

Course of Study:

United States History – Survey course

Unit:

May be used at any point in a US History course

Topic:

Travel—Aspirations, Challenges and Consequences

Vital Theme(s):

Patterns of social and political interaction: - change and continuity of class, ethnic, racial and gender structure and relations. Migration, immigration, forces for social mobility and immobility. The conditions and aspirations of common people, and those of elites, and their effects upon political power and institutions. The characteristics of multicultural societies; forces for unity and disunity.

Comparative history of major developments – The characteristics of revolutionary, reactionary, and reform periods across time and place. Imperialism ancient and modern. Comparative instances of slavery and emancipation, feudalism and centralization, human successes and failures, of wisdom and folly. Comparative elites and aristocracies; the role of family, wealth and merit.

“Vital Themes and Narratives,” *Building a United States History Curriculum*. Westlake, OH: National Council for History Education, 2005, pp. 10-11.

Lesson:

Using primary sources to understand the aspirations, challenges, and consequences of mobility throughout US History

Rationale for lesson and the use of *Vital Themes*:

Using the theme of *Patterns of Social and Political Interaction*, students will explore how the reasons for travel affected different social classes, how those differing social classes experienced travel as well as the consequences - intended and unintended – of such mobility. Students will see how travel throughout American history shaped our collective experience. The motivations and aspirations surrounding such travel will also become evident.

Using the theme of *Comparative History of Major Developments*, human successes and failures can easily be highlighted. An investigation of the elites and aristocracies as well as the role of family, wealth and merit and the effects thereof can also be explored.

Mobility and travel are always underlying themes in American History. By focusing on the documents in this lesson, students can certainly recognize how an oft-overlooked concept is vital to the understanding of nearly every event in United States History. As always, the choice of documents remains teacher directed. Teachers may choose to use documents that span time and space or focus on one particular era and location.

Student Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Be historians and employ *History’s Habits of Mind* to “do history”
- Critically analyze primary sources
- Identify a relevant *Vital Theme* and be able to recognize that *Theme’s* relevance in various primary sources
- Evaluate the reliability documents in context of a *Vital Theme*

Benefits for Teachers:

- Focused study of a topic through NCHE’s *Vital Themes*
- Using unique primary sources for the teaching of US History
- Creating an active history classroom with students “doing history” by focusing on *History’s Habits of Mind*
- Enhancing a student’s ability to read with purpose

History's Habits of the Mind:

- Understand how things happen and how things change, how human intentions matter, but also how their consequences are shaped by the means of carrying them out, in a tangle of purpose and process
- Understand the relationship between geography and history as a matrix of time and place, and as a context for events

“History’s Habits of the Mind,” *Building a United States History Curriculum*. Westlake, OH: National Council for History Education, 2005, p. 9.

Materials:

- Suggested written documents from *Lapham’s Quarterly*
 - 1787: *Paris* – Thomas Jefferson (p. 39)
 - 1846: *Oregon Trail* – Tabitha Brown (p.98)
 - 1854: *Mississippi* - Frederick Law Olmsted (p.61)
 - 1935: *Smalltown, USA* - Ilya Ilf & Evgeny Petrov (p.58)
 - 1949: *American Road* - Jack Kerouac (p.104)
 - 1784: *Auteuil* -Abigail Adams (p.114)
 - 1805: *America* - Lewis and Clark (p. 126)
 - 1893 – *United States* -Baedeker’s United States (p.118)
 - 1493 – *Lisbon* - Christopher Columbus (p.176)
 - 1883 – *Hannibal* - Mark Twain (p.157)
- Suggested charts from *Lapham’s Quarterly*
 - *Beaten Path* map (p.10)
 - *Estimated Travel Times* (p.32)
 - *Carry-On Baggage* (p.91)
- Suggested Images from *Lapham’s Quarterly*
 - *Boys Watching Sternwheeler on Ohio River, 1946* - Justin Locke Photo (p.26)
 - *Discovery of Hudson* - Albert Bierstadt (p.112)
 - *Oklahoma Land Rush* – John Stewart Curry (p.158)
 - *Stagecoach c. 1875* – (p.197)
 - *Crayfish c. 1770* – Sydney Parkinson (p. 199)
 - *Apollo 15 Astronaut* – Dave Scott photo (p. 176)
- Document Analysis – A.D.A.P.T sheet attached

Lesson Activities:

Prerequisites:

- General understanding of the time period(s) being discussed.
- A short discussion / writing assignment / brainstorming session on why people travel – aspirations, possible challenges, and results (positive and negative)

Motivation for Student Learning:

- As a class, have students closely read and analyze *Paris* by Thomas Jefferson (p. 39). Ideally, individual copies should be distributed. Many students may not be familiar with the document or what it represents.
 - Students should not only analyze the source (suggested A.D.A.P.T analysis sheet attached), but also identify the aspirations for travel, possible challenges and the consequences.
 - Students should look for specific words and phrases to indicate a comprehension of the author’s purpose.
- Similar questions could be asked about the creator of an image and comparisons could be made between the image and text. The written source could be used individually or in conjunction with the image.
- Suggested charts above may also be used as a motivation activity. While different questions may be asked, the focus should remain on finding specific information to support student responses.

Activity / Application:

1. Divide students into small groups of 3 or 4 when the above “Motivation” activity is finished. Tell students that they will be examining sources from a specific time period or across time (depending on the teacher’s preference). Provide each group with a primary source (suggested ones listed above and additional ones may be found in this issue of *Lapham’s Quarterly*).
2. Each group should complete a document analysis (A.D.A.P.T) of their particular document. Students should note what aspirations, challenges and consequences exist. Students should pay particularly close attention (in the analysis) to the date and context. Each group should have the same information to carry to their next group.
3. (Jigsaw) Create new groups where each member of the group has a different document. Give students copies of each document for reference and note taking.
4. Have groups answer the following question:
To what extent can the aspirations, challenges and consequences of travel among various social classes (of the same time period or across time) be considered similar?
5. Tell students that they will be writing a group essay. Each student must have a copy and you will only collect one (at random) from each group. Students must collaborate and use SPECIFIC evidence from each document provided.
6. To ensure that students also address the differences in the aforementioned *To what extent* question, the essay must contain evidence of counter-argument as well.

Alternate Assessments:

- Keeping in mind *History’s Habits of Mind*, the following assessments are designed to allow students to “do history” and be historians in the truest sense – reflective, analytical, and knowledgeable.
1. **Comprehension** Using all of the documents presented as evidence, have students explain how the purpose for travel has changed or remained consistent throughout American History. Have students assess how the challenges associated with travel have changed or remained similar throughout American history. Allow students to interpret each document and justify their interpretation with evidence from the document.
 2. **Analysis and Comprehension:** Have students use documents to support or refute the assertion that government sponsored travel produced positive results for that society, while private individual or group travel usually focused on selfish interests and did not benefit society as a

whole. Allow students to interpret each document and justify their interpretation with evidence from the document.

3. **Analysis and Comprehension:** Have students use the information from the *Carry on Baggage* chart on page 91 to discuss the importance of the following *Vital Theme* in the study of history:

Human Interaction with the Environment – *The relationship among geography, technology and culture, and their effects on social, political, and economic developments. The choices made possible by climate resources, and location, and the effect of culture and human values on such choices. The gains and losses of technological change. The central role of agriculture. The effect of disease, and disease-fighting, on plants, animals and human beings.*

4. **Further Research:** Have students (individually or in small groups) examine the other documents in *Lapham's Quarterly* (or the quarterly's website) and choose one or two documents. Have them complete an analysis for each document and explain the document how the document could be an example for the following *Vital Theme*:

Human Interaction with the Environment – *The relationship among geography, technology and culture, and their effects on social, political, and economic developments. The choices made possible by climate resources, and location, and the effect of culture and human values on such choices. The gains and losses of technological change. The central role of agriculture. The effect of disease, and disease-fighting, on plants, animals and human beings.*