

# A More Perfect Union

## Description

The social studies curriculum for eighth grade uses the unique, founding principles of the United States to examine events of the Twentieth Century. Students will first identify the founding principles then create a rubric based on those principles. For each unit or major event studied students will then determine if the actions or results of that event has moved America closer to or further from a more perfect union.

## Course Overview

### Course Objectives

Students should:

- identify the fundamental and unique characteristics that define America.
- create and use a rubric based on their definition of America to evaluate whether or not specific events have weakened or strengthened the United States.

### Essential Questions

- What does it mean to be an American?
- What makes a more perfect Union?

### Assessments

*Common Assessments*

*Skill Assessments*

### Content Outline

- I. [What Defines America?](#)
- II. [United States and the World](#)
- III. [Changes in American Life](#)
- IV. [Economic Crisis](#)
- V. [The World at War](#)
- VI. [Post War Boom!](#)
- VII. [The Times They are A-Changin'](#)
- VIII. [Ongoing Challenges](#)

### Standards

[Connecticut SDE - Social Studies Framework 2008](#)

Connecticut State Standards are met in the following areas:

- CSSF1: Content Knowledge**
- CSSF2: History/Social Studies Literacy**
- CSSF3: Application**

### Grade Level Skills

Students will be able to:

- give an oral presentation on a historical topic.
- access and gather information from a variety of sources.
- identify bias in sources and fact vs. opinion.

## Pacing Guide

1st Marking Period		2nd Marking Period			3rd Marking Period			4th Marking Period	
September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June
Unit 1 <a href="#">What Defines America?</a>  6 weeks	Unit 2 <a href="#">United States and the World</a>  3 weeks	Unit 3 <a href="#">Changes in American Life</a>  3 weeks	Unit 4 <a href="#">Economic Crisis</a>  4 weeks	Unit 5 <a href="#">The World at war</a>  5 weeks	Unit 6 <a href="#">Post War Boom!</a>  3 weeks	Unit 7 <a href="#">Changing Times</a>  6 weeks	Unit 8 <a href="#">Ongoing Challenges</a>  5 weeks		

**Unit I – What Defines America?, 6 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards**

Students will:

- CSSF1.3 – Grade 8: analyze immigration’s impact on the United States ad different stages in its history.
- CSSF2.4 – Grade 8: participate in formal debates on social studies related issues.

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- examine the effects of the laws and events that lead to the American Revolution.
- identify the ideas and philosophies expressed in the Declaration of Independence.
- identify the basic principles of government as outlined in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights in the United States of America.
- examine the compromises and weaknesses in the Constitution in order to understand the difficulties of turning ideals into practice.
- formulate and utilize a rubric in order to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the Union.
- examine the course themes through current events and issues that illustrate constitutional principles.

**Essential Questions**

- What did it mean to be an American during the Revolutionary Era?
- How did the Founding Documents shape and define the Union?
- What is the American Dream?
- How has the definition of America changed over time?

**Focus Questions**

- What were the laws and events that caused the colonists to revolt?
- What ideas and philosophies were expressed in the Declaration of Independence?
- What roles did key individuals and groups play in the struggle for independence?
- What were the basic principles of government stated in the Constitution of the United States of America and Bill of Rights?
- What were the major conflicts and compromises present in the founding Documents?
- What is the Bill Rights and why was it added to the Constitution?
- How did unresolved issues in the Constitution lead to later conflicts?
- How did the Civil War demonstrate the weaknesses of the Constitution?

**Assessments**

- Constitution photo story
- A “more perfect” Union rubric design

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- differentiate between main and subordinate ideas.
- interpret what is read by drawing inferences.
- detect cause and effect relationships.
- distinguish between fact and opinion; recognize propaganda.

**Unit II – United States and the World, 3 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards**

Students will:

CSSF1.1 – Grade 7: evaluate the impact of interactions between the United States and other countries.

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- identify social, political, and economic changes in the United States at the turn of the century.
- identify the factors that led to increased immigration at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- identify and explain the challenges faced by immigrants in pursuit of the American Dream.
- analyze the factors that led to increased American involvement in foreign affairs.
- describe the causes and effects of U.S. involvement in World War.

**Essential Questions**

- What did it mean to be an American at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- How did immigrants define the American Dream?
- How did World War I impact the United States at home and abroad?
- Did America move toward a more perfect Union during this era?

**Focus Questions**

- What were the push/pull reasons that lead to increased immigration in the United States?
- What problems did immigrants face in the United States?
- Why did America increase its involvement in foreign affairs?
- Why did the United States enter World War I?
- How did American's demonstrate their patriotism during World War I?
- What were the terms identified in the Treaty of Versailles?
- What was the lasting impact of the Treaty of Versailles?
- How did the federal government increase control over society and economy during World War I?

**Assessments**

- *Did immigration help create a more perfect Union?* writing assessment with created rubric
- Web-based immigration project with written assessment
- Trench Warfare WebQuest
- WWI test

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- analyze primary sources.
- Learn propaganda techniques.
- detect bias in visual and/or print materials.

**Unit III – Changes in American Life, 3 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards**

Students will:

CSSF2.3 – Grade 8: compose an essay stating a personal opinion.

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- identify and explain the growth of the American city.
- analyze the rapid change in American culture and society.
- describe and analyze the impact of technology on American society.
- describe and analyze the relationship between World War I and the change in culture and society during the 1920's.

**Essential Questions**

- How did social and technological changes impact the American Dream?
- What did it mean to be an American during the 1920's?
- Did America move toward a more perfect Union during this era?

**Focus Questions**

- What factors led to the approval of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment?
- What factors contributed to the growth of the American city?
- How did the Jazz Age change black America's image in society?
- Why was the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment approved and repealed?
- How did people spend their new found leisure time?
- What new technologies were accessible to Americans?
- How did the new technology of the 1920's impact American society?
- What factors led to the culture-clash in the 1920's?

**Assessments**

- Rubric Assessment
- *It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...* writing assignment

**Unit Skills**

Students will:

- independently develop a position and support it with content-based evidence.
- analyze primary sources.

**Unit IV – Economic Crisis, 4 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards**

Students will:

CSSF2.2 – Grade 8: interpret primary and secondary sources to determine accuracy and validity.

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- analyze the causes of the Great Depression.
- evaluate the response by the government to the multitude of challenges of the Great Depression.
- identify the impact of the Great Depression on daily life.

**Essential Questions**

- To what extent is the government responsible for helping individuals achieve the American Dream?
- Did the government response move America toward a more perfect Union?
- What did it mean to be an American during the Depression?

**Focus Questions**

- What were the causes of the Great Depression?
- What were the challenges and difficulties of daily life during the Great Depression?
- Were all Americans equally impacted by the Great Depression?
- How did the role of the government change during the Great Depression?
- What were the characteristics of FDR’s leadership style?
- What were the major programs of the New Deal?

**Assessments**

- Rubric Assessment
- New Deal propaganda posters
- *Did the New Deal help create a “more perfect” Union?* persuasive essay
- Concept based assessment – detecting bias, perspective, analysis of political cartoons, etc

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- analyze primary sources to draw conclusions.
- draw and defend independent conclusions regarding historical/current events based on an analysis of different resources.
- identify and evaluate different perspectives/points of view.
- detect bias in visual and/or print materials.

**Unit V – The World at War, 5 weeks [top](#)**

**Standards**

Students will:

- CSSF2.1 – Grade 8: gather information from historical maps.
- CSSF2.2 – Grade 8: compare information about the same event using a variety of primary sources.

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- explain the factors that led to the rise of dictators.
- identify the major causes of World War II.
- evaluate the need for America’s entrance into the war.
- analyze the impact of the war on daily life in America.
- identify the factors that led individuals and governments to commit atrocities and human rights abuses against specific groups.
- analyze the decision to drop the atomic bombs.

**Essential Questions**

- Was it necessary for the United States to enter World War II?
- Is being part of a group more important than being an individual?
- Did America move toward a more perfect Union during this era?
- What did it mean to be an American during the World War II era?

**Focus Questions**

- Who were the major dictators during this era and how did they come to power?
- What were the causes of World War II?
- Why did the United States enter the war?
- How did daily life change because of the war?
- How did the home front support the war effort?
- What was the importance of D-Day?
- What role did propaganda play in gaining support for war?
- How did Hitler’s rise to power create instability?
- How was Hitler able to commit mass-genocide without world intervention?
- What led to the decision to drop the atomic bombs?
- How did the atomic bomb change warfare?

**Assessments**

- Japanese Internment Web-based activity using *A More Perfect Union* website
- Japanese American / FDR – cross poem
- *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* movie review / discussion-based activity
- World War II propaganda poster analysis and creation
- Dropping the bomb –class debate

**Skill Objectives**

- Propaganda analysis
- Primary source analysis
- Perspective

**Unit VI – Post War Boom, 3 weeks - [top](#)**

**Standards**

Students will:

CSSF1.3 – Grade 8: analyze the impact of technology on productivity.

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- define Cold War in terms of domestic and foreign issues.
- analyze how the 1950's was a time of both prosperity and fear.
- identify and describe the ideal image of family life during the 1950's.
- analyze how the American Dream was impacted by newfound prosperity during the 1950's.

**Essential Questions**

- What is the responsibility of a world power?
- Was the American Dream accessible to everyone in the 1950's?
- Did America move toward a more perfect Union during this era?
- What did it mean to be an American during the 1950's?

**Focus Questions**

- How was the United States changed economically and politically after World War II?
- What was the Cold War?
- Identify how the following are part of the Cold War:
  - Arms race
  - Korean War
  - McCarthyism
  - Iron Curtain
- What was the “baby boom”?
- How was idealistic family life portrayed in the media?
- Was the 1950's the Golden Age of America?

**Assessments**

- Rubric Assessment
- Round table discussion on the “American Dream”

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

**Unit VII – The Times They are A-Chagin’, 6 weeks - [top](#)**

**Standards**

Students will:

- CSSF1.13 – Grade 8: compare similarities and differences of ethnic/cultural groups in the United States.
- CSSF3.1 – Grade 8: compare and contrast two or more interpretations of an historical event.

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the factors leading to the growth of the Civil Rights movement.
- Evaluate the impact of the Civil Rights movement on society and government.
- Analyze the process in which America became involved in the Vietnam conflict.
- Analyze and explain the growth of the anti-war movement and its relationship to the counterculture.
- Explain how the Presidents of the era responded to pressures and issues while in office.
- Explain the factors that led to the end of the Cold War.

**Essential Questions**

- Can one individual make a difference?
- What are the appropriate citizen responses when a government pursues immoral courses of action?
- What is the appropriate government response to crisis?
- Did America move toward a more perfect Union during this era?
- What did it mean to be an American during the 1960’s era?

**Focus Questions**

- Who were the leaders of the Civil Rights movement?
- How did everyday citizens become involved in the Civil Rights movement?
- What were the strategies of the Civil Rights movement?
- What were some of the significant events during the Civil Rights movement?
- Why and how did individuals and the U.S. government resist the changes during the Civil Rights movement?
- What did the Civil Rights movement accomplish?
- How did the United States become involved in the Vietnam conflict?
- What were the causes, major events, and results of the Vietnam War?

**Assessment**

- Rubric Assessment

**Skill Objectives**

Students will:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What gave rise to the counterculture and what impact did it have on society?</li><li>• Why did many American's protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam?</li><li>• What were the major challenges to the Presidencies of:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Kennedy</li><li>○ Johnson</li><li>○ Nixon / Ford</li><li>○ Carter</li><li>○ Reagan</li></ul></li><li>• How did the Cold War end?</li></ul>	
--	--	--

**Unit VIII – Ongoing Challenges, 5 weeks - [top](#)**

**Standards**

Students will:

- CSSF2.2 – Grade 8: compare information about the same event using a variety of primary resources.
- CSSF3.3 – Grade 8: compare and contrast possible solutions to a current issue citing relevant information.

**Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- analyze the challenges to America’s role in the world in the post Cold War era.
- determine how the rise of new foreign economies has challenged America’s role as an economic superpower.
- determine how and why the image of America changed in the post Cold War era.
- evaluate the impact of 9/11 on America.
- identify relevant current issues that pose challenges to the United States.
- analyze the accessibility of the American Dream in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Essential Questions**

- What is the responsibility of a world power?
- What does it mean to be an American in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- What challenges does America face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
- Is the American Dream dead?
- Is America moving towards a more perfect Union in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

**Focus Questions**

- What defines a superpower in the modern era?
- What have been the major challenges in the last 20 years to America’s status as a superpower?
- List the countries that have emerged as economic powers.
- What countries and groups pose a threat to American security?
- How has the pursuit and attainment of resources impacted the global community?
- How has technology impacted the rise of economically successful countries in the global world?
- How is the United States perceived in the global community and how has it changed over the past decade?
- What were the immediate and long term effects of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks on American society and government?
- What are the characteristics of the modern American Dream?
- What are the current challenges to accessing the American Dream?

**Assessment**

- Cornerstone Assessment

**Skill Objectives**

Students will: