

★ American Heritage Themes ★

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is for students to develop meaning for the four important themes in American History - freedom, unity, progress, and responsibility. One theme is stressed in each lesson in the curriculum materials. Themes are drawn from the work of the Founding Fathers as they discussed the formation of the United States. Students will analyze and discuss quotations related to themes, form four separate groups, and develop an illustration of the meaning of one theme.

Objective

The student will define freedom, unity, progress, and responsibility in American history.

Themes - Freedom, Unity, Progress, & Responsibility

Americans are responsible for communicating a blueprint to future generations the ideas of how the country gained freedom and was formed and how we unify our citizens and progress toward a better life for ALL people.

Core Knowledge

Grade 1 - Amer Hist & Geog. Sec III: From Colonies to Independence: American Revolution. Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence. Fourth of July. Benjamin Franklin. George Washington. Sec V: Symbols and Figures. Liberty Bell, U. S. President, American flag.

Grade 2 - Amer Hist & Geog. Sec I: American Government: The Constitution. Government based on the Constitution, government by consent of the governed, "We the People."

Sec V. Immigration & Citizenship. E Pluribus Unum, Statue of Liberty, newcomers to America, idea of citizenship.

Grade 3 - Amer Hist & Geog. Sec III: The Thirteen Colonies: Life and Times Before the Revolution. Colonies by region. Important cities.

Grade 4 - Amer Hist & Geog. Sec I: American Revolution. B. Causes and Provocations. C. The Revolution. Sec II: Making a Constitutional Government. A. Main ideas behind the Declaration. "All men are created equal," inalienable and natural rights, responsibilities of government. B. Making a new government: From Declaration to Constitution. Definition of republican government, Founding Fathers, Constitutional Convention. C. Constitution of the U. S. Sec V: Symbols and Figures. White House, Great Seal.

Grade 5 - World Hist & Geog. Sec IV: England and the Golden Age to the Glorious Revolution. B. From the English Revolution to the Glorious Revolution. English Revolution and Bill of Rights.

Time

55 minutes

Materials

- ★ American Heritage Themes handouts
- ★ Loyalty Day Proclamations
- ★ Art supplies (as needed)
- ★ Website - www.americanheritage.org

Preparation

- ★ Copy American Heritage Themes handout for each student.
- ★ Copy American Heritage Themes templates (as needed).
- ★ Gather art supplies (as needed).

Focus

Students are to develop the meaning of the four themes of American Heritage. Write the words **freedom**, **unity**, **progress**, and **responsibility** on the board. Ask students what they think each of the words means, and write their responses near the word. Read one of the quotes about each one of the themes and ask students how the quote relates to the definition the students have provided.

Activity

Teachers may select one or more of these activities for their students.

1. Have groups of students list the jobs of four family members and describe how each of the jobs impacts one of the four themes.
2. Ask each student to create a poster to illustrate one of the four themes. Group all of the posters of the same theme and have the students who created the posters unify their ideas to create a single poster. Display the posters around the school and area businesses.
3. Ask students to write a poem, "What is an American?"
The poem format:
Line 1—one of the four themes
Line 2—2 adjectives
Line 3—3 action verbs
Line 4—a sentence about the theme
Line 5—a synonym for the theme
4. The teacher will summarize and discuss with students the Loyalty Day proclamation excerpts. Read also the American Heritage Month excerpt. Discuss with students why it is important to learn about America and its history and heritage. (See Links page on www.americanheritage.org for additional resources on Loyalty Day.)

Closure

Remind students that freedom, unity, progress, and responsibility are themes from American history that are still important to Americans today.

Assessment

Students will write a brief composition explaining the importance of freedom, unity, progress, and responsibility to Americans in the twenty-first century. Or, students may write on why it is personally important to them to learn about America.



The God who gave us life,
gave us liberty at the same time.
Thomas Jefferson
1743-1826

There is nothing on this earth
more glorious than a man's freedom,
and no aim more elevated than liberty.
Thomas Paine
1737-1809

Is life so dear or peace so sweet,
as to be purchased at the price
of chains or slavery?
Forbid it, Almighty God!
I know not what course
others may take, but as for me,
give me liberty or give me death!
Patrick Henry
1736-1799

We must all hang together, or
assuredly we shall all hang separately.
Benjamin Franklin
1706-1790

E PLURIBUS UNUM – From Many, One
The Great Seal of the United States
1782

Be Americans.
Let there be no sectionalism,
no North, South, East or West:
You are all dependent on one another
and should be in union.
In one word, be a nation:
be Americans, and be true to
yourselves.
George Washington
1732-1799

Freedom

Unity

Progress

Responsibility

Freedom, unity, progress,
and **responsibility** are central
themes in America's heritage
that generations of Americans
from various backgrounds have
embraced
for over two centuries.

This society of free, self-reliant individuals has
brought about the greatest outburst of creative
human energy ever known, producing more
social, economic, and health advances than ever
before in history—the miracle that is America. Yet
there is more to do. The most rapid, permanent
progress is achieved through individual freedom,
education, productivity, and morality.
Dr. Richard J. Gonzalez
1912-1998

*The main fuel to speed our progress is our
stock of knowledge, and the brake is our
lack of imagination. The ultimate resource is
people—skilled, spirited and hopeful people
who will exert their wills and imaginations
for their own benefit, and so, inevitably, for
the benefit of all.*
Julian Simon
1932-1998

God grants liberty only to those
who love it and are always ready
to guard and defend it.
Daniel Webster
1782-1852

For, however loftily the intellect of man may have
been gifted, however skillfully it may have been
trained, if it be not guided by a sense of justice, a
love of mankind, and a devotion to duty, its
possessor is only a more splendid, as he is a more
dangerous, barbarian.
Horace Mann
1796-1859

And so, my fellow Americans,
ask not what your country can do for you;
ask what you can do for your country.
John F. Kennedy
1917-1963

Freedom

Unity

Progress

Responsibility

The Theme is Freedom

(excerpts)

By M. Stanton Evans

Regenery Publishing Company, Washington, D. C., 1994

If we want to find the sources of our freedom, we first need to know what freedom is, as Americans have historically defined it. Our definition of freedom in these pages means *the absence of coercion* to the extent that this is feasible in organized society. It means the ability of human beings to act in voluntary fashion, rather than being pushed around and forced to do things. Someone who does something of his own volition is free; someone forced to act at gunpoint isn't. This seems an obvious enough distinction, and, in an age disgraced by the totalitarian horror, a useful one to keep in focus.

It (freedom) means, for instance, the ability to decide things on a voluntary basis, but says nothing at all about *what* will be decided. This gives freedom a status of its own, a helpful feature if we want to compare or contrast it with other values. Even so, it comes attached with a proviso: Liberty to act on one's own behalf must be fenced off by the equal liberty of others, so that freedom for one individual doesn't become oppression for a second. Freedom in this sense must be mutual, so as not to contradict the basic premise.

Most important for our discussion, freedom thus defined also entails a certain kind of governing system. If a regime of liberty is to exist, some agency must forestall the use of force or fraud by which one person invades another's rights, render justice in doubtful cases, and provide a zone of order in which people may go about their affairs in safety. This agency is the government. Its basic job is to maintain the equal liberty of the people, by preventing various species of aggression. Likewise, for identical and fairly obvious reasons, government also must be precluded from violating freedom. Taken together, these concepts add up to the notion of the order-keeping state, which protects its citizens from hostile forces, but is itself restrained in the exertion of its powers.

Establishing such a regime of freedom is no easy matter, as it requires a proper balance between the requirements of liberty and those of order. Government needs sufficient power to do its job, but not too much--which would endanger freedom. The dilemma was summed up by Burke: "To make a government requires no great prudence. Settle the seat of power, teach obedience, and the work is done. To give freedom is still more easy. It is not necessary to guide; it only requires to let go of the rein. But to form a *free government*, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind."

Similar thoughts about the topic were expressed by the Founders of our republic. Indeed, Americans will have no trouble recognizing the view of government we have been describing, since in general outline it is our own: an emphasis on voluntary action, safeguards for individual rights, limits on the reach of power. The core ideas of American statecraft have been, precisely, that government exists to provide an arena of ordered liberty, but that government in turn must be prevented from violating freedom.

Loyalty Day

A Proclamation (excerpts) (2003)
By the President of the United States of America

“To be an American is not a matter of blood or birth. Our citizens are bound by ideals that represent the hope of all mankind: that all men are created equal, endowed with unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. On Loyalty Day, we reaffirm our allegiance to our country and resolve to uphold the vision of our Forefathers....

...Our founding principles have endured, guiding our Nation toward progress and prosperity and allowing the United States to be a leader among nations of the world. Throughout our history, honorable men and women have demonstrated their loyalty to America by making remarkable sacrifices to preserve and protect these values....

...These values must be imparted to each new generation. Our children need to know that our Nation is a force for good in the world, extending hope and freedom to others. By learning about America’s history, achievements, ideas, and heroes, our young citizens will come to understand even more why freedom is worth protecting....”

GEORGE W. BUSH
The White House
Office of the Press Secretary
April 30, 2003
www.whitehouse.gov

Loyalty Day

A Proclamation (excerpts) (2004)
By the President of the United States of America

“As Americans, we work to preserve the freedom declared by our Founding Fathers, defended by generations, and granted to every man and woman on Earth by the Almighty. On Loyalty Day, we are reminded that we are citizens with obligations to our country, to each other, and to our great legacy of freedom and democracy....

...We must continue to ensure that our young people know the great cause of freedom and why it is worth defending. Our Founders believed the study of history and citizenship should be at the core of every American’s education. By encouraging students to learn more about American history and values, we can help prepare the next generation of Americans to carry our heritage of freedom into the future....”

GEORGE W. BUSH
The White House
Office of the Press Secretary
April 30, 2004
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CELEBRATE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH IN NOVEMBER!

“American Heritage Month gives us all an opportunity to reflect on our roots as Americans from a fresh perspective. It is a time to remember that we Americans have brought with us many different heritages, but we have joined together in this country as one people. The Declaration of Independence sets forth our fundamental values, and the Constitution serves to protect those values. Our schools, teachers, students, and other citizens help preserve and strengthen the miracle that is America. As Thomas Jefferson said, ‘If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be.’”

The American Heritage Education Foundation, Inc.

