

OUSD Teaching American History Grant for 2010-2011
The Study of American Ideas and Culture

Recommended Fourth Grade Topics

1. **Learning about American cultural history through Music & Dance** – The rich diversity of American culture is best viewed by studying the music and dance forms of the many different cultures that make up American society. Taking into consideration the ethnic background of the students in the class, a teacher can use a variety of primary source materials from learning the routines of ethnic or American dances and learning or listening to the words of ethnic or American songs. The songs and dance routines can be taught within a historical context such as the colonial era, slavery, early CA, immigration and western migration.
 - Native American chants and dance ceremonies
 - Songs and dances of the early American colonies
 - African American songs (spiritual, blues) and dances
 - Latin American songs, instruments and dances (salsa, marangue)
 - Chinese songs/dance/martial arts
 - Japanese songs/dance/drumming
 - American Folk Music (Dusk Bowl -Woody Guthrie)

2. **A Look at American cultural history through Art** - Using the curriculum materials of the **De Young Museum**, students will study western migration to California by closely examining the **landscape painting of Donner Lake**.
 - One of the objectives of the curriculum is to uncover the feelings elicited from viewing the landscape.
 - Students will be asked to look for details in the painting. They will understand the historical significance of a cross on a pile of rocks in the painting which marks the tragic loss of members of **the Donner Party in 1846**.
 - Viewing this painting will also elicit a discussion of geographical make-up of the state of California as well as the history of building of transcontinental railroad since part of the landscape also a part of the **Central Pacific Railroad** going through the **Sierra Nevada**.

3. **A Look at American cultural history through Fashion**

American fashion both for men and women reflects a diversity of styles and colors that has changed over time and place. Students can learn about these historical and regional changes in American fashion by viewing clothing in portraits and paintings from the past. A more modern view of fashion is gleaned from current day books, magazines, television shows and movies. Such past and present depictions teach students that clothing serves both a stylistic and practical function.

 - The dress and artifacts of California's Indians

- The impact of European and Native American styles on the dress of the Californios
- Clothing for Work: Argonauts during the Gold Rush, Chinese workers on the Railroad and Migrant Workers on California's farms
- Clothing worn during the period of western migration (Dust Bowl and southern migrants,)
- Fashions of the modern era – WWI & WWII, the post war periods of 1950 - 1970 (Hippies) and the current fashions of today (from Hollywood to Hip Hop)

4. **California becomes a State** – Students will learn about the democratic values and ideas that formed the basis of the state's first Constitution. The goal is to help students understand how in 1849 the under-developed Gold Rush community of California transitioned into a free state in the Union.

- Beginning with California's history as a military territory of the federal government, students will learn about **the Monterrey Convention** of 1847 which set in motion the steps toward statehood.
- Students will discuss some of the democratic values embodied in **the California Constitution** of 1849 which formed a legislature, gave the vote to white men but allowed married women to own property.
- The issue of slavery during the statehood process will also be examined. Students will learn how certain legislators in territorial California wanted to allow slavery in the state. However, on September 9, 1850, California joined the Union as a free state because the **Compromise of 1850** allowed Congress to pass the Fugitive Slave Act.

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Recommended Fifth Grade Topics

1. **Studying American Cultural History through Poetry** – as a form of written expression, poems provide insight into the social, political and cultural ideas of American society. By reading a selection of poems written by diverse group of poets, students will be exposed to a multiplicity of ideas and cultural values that are fundamentally American.
 - Lucy Terry Prince’s “**Bars Fight**” – A ballad written in 1746 by an enslaved African woman about the last Indian raid in Deerfield, Massachusetts
 - Henry Wadsworth’s Longfellow’s “**Paul Revere’s Ride**” tells the story of Paul Revere ride across the Massachusetts countryside during the American Revolution to alert the colonists of the British advance to Lexington and Concord on April 18, 1775. (Text, p. 314-317)
 - Phyllis Wheatley’s poem “**To His Excellency George Washington**” honoring George Washington for being named commander in chief of the Continental Army, October 26, 1775 (Text, p. 347)
 - Lydia Learned’s “**A Letter to A Worthy Officer of the American Army,**” asking God to grant favor to the American soldiers during the American Revolutionary War, March 17, 1778

2. **How Do Americans Celebrate Culture?** The United States is a multicultural nation consisting of individuals from diverse ethnic groups. With such a multiplicity of cultures within its shores, it is difficult to identify what is truly American culture. Thus, it is this conglomeration of varied ethnic cultures that make up what is essentially known as American culture. Students can pull from their own ethnic backgrounds to contribute to a discussion of diversity in American culture.
 - **Native American Culture** – as seen in the Hopi Butterfly Dance, Navajo Chants, Totem poles, wampum belts and the Cradle Basket of the Achomawi displayed in the curriculum materials of the De Young Museum
 - **European festivals** – Scottish Highland Games, and the Dutch Tulip Festival
 - **American folklore** – Country music/dances and blue grass music
 - **Latin American Culture** – ethnic dances (marangue, salsa), songs and musical instruments
 - **African American/West Indian Culture** – dance, spirituals, jazz, blues, reggae, African drumming
 - **Asian Culture** – Chinese New Year, Japanese drumming, ethnic songs, dances, and festivals, martial arts and musical instruments

3. **War as an Ideological Experience of American Culture** American acts of war has always been connected to ideological beliefs. Students will learn how ideas about the nation's involvement in war have undergone transformation since its founding.
- **American Revolution** – A war based on the conflicting ideas of freedom and independence from Britain despite the continued enslavement of thousands of African Americans within its shores. The laws of new nation were outlined in a Constitution that guaranteed a balanced federal government with a system of checks and balances
 - **Indian Wars in the post-American Revolution Period** – Both the earlier and later internecine wars with Indians were battles over land. Indian warriors like Tecumseh fought land grabbing Americans for control of the western frontier.
4. **Religious Practice in the Early American Colonies** – Studying how religion was practiced in the colonial period will help students to understand diversity of American culture. Gaining knowledge of religion beyond the Puritan religion practiced in the New England colonies is essential to understanding the cultural plurality of early America. Thus, students will learn about other forms of religious practice including Native American and African spiritual beliefs as well other the religious ideas of Anglicans, Quakers, Baptists, and Catholics.
- **Native American** - Pueblo Indians believed in gods of sun, rain, and Earth. Hopi Indians believed that the spirits worked as messengers between people and the gods (Text, p. 54)
 - **African American** – the early Africans rejected the religion of their masters and maintained their polytheistic beliefs in African deities or in the god of Islam. It was only after the Great Awakening of 1740 that African Americans began to adopt Christianity.
 - **Puritan Religion** – Using the curriculum materials of the De Young “Portrait of the Mason Children,” Puritanism will be examined as a religious lifestyle.
 - Other forms of Christian worship can be studied within the context of the early American colonies, including the **Church of England** (VA & NY), the **Quaker Meeting** (PA), the **Baptist Church** (RI) and the **Catholic Church** (MD).