

★ The National Motto ★

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to teach the students about the history and ideology of the National Motto, to discuss the contributions of the Founding Fathers to our new nation, and to examine/consider the role of religion in our nation's foundation.

Objective

1. The student will discuss and explain the phrase "Divine Providence."
2. The student will discuss the role of religion in the founding of America.
3. The student will explain the historical roots of our National Motto, "In God We Trust."

Theme-Progress

The use of the words "In God We Trust" as a motto affirms by the Founders and subsequent leaders the fundamental role of God the Creator in the founding and growth of the United States of America.

NCSS Standards

IVf. identify and describe the influence of perception, attitudes, values, and beliefs on personal identity.

IVh. work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.

Vg. apply knowledge of how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good.

Xa. examine the origins and continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government.

Xf. identify and explain the roles of formal and informal political actors in influencing and shaping public policy and decision-making.

Time

45 minutes

Materials

- ★ "In God We Trust" reading
- ★ "The National Motto" timeline
- ★ "The National Motto" worksheet
- ★ Website - www.americanheritage.org

Preparation

- ★ Copy the "In God We Trust" reading and "The National Motto" timeline.
- ★ Copy "The National Motto" worksheet.
- ★ Provide a penny, nickel, dime and quarter for every student or assign it for homework.

Focus

Define and discuss the word "Divine Providence." Discuss and list events in early American history that might have called for the Founding Fathers to ask for "Divine Intervention."

Activity

1. Discuss the list completed in the Focus activity.
2. Read handout, "In God We Trust," and discuss. Complete questions for reading. (See Links page on www.americanheritage.org for additional resources on the National Motto and its historical context.)

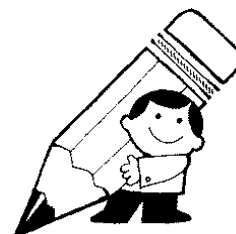
3. Have students study a penny, nickel, dime, and quarter. They should note the different designs, phrases, and figures on each coin. Discuss the historical significance of the symbols on these coins.

Closure

Discuss the meaning and use of the phrase “Divine Providence.” Discuss our nation’s historical religious roots.

Assessment

Cut pictures out of magazines and newspapers that reflect our religious history. Create a poster, book, or collage to present and/or display these pictures.



IN GOD WE TRUST

America was founded on religious freedom, a concept that permeates many of our national symbols, phrases, and monuments. The National Motto, “In God We Trust,” reflects this historical religious heritage. The motto was adopted in 1956 and has been printed on every coin since 1864. The Federal courts of the United States have upheld the motto as a symbol of our history that enhances the ideals of unity, patriotism, and the future progress of our country.

The first colonists came to and settled in America with little existing knowledge of the new continent but motivated by religious convictions. Many groups claim they were guided by “Divine Providence.” The Pilgrims of Massachusetts established “The City on the Hill,” a society based on a God-centered life. William Penn founded Pennsylvania, a Quaker settlement called the “The Holy Experiment” which advocated an equal and free society for all. Roman Catholics came to Maryland to practice their religion freely. Colonizing was difficult, and the settlers looked for “Divine Intervention” to help them succeed against geography, weather, and other dangers.

Many of our Founding Fathers and revolutionary leaders were Masons. Masonic organizations migrated to America with the European immigrants. Members of these clubs included the best minds of Europe and America. Their goal was to create a society that fostered virtuous human beings and promoted citizenry, philanthropy, liberty, and brotherhood. The Masons wanted a national government built on good judgment and integrity, with the rule of law. Many leaders felt virtue could not be obtained without religion. During the Revolution, many colonists believed “The Invisible Hand” of God would support and defend the idea of liberty instead of the “divine right of kings.”

During the writing of the Constitution, the Founding Fathers believed that with “Divine Guidance” their efforts would have vision and purpose and that they would not get lost in their own materialistic goals. They would be successful in the establishment of the first government for the people, run by the people.

Our National Motto, “In God We Trust,” first stated in “The Star-Spangled Banner,” reflects our unique religious and historical roots. The motto unifies the people of the United States and is a reminder of our nation’s conception and birth.

NATIONAL MOTTO: "IN GOD WE TRUST"

Worksheet

Define the following words/phrases:

- a. Divine Providence
- b. Founding Fathers
- c. Philanthropy
- d. Civic Virtue

1. List three (3) events in early American history that led colonists to ask for "Divine Intervention," "Divine Guidance," or "Divine Providence."
2. What is a Mason? What were the Masons' goals?
3. Explain the term "Divine Intervention."
4. List some other symbols or phrases on other forms of currency that you don't understand or that you think have a religious or historical background.

FEATURE	MEANING OR SIGNIFICANCE
(symbols / phrases)	(background)

THE NATIONAL MOTTO



In God We Trust

The United States National Motto, "In God We Trust," expresses the ideas from the 1776 Declaration of Independence that nature's God is the Creator who gives humans equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and who is the Supreme Judge of the world.

1814 "The Star-Spangled Banner," the national anthem of the United States, written by Francis Scott Key, states in the final stanza:

"And this be our motto, In God is our Trust."

1863 In the Gettysburg address, President Lincoln said, "This nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom."

1864 President Lincoln declared that the words "In God We Trust" be printed on all coins of the United States. The words "In God We Trust" have been printed on all United States coins since 1864.

1954 Congress added the words "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States.

1955 Congress ordered that "In God We Trust" be printed on all the paper currency of the United States.

1956 Congress designated "In God We Trust" as the national motto. Congress proclaimed a National Day of Prayer which has been celebrated annually on the first Thursday in May since the early 1950s.

1970 Legal attacks and efforts to remove "In God We Trust" from money of the United States were rejected by the courts.

