

# ★ What is an American? ★

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this lesson is to teach students that while Americans come from a variety of backgrounds, they all share certain values, beliefs, and experiences. Students create a collage to illustrate these themes.

## **Objective**

1. The student will describe what it means to be an American.
2. The student will discuss the uniqueness of the country in which we live.

## **Theme-Responsibility & Unity**

As Americans we should celebrate and honor diversity, recognizing that while Americans are very different we all make up our one nation.

## **NCSS Standards**

Ib. explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of

reference.

IVb. describe personal connections to place—as associated with community, nation, and world.

IVc. describe the ways family, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and institutional affiliations contribute to personal identity.

IVh. work independently and cooperatively to accomplish goals.

## **Time**

60 minutes

## **Materials**

- ★ Poster board, markers, scissors, and glue
- ★ Picture sources (e.g., magazines, calendars, newspapers)

## **Preparation**

Gather sets of art materials for students to work in groups.

## **Focus**

Write “What is an American?” on the board. Have students think about/reflect on what they have learned about America and its history and heritage, democratic ideals, philosophy, etc.. Discuss American themes and ideals and possible brainstorming about what it means to be “American.” Consider reasons why various groups have come to America. Discuss with the students the fact that while there is much diversity among Americans, there are important things that we share.

## **Activity**

1. A. Have students compare the “American family” of 281,000,000 citizens to their own families. They can do a T-chart, vend diagram, collage of all members in their families, or other activity to brainstorm and note unique as well as American traits of their families. Students can brainstorm answers in two columns labeled “Different” and “Similar.”

Remind students that just as each member of their family is important, so also is every citizen important to the American family. Further, just as individual family members can draw strength from one another, so can American citizens of one nation draw strength from all other citizens to enjoy and improve each of their lives. Let students know they are vital members of the American family.

B. Students will work in groups to create collages titled, “What is an American?” Remind students to include images and symbols that represent the diversity of individuals living together as a family in one nation. Students can present their collages to the class when they are finished.

## Closure

1. Review the brainstorming and list made in the Focus as well as the student collages or other analyses to find things Americans have in common. Discuss.
2. Considering the question, “What is an American?,” students think about and discuss what they have learned about America and its heritage and history. Students should consider America’s democratic ideals, philosophy, founding and important documents, national symbols, significant events, important individuals and leaders, citizenship, national identity, etc. Students can also think about American Heritage themes and/or refer to various activities or assignments.

## Assessment

To answer the question, “What is an American?,” students will write an essay defining an American, describing both differences and similarities among Americans. Students should consider American Heritage themes and what they learned through activities about America and its heritage including its democratic ideals, philosophy, founding and important documents, national symbols, significant events, important individuals and leaders, citizenship, national identity, etc.



# What is an American?