

American Values Essay

A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of Covid-19



U.S. History Curriculum

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American Values Essay

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is for students to think critically about the world in which they live and to tie modern American values and actions to their historical roots. Additionally, students will continue to develop their writing skills. Student work is being submitted to the *A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of Covid-19* because it demonstrates the intersectionality of experiences that teenagers are having during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Essential Question: Is America currently living up to its core values? OR Is America currently living up to its core values during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Student Outcomes: Students will be able to write an essay in response to the essential question, using evidence to support their claim. Students will also select 1 to 3 images to accompany their essay and will submit their work to *A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of Covid-19*.

Pre-Writing Activity Ideas:

Prior to writing a response to the essential questions, students should explore core American values. The following are ideas to generate a student-composed list of core American values.

-Generate initial list of core American values through discussion.

What do you value?

What do Americans value?

-To determine the origin of core American values, complete the below activities. Note that this is not a comprehensive list, there are many other groups and documents that could be added to this unit of study depending on time. A class generated list of core American values is kept as the unit of study progresses.

Study the Puritans

Analyze the Declaration of Independence

Analyze the Constitution (with a focus on the Preamble and Bill of Rights)

[What Does America Stand For? We Asked Teenagers](#) (New York Times)

[The Values Americans Live By](#) (L. Robert Kohls)

View America The Story of Us: Revolutions (Episode 2)

View [American Creed](#) (PBS)

Analyze the Star Spangled Banner

Analyze the Pledge of Allegiance

Writing:

- Students are instructed to select 1 to 2 core American values they would like to focus on for the writing assignment.
- They then watch the news and/or read news articles to determine whether or not America is currently living up to the core values they selected.
- Students should save source information as they collect evidence.
- Students then complete an essay outline. Example [here](#).
- Once the outline is complete, students write their essay, including source citations.
- Students select 1 to 3 images to compliment their essay.
- Students submit their essay and images to *A Journal of the Plague Year: An Archive of Covid-19*.

Note: This assignment serves as a check-point on student writing skills at the start of the school year. Students have not received extensive formal instruction on writing essays (i.e., how to complete citations, passive voice, etc.).

Other Resources

[Sample Rubric](#)

[Transition and Synthesis Words](#)

[Edit Checklist](#)