

# ★ 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.

## **TEKS**

113.22.b.6.2 History. The student understands the contributions of individuals and groups from various cultures to selected historical and contemporary societies.

113.22.b.6.11 Government. The student understands the concepts of limited governments, such as constitutional and democratic governments....

113.22.b.6.13 Citizenship. The student understands that the nature of citizenship varies among societies.

113.22.b.6.14 Citizenship. The student understands the relationship among individual rights, responsibilities, and freedoms in democratic societies.

113.22.b.6.15 Culture. The student understands the similarities and differences

within and among cultures in different societies.

113.23.b.7.21 Soc Studies Skills. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources.

113.23.b.7.22 Soc Studies Skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.

113.24.b.8.3 History. The student understands the foundations of representative government in the U. S.

113.24.b.8.16 Government. The student understands the American beliefs and principles reflected in the Constitution and other historic documents.

113.24.b.8.20 Citizenship. The student understands the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the U. S.

113.24.b.8.21 Citizenship. The student understands the importance of voluntary individual participation in the democratic process.

113.24.b.8.24 Culture. The student understands the relationships between and among people from various groups....

## **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.

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.

## 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.”

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

