughout the film? Do they progress or decline?

What types of stereotypical roles changed throughout the Great Depression? How did different people deal with these changes? (Example: role of male as the breadwinner)

#### **Materials/Resources:**

- *Cinderella Man* DVD
- DVD player
- TV
- *Cinderella Man* introduction sheet with film viewing directions (see below)
- Handouts of three *New York Times* articles, primary resources (see attached)
- Guided questions for *New York Times* Articles (see attached)

### **Activities:**

- Students enter and are seated
- (3 minutes) Pass out *Cinderella Man* introduction sheets, and divide students into character groups (4 students- Jim Braddock, 4 students- Mae Braddock, 4 students- Joe Gould, 3 students- Max Baer/Jimmy Johnston, 3 students- Three Braddock children); instead of taking notes, the students will shadow their assigned character throughout the movie and analyze how the character changes throughout the film
- (45 minutes) Show *Cinderella Man*
- (5 minutes) Check for understanding, ask for student participation to predict coming events in the movie, or to comment on the scenes they viewed pertaining to their characters
- **NOTE:** You may select specific clips or show the entire film.
- At the conclusion of the film, pass out primary resource article from *New York Times*. Have students read article and complete analysis sheet or create class discussion.

### **Assessment:**

Both formal and informal assessments were used during this lesson. These assessments were used for formative and summative purposes. The informal class discussions were used as an informal formative assessment. This final discussion was used to make sure that the students were effectively analyzing the film and its characters. The collection of the *Cinderella Man* packet served as a summative and formal assessment. You may use these sheets to see how effective my objectives were throughout the film. Were the students able to analyze multiple perspectives in a film, and identify which perspectives were not included? Finally, the homework assignment will serve as another formal assessment. It allows the students to critically compare and contrast the primary resources with the movie. This exercise is designed to help the students view movies in a critical fashion and to give them an idea how fact and fiction meet.

### **Content Standard s**

Use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives

- Formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources
- Gather, analyze and reconcile historical information, including contradictory data, from primary and secondary sources to support or reject hypotheses
- Interpret oral traditions and legends as “histories”
- Evaluate data within the historical, social, political and economic context in which it was created, testing its credibility and evaluating its bias
- Describe the multiple intersecting causes of events
  
- Initiate questions and hypotheses about historic events they are studying
- Describe and analyze, using historical data and understandings, the options which are available to parties involved in contemporary conflicts or decision making
- Display empathy for people who have lived in the past describe relationships between historical subject matter and other subjects they study, current issues and personal concerns

## *Cinderella Man*

### **Viewing Guide**

During the Great Depression, a common-man hero, James J. Braddock-- a.k.a. the Cinderella Man--was to become one of the most surprising sports legends in history. By the early 1930s, the impoverished ex-prizefighter was seemingly as broken-down, beaten-up and out-of-luck as much of the rest of the American populace who had hit rock bottom. His career appeared to be finished, he was unable to pay the bills, the only thing that mattered to him--his family--was in danger, and he was even forced to go on Public Relief. But deep inside, Jim Braddock never relinquished his determination. Driven by love, honor and an incredible dose of grit, he willed an impossible dream to come true. In a last-chance bid to help his family, Braddock returned to the ring. No one thought he had a shot. However Braddock, fueled by something beyond mere competition, kept winning. Suddenly, the ordinary working man became the mythic athlete. Carrying the hopes and dreams of the disenfranchised on his shoulders, Braddock rocketed through the ranks, until this underdog chose to do the unthinkable: take

on the heavyweight champ of the world, the unstoppable Max Baer, renowned for having killed two men in the ring. ([www.imd.com](http://www.imd.com))

While watching the film, *Cinderella Man*, please limit the amount of notes you take. Instead, focus on movie, and the changes that take place with the characters. Notice how the characters change from being prosperous to being poor.

Character Groups:

- 1) Jim Braddock (4 students)
- 2) Mae Braddock (4 students)
- 3) Joe Gould (4 students)
- 4) Max Baer/Jimmy Johnston (3 students)
- 5) 3 Braddock Children (3 students)

Shadow your character throughout the movie. What happens to them? How do they change? How does their role in society change? What perspectives are not shown in the film?

\* This film is “based” on a true story. Is it an accurate representation of history?

## *Cinderella Man*

### *New York Times* Guided Questions

**How do the *New York Times* articles prove or disprove themes and/or events from the movie?**

**Judging from the article, the film, and your own opinion, was Jim Braddock's story during the Great Depression one of progress or decline? Why?**

**After reading the articles, do you think that Jim Braddock's fight inspired people who were struggling through the depression? Why or why not?**

**Based on these primary resources, did Hollywood accurately portray the struggles of Jim Braddock?**

