

**Course of Study:**

United States History – Survey course

**Unit:**

*May be used at any point in a US History course*

**Topic:**

*Medicine – The “Health Care Debate” Throughout US History*

**Vital Theme(s):**

**Civilization, cultural diffusion and innovation:** The evolution of human skills and the means of exerting power over nature and people. The rise, interaction, and decline of successive centers of such skills and power. The cultural flowering of major civilizations in the arts, literature, and thought. The role of social, religious, and political patronage of the arts and learning. The importance of the city in different eras and places.

**Human interaction with the environment:** The relationships among geography, technology, and culture, and their effects on economic, social, and political 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.

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

**Lesson:**

*Using documents to understand the evolution of medical treatments and medicine throughout US History*

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

Using the theme of **Civilization, cultural diffusion and innovation**, students will explore how Americans used the skills and knowledge of different eras to shape our unique medical experiences. In addition, it will become evident how individuals or events change the reasons for health care. Certainly, as students will discover, the health care debate did not start in the modern era.

Using the theme of **Human interaction with the environment**, human successes and failures in the realm of healing the ill can easily be highlighted. An examination of the effect of disease, and disease-fighting, on plants, animals, and human beings will place the modern debate on the environment and health care at the forefront.

Certainly illness and treatments for various injuries and ailments have preoccupied every generation across time and place. By focusing on the American History documents and sources in this issue, students can see the commonalities that tie our generation to the past and recognize the challenges that each generation faced. As always, the choice of documents remains at the teacher’s discretion and should assist the classroom teacher in meeting curricular demands. Teachers may choose to use the very unique documents that span time and space or focus on one particular era and location.

**Student Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Recognizing history’s relevance on today’s society
- Read widely and critically to help frame important, researchable questions
- Recognize the growth or stagnation of medical technology through careful examination and analysis of primary source material

**Benefits for Teachers:**

- Teaching the evolution of a single topic across time
- Generating an interest in history by highlighting the relevance of the past on today's society
- Creating lifelong skills by focusing on *History's Habits of Mind*

**History's Habits of the Mind:**

- Understand the significance of the past to their own lives, both public and private, and to their society
- 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:**

- Document Analysis – A.D.A.P.T sheet attached
- Possible Documents (to be selected and used at teacher's discretion):
  - 1974: *Los Angeles* Kay Redfield Jamison approaches the abyss - (p. 38)
  - 1977: *New York City: Susan Sontag reads the charts* - (p.55)
  - 2009, *McAllen, Texas, Atul Gawande learns that more is less* - (p. 82)
  - 1862: *Washington, DC : Louisa May Alcott clears for action-* (p. 118)
  - 2005: *Afghanistan* (p. 121)
  - c. 1863: *Osage County* (p. 126)
  - 1997: *New York City* (p. 158)
  - 1847: *Tennessee – Dorothea Dix* (p. 159)
- Charts / Images (to be selected and used at teacher's discretion):
  - *Pandora's Box -The medicinal origins of illegal synthetic drugs* – (p. 23)
  - *Ad for Cocaine Based Tooth Medicine* – (p. 24)
  - *Doctors line the hall of a New Jersey laboratory, 1966. Photograph by Elliot Erwitt* – (p. 29)
  - *Vital Signs: The modern American hospital* – (p. 45)
  - *Anti-venereal disease poster, by Ernest Fuhr, c. 1919.* – (p. 64)
  - *Donald Sutherland and Elliott Gould in a scene from M\*A\*S\*H, directed by Robert Altman, 1970.* – (p. 82)
  - *Dr. Sharadkumar Dicksheet*– (p. 110)
  - *Tools of the Trade* - (p. 163)
  - *Laboratory of War - Advances in modern medicine during wartime* – (p. 179)

**Lesson Activities:**

***Prerequisites:***

- General understanding of the healthcare debate and why it is so controversial.

***Motivation for Student Learning:***

Begin with the quotes featured on pages 67 (Francis Bacon), 77 (Elisabeth Kulber-Ross) and 83 (Jorge Luis Borges).

1. Ask students to read each quote carefully. Lead a class discussion on what each author believes to be the purpose of healthcare / doctors / medicine.

Possible answers:

- Eliminate suffering
  - Prolong life
  - Humanitarian purposes – helping less fortunate, helping others despite status as an enemy, etc.
  - Public benefit
  - Any combination of above
  - None of the above
2. Are the views more similar or more different? Indicate that one view comes from a doctor, another from a writer/ poet, and another from a “Renaissance man.”
  3. An analysis of Hippocrates’ c. 400 BC: *Cos: Setting the record straight* (p. 28) could be assigned as a concluding activity. Students may also want to include the famous phrase, “Above all do no harm,” which is often mistakenly attributed to the Hippocratic Oath, in their analysis.

***Activity / Application:***

Students will be examining documents that will elaborate on the above concept of the purposes of healthcare. The purpose of this lesson is to illuminate an **historical analysis** of why such a societal emphasis is placed on healthcare. The intention is not to have students engage in debate on current political issues.

Students will be asked to examine a number of documents (at teacher’s discretion) and discuss the creator’s perspective on the need for healthcare and the context of the time period when the opinion is being expressed. This activity may be done in small groups or as an individual project. The images may present a problem, but with careful historical analysis, students can make informed judgements and provide specific evidence to support their conclusions.

After reading and analyzing each document, students should present their findings to the class or to the teacher in written form. The findings **MUST** include specific evidence (quotes / symbols / items) from the documents. Generalized statements without support should be rejected.

Their findings should include the following:

- Do the reasons for healthcare change based on the author’s background, condition, or occupation?
- Do the reasons for healthcare seem to change based on the time period?
- Do the reasons for healthcare seem to change based on the audience of the document?
- Do the reasons for healthcare change based on the situation (i.e. war, difficult economic times, and/or ailment of patient)?
- Is there any consensus among the authors? Across time?

Students should have an opportunity to share findings with others so various perspectives may be included. If no consensus is reached on why healthcare is needed, students should begin to understand the complexity of the healthcare issues today.

*Alternate Assessments:*

**Research and Comprehension:** Compare any event in US History with the current H1N1 (Swine Flu) crisis. Choose any document in this issue to use as a basis and determine whether the same arguments / questions could be used /asked today. Is the panic over this issue similar to any others in the past?

**Research and Analysis:** To what extent has the purpose of American medical technology and understanding been stagnant for the period of time under study (chosen at teacher's discretion)?  
- Possible documents / tables from *Lapham's Quarterly*— chart on war treatments (pg. 179), hospital (pg. 45), medical tools (pg. 163) and reading on home remedies (pg. 126) may be used.

**Research and Analysis:** To what extent do events (wars, growth of cities, encounters with the “other”) lead to advancements in medical knowledge and treatment? Or, to what extent are individuals responsible for advancements? Identify any specific events or person and assign an essay discussing whether people or events advanced medical advancements. Cite evidence from a document featured in this issue. What factors contributed to this advancement? (Answer using specific knowledge of the time period being studied).