



Introduction to Ethnic Studies High School Course



FOUNDATION
AGAINST
INTOLERANCE
& RACISM



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Ethnic Studies

High School Course

FAIR Introduction to Ethnic Studies High School Course

Introduction

The FAIR Introduction to Ethnic Studies course explores the true diversity within and among ethnic groups in American society by highlighting the challenges these groups have faced, including racism and discrimination, the resources they have used to meet those challenges, and the positive contributions they have made to the American story. FAIR's ethnic studies course celebrates both the beauty of diversity as well as the traits shared by Americans of different backgrounds. Exploring these commonalities will enable students to relate the subject of ethnic studies to the concepts of American and human identity, and to connect what they learn in ethnic studies to other subjects such as civics, American history, economics, and government.

A primary goal of the FAIR Introduction to Ethnic Studies course is for every student to see themselves and all of their classmates as vital parts of the American story. Ultimately, the course is meant to empower students with knowledge about themselves, their own and others' ethnicities and humanity, and the conditions for sustainable justice and thriving so that they will make constructive contributions to their communities and our country throughout their lives.

Course Structure

The FAIR Introduction to Ethnic Studies course is structured into three parts. Part One (8 weeks) explores the relationship between ethnicity, identity, and humanity; American governing principles and laws in theory and practice; and the history of immigration, including the challenges immigrants faced and opportunities they found in America. Part Two (24 weeks) explores the lived experiences of people of particular ethnic, ancestral, and cultural backgrounds in the U.S. Part Three (4 weeks) finishes with a capstone project in which students draw upon all they have learned to author their own narratives as unique human beings within the framework of the American story. The project will empower students to reflect on their experiences and identities and to meaningfully participate in civic action in their own communities.

Below is a curriculum map containing overviews, representative essential questions, and sample primary sources and readings from a diversity of perspectives upon which our units and lessons are built. A sample lesson is attached as an appendix.

California Standards Alignment

- [California Dept. of Education Model Ethnic Studies Curriculum Guidelines, 2021](#)
- [CA HSS Analysis Skills \(9–12\)](#)
- [CA CCSS Writing Standards WHST 1-10 \(Grades 9-12\)](#)
- [CA CCSS Reading Standards RH 1-10 \(Grades 9-12\)](#)
- [CA CCSS Speaking and Listening Standards SL 1-10 \(Grades 9-12\)](#)
- [CA ELD Standards: ELD.PI.9–10.1, 5, 9, 10a](#)
- [CA HSS Framework Chapter 20, "Access and Equity."](#)

PART 1**ETHNIC STUDIES, PRINCIPLES OF AMERICAN GOVERNANCE, AND A HISTORY OF AMERICAN IMMIGRATION**

Overview:

Part 1 explains the goals and structure of the course, defines and examines essential concepts related to ethnicity, explores the principles and structure of American governance, and provides a concise but comprehensive history of the motivations, challenges, and opportunities of immigrants to the United States.

Part 1, Unit 1 | Introduction to Ethnic Studies (2 Weeks)**Overview**

This unit explores the relationships between ethnicity, humanity, identity, character, and personality and the role each of them plays in our lives.

Week 1: Understanding Ethnicity and Ethnic Studies

Sample of Essential Unit Questions:

- What is ethnicity? What is culture? What are the relationships between ethnicity and culture?
- Why is it important to study ethnicity and culture in America?

Sample of Essential Unit Primary Sources:

- Selections from [A Beginner's Guide to America](#), Roya Hakanian
 - "The Complexity of Ethnicity in American Society," from Chapter 1, [Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies, Eighth Edition](#), James Banks
-

Week 2: Understanding Identity

Sample of Essential Unit Questions:

- What are essential elements of human identity?
- How do humanity, ethnicity, identity, nationality, culture, character, and personality overlap and help shape people's lives?

Sample of Essential Unit Primary Sources:

- Selections from [A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.](#), edited by James M. Washington
- [Exploring Personal Identity](#)
- "[I, Too](#)" by Langston Hughes

Part 1, Unit 2 | Principles of American Governance (2 Weeks)

Overview

This unit prepares students to understand historic and current ethnic challenges by exploring the foundational principles and laws of the United States. Students will learn how these laws have protected the rights of many Americans, but also how, for much of our history, they have failed to protect other Americans. This unit also highlights how many Americans who were marginalized by the US legal system fought for and eventually secured equal rights under the law and how many Americans today continue to ensure that our justice system lives up to its founding principles.

Week 1: The Declaration of Independence and its Legacy

Sample of Essential Unit Questions:

- What are “inalienable rights”? How do inalienable rights relate to the idea that “all men are created equal”? How does being “created equal” relate to the concepts of equality before the law, equality of opportunity, and equality of outcome? What are the differences between these three concepts of equality?
- When and for what reason(s) has the Declaration of Independence been invoked in American history? How do some of these relate to the history of ethnic groups in America?

Sample of Essential Unit Primary Sources:

- [The Declaration of Independence](#)
 - [Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments](#)
 - W.E.B. Du Bois, [Niagara Movement Declaration of Principles](#)
-

Week 2: The Constitution and its Legacy

Sample of Essential Unit Questions:

- In what ways did the Constitution attempt to protect inalienable rights and the consent of the governed? In what ways did it fail to protect these rights?
- How and why has the Constitution changed over time, through amendments or through interpretation? How have these changes affected the experiences of various ethnic groups in America?

Sample of Essential Unit Primary Sources:

- [U.S. Constitution](#)
- Abraham Lincoln, [Cooper Union Address](#)
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, [Commonwealth Club Address](#)

Part 1, Unit 3 | America: E Pluribus Unum? (4 Weeks)

Overview

This unit explores the range of diversity in national, cultural, ancestral, and ethnic backgrounds that has existed in the U.S. from colonial times to the present. Students will examine the hardships faced by Americans of various ethnic backgrounds, the strategies they employed to overcome these hardships, as well as the opportunities that they had to thrive in America. This unit finishes by inquiring into the tensions and commonalities between forms of belonging in the American motto of E Pluribus Unum: out of many, one.

Week 1: Immigration and Ethnicity in America: An Overview

Sample of Essential Unit Questions:

- To what extent are broad ethnic labels such as Asian American, Latino, Hispanic, Native American, etc. accurate descriptors of the individual people in these groups? Do all immigrants identify with their country or tribe of origin? Should they be encouraged to?
- What are some of the main motivations and forces that have drawn immigrants to America over these past centuries?

Sample of Essential Unit Primary Sources:

- Selection from David Gerber, [American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction](#), Oxford University Press
 - “[The New Colossus](#)” by Emma Lazarus
 - From “[What Is an ‘Ethnic Group’ in Ordinary People’s Eyes? Different Ways of Understanding It Among American, British, Mexican, and Polish Respondents.](#)” Katarzyna Hamer, et. al, Cross Cultural Research
-

Week 2: Immigration and Ethnicity in Colonial Times and the Revolutionary Era, 1600-1789

Sample of Essential Unit Questions:

- In what ways did African Americans struggle against and respond to forced immigration and the oppression they experienced in the American colonies and early U.S.?
- What do primary sources suggest about the ability of the colonists to deal with differences among the European ethnic groups settling in America?

Sample of Essential Unit Primary Sources:

- Selection from Letters from an American Farmer, quoted in Daniels, Roger. [Coming to America \(Second Edition\)](#)
- Iroquois Chief Canasatego, quoted in [Virginia’s Early Relations with Native Americans | Colonial Settlement, 1600s - 1763 | U.S. History Primary Source Timeline | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)
- [A Petition from Enslaved Africans in Massachusetts, April 20, 1773](#)

Week 3: Immigration and Ethnicity in the Industrial Transformation, 1820-1924

Sample of Essential Unit Questions:

- How did immigrants and native-born American citizens respond, both negatively and positively, to the increasing ethnic diversity of the U.S. in the decades from the 1880s to the 1920s?
- How did Native Americans attempt to protect their ways of life from the tide of European expansion into their lands?

Sample of Essential Unit Primary Sources:

- From the [Journal of the American-Irish Historical Society](#)
 - From [Chapter 9, The Promised Land, by Mary Antin](#)
 - [President Harding Lambasts Segregation in Birmingham, Alabama, 1921](#)
-

Week 4: Modern Times, 1965-Present

Sample of Essential Unit Questions:

- How have the motivations, challenges, and opportunities for immigrants changed from colonial times to the present? How have they remained the same?
- How does the term “assimilation” describe what happens to ethnic groups over time? What are the potential benefits and costs of assimilation?

Sample of Essential Unit Primary Sources:

- From [“Not All Asian Americans Are the Same. So Why Do School Data Treat Us That Way?” in Education Week](#)
- Farhad Manjoo, [“There’s Nothing Wrong with Open Borders,”](#) The New York Times, January 16, 2019.
- Reihan Salam, [“Less Immigration, More Immigrants,”](#) The National Review, March 10, 2014.

PART 2**ETHNIC GROUPS IN AMERICA**

Overview

Part 2 explores the diverse backgrounds and experiences of people who have contributed to the United States and their local communities throughout American history. It includes units on the experiences, cultures, and contributions of people of African, Latino, Asian, and Native American ancestries. Each unit features in-depth explorations of cultures, movements, and individual stories that reveal how each of these ethnic groups played an essential role in the development of America. This part of the course can be customized to suit local needs and preferences.

Representative Essential Questions for Ethnic Groups in America

All four units in Part Two contain the following common essential questions, as well as essential questions that are specific to each unit:

- How have people from various ethnic backgrounds faced social and economic adversity in America? How have people from some ethnic backgrounds historically faced greater adversity than others?
- What cultural, legal, communal, and personal resources have people with various ethnic backgrounds drawn on to overcome adversity in America?
- How have people of various ethnic backgrounds contributed to making America the country that it is today?
- Do people of some ethnic backgrounds face more challenges than others in America today?
- How has the recognition and protection of the rights of people in various ethnic groups changed over different eras?
- How has the degree of respect for human rights in their ancestral countries affected various people's hopes and expectations for what America can offer?
- In what ways can the histories and cultures of people of various ethnic backgrounds influence their lives in the U.S. today?
- What is the American dream? Is the American dream accessible to Americans of all ethnic backgrounds today?

Part 2, Unit 1 | African American Experiences (6 Weeks)**Overview**

Arriving in America by force in the 1600s, African Americans have endured extraordinary suffering, hardship, and oppression resulting from the denial of their inalienable rights. This unit explores collective and individual African American experiences as they have fought for the full recognition of their rights while also making significant cultural, economic, and political contributions to American life.

Week 1: The Evolving Slave System and African-American Life in Colonial America and the Early Republic

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What is the relationship between slavery and racism in U.S. history?
- What role did the Declaration of Independence play in the political thought and activism of African Americans?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [*Four Acts Regarding Slavery by the Virginia General Assembly*](#)
 - [*Prince Hall's Petition to the Massachusetts Legislature*](#)
 - Phillis Wheatley, "[*On Being Brought From Africa to America*](#)"
-

Week 2: Slavery, Partial Freedom, and Abolitionism In The New Republic: 1800-1863

Sample of essential unit questions:

- How did abolitionists draw on the U.S. Constitution to support their cause?
- What factors made it so difficult for black abolitionists to work within the United States' political system?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- From [Henry Highland Garnet's Rejected Address to the Colored Convention of 1843](#)
 - Frederick Douglass, "[What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?](#)"
 - David Walker's [Appeal](#)
-

Week 3: African American Resilience In The Era of Reconstruction's Success and Failure: 1865-1900

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What kinds of injustices have African Americans faced since the legal abolition of slavery?
- In what ways did Reconstruction succeed? In what ways did it fail? Why?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- Selection from Booker T. Washington, [Up From Slavery](#)
- Selection from W. DuBois, [The Souls of Black Folk; Essays and Sketches](#).
- Selection from Baley Wyatt: [A Freedman Speaks](#)

Week 4: A Black Renaissance In The Face of Jim Crow: 1900-1940

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What were the distinctive African American contributions to American culture in music, visual art, and literature?
- How did black cultural contributions rise so dramatically during a period of stifling segregation?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [Platform Adopted by the National Negro Committee](#), 1909
 - Discussion of music in [Remembering Slavery, African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery](#)
 - Selection from Zora Neal Hurston's Autobiography, [Dust Tracks on a Road](#)
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Week 5: The Civil Rights Movement's "New Birth of Freedom"

Sample of essential unit questions:

- How did Martin Luther King, Jr.'s approach to achieving civil rights differ from Malcolm X's?
- How did many of the successes of the American Civil Rights movement draw upon the founding principles of the United States Constitution?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- From "[Pilgrimage to Nonviolence](#)," April 13, 1960. From Stanford University, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute.
 - From "[Message to the Grass Roots](#)" delivered at a Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference in Detroit, in November 1963. The speech is reprinted from *Malcolm X Speaks*, copyright 1965 by Merit Publishers and Dr. Betty Shabazz.
 - From a [Stokely Carmichael Speech on Black Power](#), 1966
-

Week 6: The Past 50 Years: Breakthroughs, Successes, and Challenges, Old And New

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What challenges do African Americans continue to face in the U.S., and what resources have they marshaled to confront these challenges?
- How are the experiences of immigrants of African ancestry different from those of African Americans who are descended from enslaved people? In what ways are they similar?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- A passage on the police from Ta-Nehisi Coates, [Between the World and Me](#), New York, Spiegel and Grau, 2015, pp. 78-79.
- From "Glenn Loury: ['If the black community wants change, it has to look at itself too,' interview by Esma Linnemann](#)," May 21, 1921.
- From "[A Brief History of African American Suburbanization](#)," by Quinton McDonald appearing on the site *Black Past*

Part 2, Unit 2 | Latino American Experiences (6 Weeks)

Overview

Latino Americans have a long and complex history in America since beginning to settle in the American Southwest in the 1500s. This unit explores the collective and individual experiences of Latino Americans as they have journeyed to America, worked for the full recognition of their rights, while making significant cultural, economic, and political contributions to American life

Week 1: Early Cultural Formations of Distinct Hispanic Peoples

Sample of essential unit questions:

- How had distinct indigenous cultures developed prior to the arrival of Europeans?
- How did the labels “Latino” and “Hispanic” originate? Why do some people with Latin American ancestry prefer to use other terms to identify themselves?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- Excerpts from [The Death of Aztec Tenochtitlan, the Life of Mexico City](#), by Barbara E. Mundy
 - Excerpts from [Rethinking the Inka: Community, Landscape, and Empire in the Southern Andes](#), by Hayshida, Troncoso, and Salazar.
 - [“Hispanic? Latino? Here’s Where the Terms Come From”](#)
-

Week 2: Journeys to America

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What are some of the main reasons why Latinos have immigrated to America? How do these reasons differ based on country of origin and time period?
- What are the greatest challenges and opportunities Latino immigrants tend to face in the United States upon their arrival?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [Mexico chapter in The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration Since 1965](#)
 - [Migration from El-Salvador to the U.S.](#)
 - Excerpts from [Enrique’s Journey](#), by Sonia Nazario
-

Week 3: Taking Root

Sample of essential unit questions:

- Why and how did most Latino Americans choose to settle in certain areas and communities in the United States and not others?
- How did different groups of Latino Americans navigate the complex issues related to questions of national, cultural, and personal identity as they settled in the United States?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [A Growing Community | Mexican | Immigration and Relocation in US History | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress](#)
 - [Excerpts from The House on Mango Street](#) by Sandra Cisneros
 - [Transforming a City | Puerto Rican/Cuban | Immigration and Relocation in US History | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress](#)
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Week 4: Overcoming Challenges

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What roles did Latino Americans play in the Civil Rights Movement? How are Latino Americans still engaged in civil rights advocacy today?
- What personal and community strengths have helped Latino Americans achieve their full human rights in America?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [Cesar Chavez](#)
 - [The Chicano Civil Rights Movement](#)
 - [Have Mexican American moderates been overlooked in Latino civil rights history?](#)
-

Week 5: Stories of Inspiration and Contributions to American Culture

Sample of essential unit questions:

- How have Latino Americans contributed to America's national prosperity and common culture?
- What personal and community strengths have helped Latino Americans to succeed and thrive at the highest levels in the United States?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [Preface from Brown: The Last Discovery of America](#), by Richard Rodriguez
- Excerpts from [Taco USA: How Mexican Food Conquered America](#), by Gustavo Arellano
- "My Five Guiding Principles" from [Powerhouse Principles](#) by Jorge Perez

Week 6: Living Today: Challenges and Opportunities to Thrive

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What does it mean today to be Mexican-American? Cuban-American? Colombian-American? El Salvadoran-American?
- What opportunities do Latino Americans have today? What kinds of obstacles do they still face?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- Excerpts from [Once I Was You](#), by Maria Hinojosa
 - [“The Prince of los Cocuyos,”](#) by Richard Blanco
 - [“Latinos are Shaping the Future of the United States”](#), Center for American Progress
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Part 2, Unit 3 | Asian American Experiences (6 Weeks)

Overview

Asian Americans played an essential role in the early development of the American West and, over the centuries, in the broader American story. This unit explores the collective and individual experiences of Asian Americans in their unique journeys to America, their struggles for full recognition of their rights, and their significant cultural, economic, and political contributions to American life.

Week 1: Early Cultural Formations of Distinct Asian Peoples

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What distinct cultures did Asian people bring with them to America, and how had those cultures developed?
- How do distinct Asian ethnicities differ in their cultures? How do they overlap?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [Southeast Asia: A Very Short Introduction](#)
 - [A Brief History of the Cultures of Asia](#)
 - [Origins of Southeast Asian Religions](#)
-

Week 2: Journeys to America

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What are some of the main reasons why Asian people have immigrated to America? How do these reasons differ based on country of origin and time period?
- How does one’s status as an immigrant or a refugee create challenges and/or opportunities for Asian-Americans?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [The Best We Could Do: An Illustrated Memoir](#), by Thi Bui
 - [Key Facts about Asian Americans, a Diverse and Growing Population](#)
 - Excerpts from [In Order to Live: A North Korean Girl's Journey to Freedom](#), by Yeonmi Park and Maryanne Vallers
-

Week 3: Taking Root

Sample of essential unit questions:

- Why and how did most Asian Americans choose to settle in certain areas and communities in the United States and not others?
- How did different groups of Asian Americans navigate the complex issues related to questions of national, cultural, and personal identity as they settled in the United States?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- Selections from [Almost American Girl](#), by Robin Ha
 - [“Asian Crops Take Root Here”](#)
 - [Chinatown Resource Guide, PBS](#)
-

Week 4: Overcoming Challenges

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What role did Asian Americans play in the Civil Rights Movement? How are Asian Americans still engaged in civil rights advocacy today?
- What personal and community strengths have helped Asian Americans secure the full recognition of their human rights?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- Excerpts from [Farewell to Manzanar](#), by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston
 - The poem [“Silence...No More”](#), by Kiku Funabiki
 - [United Farm Workers Movement: Philip Vera Cruz, Unsung Hero](#)
-

Week 5: Stories of Inspiration and Contributions to American Culture

Sample of essential unit questions:

- How have Asian Americans contributed to America's national prosperity and common culture?
- What personal and community strengths have helped Asian Americans to succeed and thrive at the highest levels in the United States?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- Excerpts from [Nothing Like it in the World](#)
 - [“From Cambodia to Southern California: Telling the Story of a King of Donut Shops”](#) PBS
 - [“Navy Lt. Susan Ahn Cuddy Carved the Path for Asian American Women”](#) US Gov
-

Week 6: Living Today: Challenges and Opportunities to Thrive

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What does it mean today to be Chinese-American? Korean-American? Cambodian-American? Vietnamese-American? Asian-American?
 - What opportunities do Asian Americans have today? What kinds of obstacles do they still face?
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Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- Marion Konishi’s Valedictory Speech, [“America, Our Hope is in You”](#)
 - [“Understanding America: Asian American History, Contributions, and Challenges,”](#) US Gov.
 - [“What it means to Be Asian in America,”](#) Pew Research
-

Part 2, Unit 4 | Native American Experiences (6 Weeks)

Overview

Native Americans, as the first people to settle in America, have struggled with the paradox of living both as indigenous peoples and as Americans. This unit will explore the unique collective and individual experiences of Native Americans, the tragic disenfranchisement that every Native American tribe has endured, how their cultures have helped them survive for millennia, and the unique ways in which they contribute to America today.

Week 1: Cultural Formation and Flourishing of Distinct Native American Tribes

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What were some of the important cultural characteristics of Native American tribes prior to contact with Europeans?
- What structures of social order have Native American tribes invented to sustain their cultures for many hundreds of years?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [Selections from Standing Ground: Yurok Indian Spirituality, 1850-1900](#)
- Selections from [The Tewa World: Space, Time, and Becoming in a Pueblo Society](#) by Alfonso Ortiz
- Selections from [Iroquoia: The Development of a Native World: Iroquois & Their Neighbors](#) by William Engelbrecht

Week 2: Relationships Among Native American Tribes

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What was the nature of the relationships among Native American tribes prior to contact with Europeans?
- What was the Iroquois Confederacy, how did it begin, and how did it function?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [California Culture: Native Americans in the Calisphere](#), produced by the University of California
 - [How the Iroquois Great Law of Peace Shaped U.S. Democracy](#)
 - [Warfare in Pre-Columbian North America, Government of Canada](#)
-

Week 3: Some Native American Responses to Early Contacts with Europeans

Sample of essential unit questions:

- In what ways have Native American tribes responded to contact with people of European backgrounds?
- Why did contact between people of European backgrounds and Native American tribes tend to end in conflict?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [“Trail of Tears” from We Shall Remain, Episode 3. American Experience](#), PBS Learning Media
 - [Frontera! Revolt and Rebellion on the Rio Grande](#), PBS
 - Selections from [Empire of the Summer Moon](#), by S.C. Gwynne
-

Week 4: Overcoming Challenges

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What role did Native Americans play in the Civil Rights Movement? How are Native Americans still engaged in civil rights advocacy today?
- What personal and community strengths have helped Native Americans secure the increasing recognition of their human rights over time?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [Native American Civil Rights Timeline](#)
- [Civil Rights Digital History Project: American Indian Movement](#), PBS.
- [The ABC-Clio Companion to the Native American Rights Movement](#)

Week 5: Stories of Inspiration and Contributions to American Culture

Sample of essential unit questions:

- How have Native Americans contributed to America's national prosperity and common culture?
- What personal and community strengths have helped Native Americans to succeed and thrive at the highest levels in the United States?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- [The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages](#) by N. Scott Momaday
 - [Navajo Code Talker Albert Smith](#), Oral Histories, American History TV, CSPAN
 - Selections from [The Nez Perce Indians and the Opening of the Northwest](#) by Alvin M. Josephy, Jr.
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Week 6: Living Today: Challenges and Opportunities to Thrive

Sample of essential unit questions:

- What does it mean to be Native American today?
- What opportunities do Native Americans have today? What obstacles do they still face?

Sample of essential unit primary sources:

- ["Escaping social-ecological traps through tribal stewardship on national forest lands in the Pacific Northwest,"](#) *Ecology and Society*
- ["Reservation Dogs is a Near-Perfect Study of Dispossession,"](#) *The New Yorker*
- ["Indian Tribes go in Search of Their Lost Languages,"](#) *New York Times*

Part 3 | Capstone Project: Authoring My Own Narrative (4 Weeks)

The Capstone Project provides students with the opportunity to author their own personal narrative describing who they are, where they have come from, and what they feel empowered to do as individuals and as responsible, engaged participants in American civic life. This project allows students to draw on the seven units they have studied in Parts One and Two to consider and write about their own personal, cultural, ethnic, and American identities, as well as their goals and potential as unique human beings within the American story.

Capstone Assignment Overview

This assignment will scaffold the development of a 12-15 page personal narrative that draws upon the documents, discussions, and narratives provided in the course. Students who do not feel comfortable writing from a personal perspective may write an imagined personal narrative from the perspective of an individual within an ethnic group that has been covered in the course.

In writing their personal narratives, students will be guided by the following essential questions.

Week 1: Ethnicity and Identity

- How does your ethnic or cultural background help shape your identity? How might you carry that part of your identity into the American experience?

Week 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges do you face right now? What personal resources can help you overcome those challenges?
- What goals or ambitions might you strive to achieve? How might you work toward achieving them?

Week 3: Similarities and Differences

- How are your challenges and opportunities different from and similar to those faced by the individuals and groups you learned about?

Week 4: Responsibilities and Aspirations

- How can you stand up to racism and discrimination when you encounter them?
- As a unique, responsible, civically engaged individual, what might you aspire to do or become in life?

SAMPLE LESSON FROM PART ONE, UNIT TWO**THE CONSTITUTION AND THE FUTURE OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA:
WERE THE COMPROMISES JUSTIFIED?**

Background

This lesson is meant to be taught near the end of the unit on the principles of American governance. The lesson explores the issue of how the early American government could both advocate so powerfully for human freedom while at the same time continuing to protect the institution of slavery.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will increase their understanding of the Constitution’s compromises over slavery and how the nation’s founders argued for or against them.
- Students will increase proficiency in debating alternative interpretations of historical events.

Recommended Pacing: 90-120 minutes

FAIR Standards and Objectives

- **HM.9-12.2:** I can explain how moral and ethical truths exist across otherwise different cultures, and I recognize those truths within my own culture.
- **DV.9-12.10:** I can explain with specific examples the contributions to the American story by people of different ethnicities, skin colors, religions, and cultural groups.
- **US.9-12.11:** I prepare for the kinds of arguments I might face tomorrow by understanding all sides of American historical debates.
- **US.9-12.12:** I can clearly express the arguments of those with whom I disagree and provide persuasive counterarguments to them.
- **US.9-12.13:** I respect others’ rights to express their opinions without believing that all opinions are equally true.
- **FR.9-12.20:** I promote justice and civil discourse to vitalize our individual and collective productive powers of character.

Materials

- [Background Essay: Slavery and The Constitution’s Compromises](#)
- [Primary Sources for “Point of View” Assignment](#)
- [Student Worksheet Assignment](#)
- [Point of View Paragraphs](#)
- [Extension Activity](#)



Teacher Instructions:

1. Give students time (in class or as homework) to read the [Background Essay](#) and the [nine primary sources](#) for the lesson. If the reading is done in class, this may extend the time needed in class to complete the lesson.
2. Hand out copies of the [Student Worksheet Assignment](#).
3. Ask students to read the two conflicting "[Point of View](#)" paragraphs and take brief notes on them in the spaces provided.
4. Students should use their answers from the Worksheet Assignment to help them take part in a guided class discussion about slavery and the Constitution. In the discussion, students share and listen carefully to varying responses to the essential question: **Were the Constitution's compromises over slavery justified?**

Our curriculum team includes highly experienced and credentialed authors and subject matter experts. Our diverse writers and reviewers have a wide range of experience working in higher education, secondary education, and professional curriculum development.

A few of the team members include:



Dr. Irasema Coronado

Director and Professor of the School of Transborder Studies at Arizona State University, whose current research is on the impact of the deportation process on families and children, environmental cooperation, and U.S.-Mexico border



Dr. Adam Seagrave

Associate Professor of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University and a co-founder and co-director (with Dr. Stephanie Shonekan) of the Race and the American Story Project



Dr. Erec Smith

Associate Professor of Rhetoric at York College of Pennsylvania, co-founder of Free Black Thought, and an advisor for Counterweight, an organization that advocates for classical liberal concepts of social justice.

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