

The American Dream

The Basics

Subject Area and/or Course Title:

AP US History/Honors American History

Targeted Grade Level:

11-12

Time Required:

3-4 Days

Related Standards:

APUSH:

- ID-3: Analyze how U.S. involvement in international crises such as the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, and the Cold War influenced public debates about American national identity in the 20th century
- 7.2.III: Economic dislocations, social pressures, and the economic growth spurred by World Wars I and II led to a greater degree of migration within the United States, as well as migration to the United States from elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere. (ID-6) (ID-8) (PEO-3) (WOR-4) American History II:
- AH2.H.8.3: Evaluate the extent to which a variety of groups and individuals have had opportunity to attain their perception of the “American Dream” since Reconstruction
- AH2.H.8.4: Analyze multiple perceptions of the “American Dream” in times of prosperity and crisis since Reconstruction

Author:

David Cornett, 2015

The Lesson

Introductory Narrative to Lesson:

The topic of the Great Depression is looked at under many different lenses. Usually, the economics of the Great Depression is what draws attention, focusing on the time of boom and bust during the 20s and the 30s and what the government did to alleviate the issues faced by the public at large; but what would happen if a more sociological approach was taken? A lot can be gained by looking at the people of America’s Great Depression and what they went through, and subsequently overcame, to get to the point where we are today.

The term “American Dream” was coined amidst the Great Depression to explain American’s hope for a future of self-fulfillment and living up to one’s own personal potential. Traditionally the concept of an American Dream is explored much sooner than the Great Depression in American History courses, usually as early as the English colonists. While an

American Dream was certainly present for those early settlers, later immigrants, and many other groups, it is worth discussing why the term had not been coined until 1931, a time where America was at a low. This lesson, that should span three days in an AP course and four in an honors AHII course, will get students to look at why the American Dream was reimagined during the Great Depression, the different perspectives of the American Dream present in the 30s, and the continuities/changes in the American Dream by comparing then to today.

Students will have some background going into this lesson. Both the AP and Honors class will have already covered The Gilded Age, Imperialism, Progressivism, WWI, and the 1920s. When it comes to the 20s (the most recent unit), students will be well versed in the economics and social aspects of the time period. They will have already discussed farmers and immigrants in the context of the Gilded Age, as well as discussed women and African Americans in the context of the Progressive Era. During those units, students will have already discussed why these groups are fighting for their rights, how they are fighting for those rights, and how it relates to the American Dream. Students will also look at groups during the 20s (most notably women and African Americans) and the affluence that most experienced during that time period.

When it comes to work done in class, students will already have practiced with the graphic organizer setup mentioned in the lesson as well as picking apart primary and secondary sources to find how they show evidence of a certain concept. As for working with music, students will not have had a huge amount of practice doing what they are doing in this lesson; however, students will be instructed to teach it as a resource and will be able to explain how the sources are different, working with the materials independently.

Instructional Goals or Objectives:

Students Will Be Able To (SWBAT) describe/defend the idea that the American Dream changes depending on circumstances. What may be the dream for a male farmer is different for a woman in different historical contexts for example.

SWBAT analyze different people during the Great Depression and how the American Dream is different for them.

SWBAT analyze the continuities and changes in the American Dream in a planned essay.

Procedures/Lesson Activities:

Great Depression: The American Dream Lesson 1

Subject: APUSH/Honors AHII Topic (Unit of study): Great Depression

I. Focus and Review (Establish prior knowledge)

As students enter class the “Fanfare for the Common Man” will be playing on repeat. (Note: explain to students that this song is a secondary source that people from this time period would not have heard, however its title still says a lot about the piece and can be compared to the people they are discussing as the people assigned to them are all “common men”.

Students will have four groups of people on the board:

- Farmers
- New Immigrants (people that came late 1800s from Asia, Southern/Eastern Europe)
- African Americans
- Women

In groups of 3-4, students will be assigned one of the groups to answer a series of questions on:

- Based off of your knowledge of 1900-1929, what does this group of people hope to gain from living in America?
- How are the lives of this group different living in America than in another place? (Note: Students will have knowledge based on a case study of Ireland completed 2 units ago to compare)
- How were these groups affected by the time period 1900-1929? Did they see change come to their group? Was that change good or bad? Explain.
- How would you describe the “American Dream” as it pertains to your group?
- Students will participate in a brief discussion based on the questions, all coming together to see how the idea of an American Dream is different for different types of people.

10-20 min.

II. Teacher Input (Present tasks, information, and guidance)

After discussion, students will have come up with a definition of the American Dream. The instructor will again play “Fanfare for the Common Man” and ask students using the I Can Hear it Now strategy:

- What immediately comes to mind when listening to this song?
- What are some details of the song that stand out? What adjectives are brought to mind by this piece?
- How would your person respond to this song if they heard it?
- What emotions does this music elicit in you?
- How is this music related to the American Dream? What kind of outcome of the American Dream does this music produce in your mind?
- Compare/contrast your view of the American Dream after hearing this song with your assigned group.

The instructor will go over a pre-made PowerPoint with the students as part of lecture. Students are instructed to keep the idea of an American Dream in their minds as we go through the lecture, emphasizing how we portray the American Dream as a positive thing. The presentation will include the evolution of the phrase “American Dream” and how it was presented in the early stages of the Great Depression. Other topics covered in presentation:

1. Start of the Great Depression/Causes
2. Overview of major effects of Great Depression
 - Includes Dust Bowl
 - Bonus Army
 - Breadlines

- Foreclosures
- Etc.

As instructor goes through pics of these and other scenarios, students will be asked if they believe it was appropriate that the idea of an American Dream was created during this time and to explain. Along with pictures, students will be asked to look back at their individual groups and discuss what they think might have happened to them throughout the Great Depression, and how their American Dream may have changed.

30-40 min.

III. Guided Practice (Elicit performance, provide assessment and feedback)

Students will pair up and be given a copy of one of 2 songs via Canvas (LMS). The songs are “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” and “Remember My Forgotten Man”. Students will listen to each song with their partner and complete 2 things:

Answer:

- From what point of view is the person singing? How do you know?
- What is this person thinking/feeling? What about the MUSIC tells you this?
- What happened to this person? Guess what will happen to him next.
- Where is this person singing this song? Argue your answer with outside evidence from what we have previously learned.

Class will discuss the two songs. Teacher will lead discussion, hopefully guiding students to think about the role of the government in citizen’s lives as well as what role the idea of an American Dream played for people during this time

30 min.

IV. Independent Practice

Students will watch “Remember My Forgotten Man” and write 1-2 paragraphs taking a position on what role the government should play in the Great Depression and in helping citizens achieve the American Dream, using the song/video as a guide.

10 min.

V. Closure (Plan for maintenance)

At the end of the day, students will discuss answers and turn in paragraphs for grading.

5-10 min.

Songs Used: “Fanfare for the Common Man”, “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”, and “Remember My Forgotten Man”

Great Depression: The American Dream Lesson 2 (in AP can be combined in lesson 1)

Subject: APUSH/Honors AHII Topic (Unit of study): Great Depression

I. Focus and Review (Establish prior knowledge)

This image will be projected on the board as students enter the room:

Students will be asked to write responses to the following questions in their journals:

- What is ironic in this photograph?
- What is the photographer's purpose in taking this picture? What were they trying to showcase?
- Should the government do anything to respond to what is happening in the picture? Explain.
- How is a change in the American Dream portrayed in this one photograph? Explain.

Questions will be discussed as a class.

5-10 min.

II. Guided Practice (Elicit performance, provide assessment and feedback)

After the warm-up, students will be broken into groups of 4-5 at 7 different stations. The different stations will have some sort of source linked to a teacher-produced QR code. Each station will be represented on a graphic organizer that has the stations with bibliographic information on the vertical axis, and the following categories on the horizontal:

- Generic analysis (what is the basic message of the document/docset)
- Focused analysis (on one of the noted focuses below)
- Relation to the American Dream
- Positive/Negative view of the American Dream

The stations are as follows:

- "Big Rock Candy Mountain"—song by Harry McClintock. Lyric and recording links will be given via QR code. Link to a bio on Harry McClintock will also be provided. Students will focus analysis on Point of View.
- "We're in the Money"—song/video from 42nd Street, video from Gold Diggers of 1933 and link to musical synopsis will be given to students via QR code. Students will focus analysis on Intended Audience
- "(If You Ain't Got the) Do-Re-Mi"—song by Woodie Guthrie link to lyrics/recording as well as article on the Okies will be given to students via QR code. Students will focus analysis on Historical Context.
- "Sunny Cal"—song by Jack Bryant lyrics/recording as well as article on migrant farmers will be given to students via QR codes. Students will focus analysis on Author's Purpose.
- "The American Dream"—song by Bryan McNulty lyrics/recording will be provided via QR code. Students will focus analysis on Author's Purpose.
- "The Virgin, the Doe, and the Leper"—poem by Marya Zaturenska from her collection Cold Morning Sky (1938) will be provided via QR code. Students will focus analysis on Historical Context.
- "American Dream Faces Harsh New Reality"—NPR article will be provided for students via QR code. Students will focus analysis on Intended Audience.

The instructor will facilitate discussion, move students along after around 7 minutes at each station (depending on where they are at), and answer analysis questions when appropriate.

50-60 min.

III. Independent Practice

Once students have been to each station they can begin working on that night's homework, which will lead into the 4th day's (5th day for Hon. AHII) discussion. The assignment is based off of the Soundtrack of Our Lives strategy from the VAT institute:

- Think about what it means to live in America for you. Brainstorm some common things: are you proud? Ashamed? Grateful? Patriotic? Jot down your ideas.
- Now, place music to your thoughts. What kind of music embodies your brainstorm sesh?
- After you have recorded your thoughts, come up with a soundtrack of 3 modern (1980-present) songs that encapsulate the American Dream for you. Create a playlist and include a write-up of why you chose each song/how it embodies your personal American Dream.
- Next, ask a parent and a grand-parent (or someone from their generation) what music pops into their minds when they think of the American Dream? Ask them to come up with 2 songs each (for a total of 4 songs from outside people) and tell you why they think that way. Include the songs on the playlist and responses in your write-up.

15-20 min.

V. Closure (Plan for maintenance)

At the end of the day, students will turn in graphic organizers and ask preliminary questions on the homework assignment.

5-10 min.

Songs Used: "Big Rock Candy Mountain", "We're in the Money", "(If you Ain't Got the) Do-Re-Mi", "Sunny Cal", "The American Dream"

Great Depression: The American Dream Lesson 3

Subject: APUSH/Honors AHII Topic (Unit of study): Great Depression

I. Focus and Review (Establish prior knowledge)

1. Discuss how soundtracks are going, provide assistance if necessary.
2. Project the following political cartoon:
3. Ask:
 - What is the message of the cartoon?
 - How does it relate to the American Dream?
 - How is the government succeeding/failing at helping people with their

American Dream?

4. Discuss as a class.
5-10 min.

II. Teacher Input

After the warm-up, instructor will use a pre-made Prezi on New Deal programs and FDR's presidency, with a focus on how they affected the people in different ways.

50-60 min.

III. Independent Practice

Students will fill complete a wheel-and-spoke word map using selected New Deal programs (instructor's discretion) and using their Chromebooks to complete basic research. Students will categorize each program as a failure/success, whether it represents Relief, Reform, or Recovery.

20-30 min.

IV. Guided Practice If time allows, instructor will review organizer with students.

V. Closure (Plan for maintenance) Instructor will lead discussion on how these programs fit into recreating the American Dream

5-10 min.

Great Depression: The American Dream Lesson 4

Subject: APUSH/Honors AHII Topic (Unit of study): Great Depression

I. Focus and Review (Establish prior knowledge)

Students will have 5-10 min. to make sure their CD's/assignments are all together. Students may be given the option to directly upload it to Canvas if they choose.

5-10 min.

II. Guided Practice (Elicit performance, provide assessment and feedback)

Students will then volunteer to share 1 song from their CD's (preferably from their own vision of the American Dream) by playing part of it and giving their rationale for why they chose the song. Allow no more than 10 students to do this. If more wish to share, allow them to in subsequent days.

Students will then be asked to analyze their work on a whole by answering in an electronically-submitted paragraph on Canvas their findings on their CD. Guiding Questions:

1. How did your parent's/grandparent's songs differ from yours?
2. What do you think the reason is for this difference?
3. Why does the American Dream seem to change every so often?

4. How does the American Dream tend to stay the same?

If time permits, facilitate discussion. Discussion would include thoughts from students who did not get the opportunity to share with the class about how their songs that they chose either reflected or contrasted the points made by the songs that were chosen.

20-30 min.

III. Independent Practice

Students will then be given a Long Essay Question prompt to answer in a timed essay. The prompt:

From the time period 1914-1939 America underwent multiple changes in all aspects of society. Discuss how the American Dream changed for American citizens during this time, but also how it stayed the same.

Students have completed timed essay before and know the process. The instructor will remind them to use their CD project as synthesis in their conclusion of the essay.

50 min.

V. Closure (Plan for maintenance)

At the end of the day, students will turn in CDs and Long Essay responses.

1-5 min.

VI. Evaluation For CD:

A rubric will be made for students:

_____/10: Required number of songs from required sources (both student and older generations)

_____/10: Brainstorm notes. Do your notes show your process?

_____/5: Playlist and write-up of each song present

_____/15: Appropriate analysis of each song is present and is related back to the central theme of the American Dream

_____/40: Overall grade

For Essay:

- Students will first peer edit each other's essays the next day. Students are instructed to write suggestions for improvement and good things that paper did on a sticky note for each paragraph.
- After students peer edit the papers, the instructor will collect the essays and score them based off of the AP LEQ rubric.

Songs Used: Student's personal CDs

Assessment and Evaluation:

For CD:

A rubric will be made for students:

_____/10: Required number of songs from required sources (both student and older generations)

_____/10: Brainstorm notes. Do your notes show your process?

_____/5: Playlist and write-up of each song present

_____/15: Appropriate analysis of each song is present and is related back to the central theme of the American Dream

_____/40: Overall grade

For Essay:

- Students will first peer edit each other's essays the next day. Students are instructed to write suggestions for improvement and good things that paper did on a sticky note for each paragraph.
- After students peer edit the papers, the instructor will collect the essays and score them based off of the AP LEQ rubric.

Closure/Reflection:

Over the past four weeks, I have been intrigued by the process of Voices Across Time in using music to teach American History. In the past, I treated music (along with film, poetry, and art) as a primary resource, but usually only with the lyrics and as a small part of the lesson, not the focus. Over the past 4 weeks, I have learned a lot on how to incorporate music and how music really shows the continuity and change over time in history I focus on when I teach my courses. I appreciate the knowledge of how to deal with different types of American music in the classroom and saw the fruits of this institute when I did my institute project. When I chose the topic of the American Dream for my final project, I chose it because I wanted to pick lessons I could use with music as a main focus. The American Dream is represented by almost all Americans, and what better way do people express themselves than through the arts, and in particular, music.

I knew, for this assignment, that I wanted to focus on the American Dream and how it has changed, the reason being is I find this concept mildly difficult to teach because it means something else to so many different people. I initially thought, and came to find, that since music can mean so many different things to different people (a concept I truly discovered from VAT) that it would be a perfect fit with the idea of the American Dream and I couldn't have been more correct. Listening to such songs as "Big Rock Candy Mountain" and "Thoroughfare for the Common Man", and making questions for these songs, has shown me how I see the American Dream and how difficult it would be to pinpoint one generalization about the subject. The institute as a whole has been beneficial for the process I took to get to this point.

Resources/Materials:

"(If You Ain't Got the) Do-Re-Mi": said to "represent the human side of money", this song looks

at the issue of money, acceptance, and migration during the Great Depression. It also celebrates the singers who told of their experiences through song. The song expresses how hard it was for migrants from the Dust Bowl to get to the agricultural safe-haven that was California, if they didn't have money.

- Woodie Guthrie, 1937
- Lyrics available on the official Woody Guthrie site:
http://woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/Do_Re_Mi.htm
- Recommended Recording available on Spotify

“Big Rock Candy Mountain”: a song that speaks of hope to a degree for the many people during the Great Depression that were either forced or chose the life of a bum/hobo as an alternative to staying put and dealing with poverty at home. The song paints a dream for what it's like for hoboes on the road, something of an American Dream for an unlikely group of people.

- Harry McClintock, 1928
- Lyrics available at: <http://www.bluegrasslyrics.com/node/568>
- Recommended Recording available on Spotify

“We're in the Money”: a song from the musical 42nd Street, released in 1980: a look at money as a way to achieve the American Dream. The song is performed as the group of girls comes into a sum of money and it gives them hope that they can get what they want, a way out of the Great Depression. I chose this song for its music as well as its lyrics. Both show how happiness can be found even in dark times, which is what I want them to see about the American Dream.

- 42nd Street, 2001, Michael Stewart and Mark Bramble with lyrics by Al Dubin and music by Harry Warren, 1980
- Lyrics available at: <http://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/42ndstreet/wereinthemoney.htm>
- Recommended recording available on Spotify

“Remember My Forgotten Man”: song from the film Gold Diggers of 1933 (Screenplay by Erwin S. Gelsey and James Seymour, 1933): does a great job looking at how the government treats farmers and soldiers during the Great Depression, leading to a generation of “Forgotten Men”, even though they did a lot for the country. Students should question how the government fits into the idea of the American Dream.

- Lyrics by Al Dubin, Music by Harry Warren, performed by Joan Blondell and Etta Mottet, 1933
- Lyrics available at:
http://www.lyricsmania.com/remember_my_forgotten_man_lyrics_joan_blonnell.html
- Recommended Recording available via Spotify

“Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?”: Similar to “Remember My Forgotten Man,” this song evokes a time when people were happy and doing well for others, but now they are forced to beg and scrape for money. I want students to see that even though it seems like this man has lost his American Dream, he is at the same time trying to gain a new one, rewriting what he wants from life.

- Lyrics by E. Y. Harburg; music by Jay Gorney, 1932
- Lyrics available at: <http://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/history/files/lavender/cherries.html>
- Recommended Recording available via Spotify

“Sunny Cal”: A song about reality of the American Dream...things are not what you hear/what they seem. This song is to show students that the grass is not always greener, even in a tough time such as the Great Depression.

- Jack Bryant, 1940
- Lyrics available at: <http://www.intimeandplace.org/Dust%20Bowl/Reading/sunnycal.html>
- Recommended Recording available at: <http://musicfromthedepression.com/sunny-cal/>

“Fanfare for the Common Man”: Written by Aaron Copland, an instrumental used to have students feel upbeat about the American Dream. The song also raises a question for student; should they feel upbeat about the American Dream? Is it a dream for all Americans, such as the Common Man as the song presents, or is it only for those that have achieved wealth, status, and power? Is the Dream about your economic position, or just being happy? What is it about the US that fostered this idea in the first place?

- Composed by Aaron Copland, 1942
- Sheet Music available ?
- Recommended Recording available on Spotify

“The American Dream”: Current song used for students to question “Is the American Dream gone?” Students will see a current view that someone has on the American Dream to compare to past compositions.

- Brian McNulty, 2014
- Lyrics available ?
- Recommended Recording available at: <https://www.reverbNation.com/brianmcnulty/playlist/-4>

Image of African Americans in Louisville, Kentucky in line at a relief station. This was during the Great Ohio River Flood (1937) where they are standing in front of an ironic billboard saying, "World's Highest Standard of Living."

- Margaret Bourke-White—Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
- TIME Magazine Topics: The Great Depression
- <http://topics.time.com/great-depression/pictures/>

Political cartoon that was against FDR’s New Deal, at least pointing holes in the plan of the NRA. The cartoon features the South using New Deal programs to keep blacks under oppression. This is a critique on the government trying to fix problems of the Great Depression through programs such as the AAA and the NRA (both of which were declared unconstitutional), yet not being able to fix all of the issues, especially the lingering issue of racism.

- L. Rogers, The Chicago Defender
- History News Network: Blacks Versus the New Deal (Part II)

- <http://historynewsnetwork.org/blog/7749>

“The Virgin, the Doe, and the Leper”—poem by Marya Zaturenska from her collection *Cold Morning Sky* (1938). This poem looks at three different characters and the troubles that they go through, alluding to the problems that different people go through during the Great Depression. This poem also goes into how everyone was pretty bad off during the Great Depression and how all odds are set against them.

- Marya Zaturenska
- *Cold Morning Sky* (1938) collection of poems
- <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma05/dulis/poetry/Zaturenska/zaturenska2.html>

NPR article “American Dream Faces Harsh New Reality”. This article comes from a special series of NPR called “American Dreams: Then and Now” that discusses what the American Dream has meant for people over the years. This particular article discusses how the traditional American Dream is in danger (when it was written in 2012) and how the poor are losing faith in the system and the dream itself.

- Ari Shapiro: “American Dream Faces Harsh New Reality”, 5/29/2012
- NPR special series: “American Dreams: Then and Now”
- <http://www.npr.org/2012/05/29/153513153/american-dream-faces-harsh-new-reality>

“If You Ain’t Got the Do-Re-Mi,” Smithsonian Folkways, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://www.folkways.si.edu/if-you-aint-got-the-do-re-mi/american-folk-world/music/album/smithsonian>

Ibid

“Anna Canoni about Woody Guthrie,” Songfacts, accessed July 20, 2015, http://www.songfacts.com/blog/interviews/anna_canoni_about_woody_guthrie/

“(If You Ain’t Got the) Do-Re-Mi” performed by Woody Guthrie on *If You Ain’t Got the Do-Re-Mi: Songs of Rags to Riches*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Folkways [SFW40195], © 2007.

“Harry McClintock Biography,” Eugene Chadbourne, All Music, accessed July 20, 2015, <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/harry-mcclintock-mn0000950936/biography>

“Big Rock Candy Mountain” performed by Harry McClintock on *Bona Fide Bluegrass and Mountain Music*. All Music, © 2002.

“We’re in the Money” performed by Karen Prunczik, Wanda Richert, Ginny King, Jeri Kansas, Lee Roy Reemes, 42nd Street Ensemble on *42nd Street* (1980 Original Broadway Cast. Cast Recording, All Music, 1980.

“Remember My Forgotten Man” performed by Susannah McCorkle on *The Music of Harry Warren*. Inner City ©2008

“Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” performed by Bing Crosby on *The Essential Bing Crosby (The Columbia Years)*, SONY BMG, ©1932.

“Sunny Cal” performed by Firebaugh FSA Camp on *American Folklife Center, Library of Congress*, 1940.

“Fanfare for the Common Man” performed by London Symphony Orchestra on *Copland Conducts Copland Columbia Symphony Orchestra*, ©2000.