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**Project Title:** Who am I? Who are We? Defining our American Identity

**Grade Level:** 5-8

**Themes:** American History, American Symbols, American Identity, Patriotism, Culture, Identity

**Driving Question:** How/Who determines what it means to be American?

**Essential Questions:**
- What is An American?
- What are the features of American Symbols?
- What are examples of "good" Americans?
- What significant events are considered important to Americans?
- Can a Person change what it means to be American?
- In your opinion, what does being American mean to you?

**Project Description:** Many students struggle with defining their identity and understanding how they fit into the American story. Students will engage in Project based Learning utilizing computers in a Blended Learning Classroom in which they drive their own research. Students will explore the concepts of identity, culture and symbols, and how anthems lend themselves to forming a sense of identity. Students will explore the process of why and how early American identity is formed and compare it to how Americans define their identity at pivotal points in American History (civil war, industrial revolution, WWI & WWII up until what we think it means to be American now. Students will complete activities throughout the project including an Interactive timeline, and reflective writing pieces. The final project will challenge students to apply their learning and decide for themselves what it means to be an American. Students will be given different options in which they can express their newfound understanding of American Identity. These final projects may take the form of a written assignment such as a poem, reflective writing, and future hopes for our country. Students may also redesign the American flag with personal meaning, create a new American Symbol or create a PowerPoint highlighting individuals events and symbols that represent America for them. Finally students may create a timeline or write a new song for America. Each project is intended to give the student complete artistic control so that the project is truly personalized to tell the story of their American experience.

**Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills – (Adapted for the 5th Grade Social Studies Standards)**

5.17 The student understands important symbols, customs, celebrations, and landmarks that represent American beliefs and principles and contribute to our national identity. The student is expected to:

5.17A explain various patriotic symbols, including Uncle Sam, and political symbols such as the donkey and elephant;

5.17B sing or recite "The Star-Spangled Banner" and explain its history

5.17E explain the significance of important landmarks, including the White House, the Statue of Liberty, and Mount Rushmore.

5.21 The student understands the relationship between the arts and the times during which they were created. The student is expected to:

5.21A identify significant examples of art, music, and literature from various periods in U.S. history
such as the painting American Progress, "Yankee Doodle," and "Paul Revere's Ride"; and
5.21B explain how examples of art, music, and literature reflect the times during which they were created.

5.22 The student understands the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to the United States. The student is expected to:
5.22C summarize the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our national identity.

5.24 The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:
5.24A differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; documents; and artifacts to acquire information about the United States;
5.24B analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;
5.24C organize and interpret information in outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps;
5.24D identify different points of view about an issue, topic, or current event; and
5.24E identify the historical context of an event.

5.25 The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:
5.25A use social studies terminology correctly;
5.25B incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication;
5.25C express ideas orally based on research and experiences;
5.25D create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies; and
5.25E use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

Materials
Access to computers or computer lab with Microsoft OneNote & PowerPoint, if unable to use technology you may need to make handouts,
Colored pencils
Markers
construction paper

Partial List of Websites used:
www.dictionary.com
www.padlet.com
www.loc.gov
www.songsfromamerica.net
www.starspangledmusic.org
www.britannica.com
www.worldbookonline.com
www.americaslibrary.gov
www.worldatlas.com
www.historyexplorer.si.edu
www.anthemforamerica.smithsonian.com
www.poets.org
www.biography.com
www.abc-clio.com
http://bensguide.gpo.gov/
http://www.history.org/

Key Vocabulary:
Identity
Culture
Patriotism
Loyalist
Symbol
American
Anthem
Emblem

***Teacher Note: throughout this lesson I will be making notes for teachers. These notes can be erased before you share them out with students. Simply highlight and delete. Feel free to modify the lessons as necessary to fit the needs of your students.
OneNote: all your notes on all your devices

OneNote can help organize your life

▶ Play video now!

School
Handwrite notes and clip from the web

Work
Syncs to PC, phone, & web

Home
Share plans with family and friends

***Teacher Note: I've included this page to give you more information on how to use OneNote. It's very similar to other Microsoft applications such as Word and PowerPoint. If your students have access to 1:1 devices or regular access to computers you can share this notebook with them!
***Teacher Note: For a crash course on Padlet and how to use it please click [here](#). The possibilities of padlet are many! I plan to use them as a way to engage students with the use of technology and as a way to track student participation through written response. Below are examples of the padlets I’ve created for my students.
Bell Ringer - Click on this link to Padlet and answer the question "What is an American?" and follow the directions on the page.

***Teacher Note: Padlet is a website that I use to make digital bell ringers. This website is an excellent way to pose questions to students and get them to respond digitally! If your students do not have daily access to computers with internet access you may choose to display the bell ringer using PowerPoint or writing it on the board. Please modify the lessons to fit the needs of your classroom & students.
What do you Know? In your own notebook copy down this chart. With a partner, answer the following questions about what you think an American is?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What Do You Know?</th>
<th>What Do You Want to Know?</th>
<th>What Do You Want to Learn?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

***Teacher Note:*** This introductory activity can be used to get more of an idea of what students believe an American is and what they would like to learn. It can be used in conjunction with the bell ringer or in place of. Please feel free to modify the activities as needed.
1. **Vocabulary Activity**— Using the following [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com), or [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us) define the following words:

- American
- Identity
- Culture

***Teacher Note:*** You are welcome to pre-define the words for your students and or use dictionaries instead of the online dictionary.
1. **Geography - Where in the world is America?**

   Use the [atlas](#) to locate the United States of America. Answer the following questions. Answer the Following Questions in your own Notebook. Work with a partner to answer the following questions:

   a. What Continent is the United States located on?
   b. What country borders the United States to the North?
   c. What country borders the United States to the South?
   d. What is the name of the body of water that borders the Eastern coast of the United States?
   e. What is the name of the body of water that borders the Western Coast of the United States?
   f. What is the name of the mountain range on the eastern coast of the United States?
   g. Label all of these items on your map of the United States.

   ***Teacher Note: If you do not have access to internet you may use an atlas or world map.***
1. **History Mystery - Where did America get its name?**

Read the following resources to determine exactly who discovered America, then answer the questions below.

1. Britannica
2. Worldbook Online Kids

1. Who discovered America first?
2. Is America named after the person who discovered it first? If not what is the name of that person?
3. Who decided to name America & Why?
4. Consider that you were the map maker who created the world map. Who would you name America after? Submit your answer using Padlet. Remember to add your name to your posts to receive credit.

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I selected Britannica and Worldbook Online as resources because my distract has subscriptions to these websites. If you do not have subscriptions to these sites you may use other resources. I also use Padlet again to offer my students another opportunity to reflect on their learning. You may again opt to write this question on the board and have a classroom discussion or writing activity.
Voices from the Colonies- How did people feel about living in the colonies?

Read this Diary to get a general idea of how this 15 year old girl felt.

Get an idea of what life was like for slaves in Colonial Virginia

***Teacher Note: This is an optional extension lesson aimed at setting the tone for how early American colonists lived and identified themselves.
What is a symbol? How are they used? Using Padlet. Please answer your question using complete sentences and correct punctuation.

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- Anthem
- Symbol
- Landmark
- Monument

***Teacher Note: You are welcome to pre-define the words for your students and or use dictionaries instead of the online dictionary.
**Name that Symbol** - Watch this video about [U.S. Symbols](#) then identify the following symbols then learn about the story behind the symbol

1. [Learn More](#)
2. [Learn More](#)
3. [Learn More](#)
4. [Learn More](#)
5. [Learn More](#)
6. [Learn More](#)

**Teacher Note:** this activity gets the students to think about what they already know about America. These links provide more information about each of the symbols displayed. Feel free to add more symbols if you like.

Hyperlinking Websites are Easy!
1. Right click on a highlighted word then scroll down to link or
2. Click on Insert in the command tab then click on the link tab or
3. Press (Ctrl+k).

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After you have identified All of these symbols, take some time and learn more about how [symbols](#) were used in early America.
**Why the Star Spangled Banner?—** Did you know that our National Anthem The Star Spangled Banner did not become the national song until 1931. Before that a number of songs were considered as Anthems for the United States. Below are songs that were at some point in history considered as the National Anthem. Decide for yourself if the right choice was made.

- Hail Columbia
- My Country Tis of Thee
- The Star Spangled Banner
- Yankee Doodle
- God Bless America
- Lift Every Voice and Sing

***Teacher Note:*** This lesson is designed to be a listening activity that uses music. The resources that I use for these songs come from the following websites: www.songsofamerica.net, www.loc.gov, and www.musick8.com. If your district allows, spotify & youtube are other great resources for this activity. This activity can be used as an individual activity. Small group or whole group. As always, feel free to modify the lesson as needed.
You Decide— Based on what you’ve heard and learned which song do you think should be our National Anthem? Explain your answer and post it on padlet.

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Vocabulary


- Patriotism
- Loyalist
- Citizen

***Teacher Note: You are welcome to pre-define the words for your students and or use dictionaries instead of the online dictionary.
What makes a Someone a "Good" American? Answer this question using padlet. Don’t forget to use complete sentences and to write your name to receive full credit.

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Examining American Character
Follow the lint to the American Library and choose one of the individuals listed on the page. Answer the following questions about the individual you choose.

1. Describe the Character of the person you chose. What makes this person unique?
2. What was his/her special talent?
3. What did they contribute to the country?
4. Would you consider this person a patriot? Why or Why not?
5. Would you consider him/her to be an Americans? Why or Why not?

Project Directions: Using Microsoft PowerPoint you will create a 4-slide Slideshow that explains about your individual. Each page must have at least 1 picture and contain the following information:

Slide 1 - Introduction (Tells who your person is, when and where they were born)
Slide 2 - Character (Explain the character of your individual, was he/she serious? Were they brave? Etc.)
Slide 3 - Contributions (This will explain what special talents your individual has and how they helped the country)
Slide 4 - Was He/ She a "Good American? (Based on your research was this person a good American? Would you consider them to be a patriot? Explain your answers.)

Additional Resources- If the American Library does not have enough information, use the following resources:
ABC-Clio
Britannica
Britannica ImageQuest
Worldbook Online

***Teacher Note: This activity allows students to choose important individuals in American history and learn about who they are and their contribution to the American experiences. My students will complete this as an individual activity however please feel free to modify this to best fit the needs of your students. If you do not have computer access, you may choose a few of the individuals listed, print them out and assign them to students. My students will complete a short PowerPoint as a project grade, however students can submit a poster or writing activity. The additional resources used are based on subscriptions to online resources provided by my district. Feel free to use resources provided by your district or other free sites such as www.factmonster.com.
**Key Points in Time**—There are times in history that have required the American people to come together and share a common cause. Each group will be assigned one event below. As a group you will look through your assigned timeline and Identify the use of symbols (American Flag, Bald Eagle etc) and specific events that brought Americans together.

**Pre Colonial** (Scroll to the 1600's)
- American Revolution
- Constitutional Convention
- War of 1812
- Civil War/ Reconstruction

Interactive
- Industrial ...

- WWI
- Great Depression
- WWII
- 1960's
- Civil Rights

***Teacher Note:*** This activity is designed to allow students to look at specific time periods throughout American History. Students are asked to pinpoint events that could be considered defining moments in American history. Most of the timelines are interactive and provide narratives alone with pictures. An alternative to this activity may be for students to use textbooks and create their own timelines of important events throughout a specified period of time that they believe helped define what it means to be an American.
Can American Identity Change? Using padlet explain whether or not you believe that people can redefine what it means to be American.

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Who creates the American Experience?

We’ve been learning a lot about what it means to be an American. You’ve had opportunities to explore all the different ways in which people show that they are a part of our nation. But who decides what it means to be American? Take a look at these examples and decide for yourself if the definition of what it means to be an American was changed, and who changed it?

**Government** - Look at these examples of how government can redefine what it means to be Government.
- Declaration of Independence
- Dred Scott Decision
- 14th Amendment
- 19th Amendment
- Civil Rights Act of 1964

**People** - Read the works of these five poets and describe how each of them defines their American identity.
- Walt Whitman - I Hear America Singing (Learn more about Walt)
- Emma Lazarus - The New Colossus (Learn more about Emma)
- Woody Guthrie - This Land is Your Land (Learn more about Woody)
- Langston Hughes I Too Sing America (Learn more about Langston)
- Julia Alvarez (Learn more about Julia)

***Teacher Note:*** This activity is designed to allow students to explore how Government & people can redefine what it means to be American. If you do not have access to computers and internet, you may decide to print out these examples and assign each one to individual students or groups of students. The poems used can be printed out and used for small or whole group instruction. I have included websites that give more information about the Authors to extend the lessons.
What Does it All Mean to You?

Over the past few weeks we’ve learned about symbols, and how America formed its identity from young rebellious colonists to the America we know today, but what does it mean to be American to you? Is it a symbol? A song? Being born in a specific area? A specific event? Taking what you’ve learned over the past weeks I want you to create a project that represents what being an American means to you:

**Project Options:**

- **A Poem** - that expresses how you feel about being an American
- **A PowerPoint** - complete with at least 3 individuals, 3 events, and 3 symbols that represent what it means to be American to you
- **A Flag Design** - Using what you’ve learned create a design for the American Flag that you feel represents America today
- **A Song** - Rewrite the National Anthem using todays language or write a new song.
- **Your American Story** - Write a story about what it means to be American to you and your family
- **A Timeline** - Create a timeline with at least 10 events that you feel helped form the identity of America
- **A New Symbol** - Create a new symbol that represents the United States of America. Be sure to use color and do your best work.
- **A New Vision** - Write a an essay no more than 1 page explaining your ideas about how you think Americans should be behave, what symbols and songs they should sing in the future.
- **A Short Play** - Write a short play that tells the story of American Identity. Be sure to include symbols, songs, landmarks, important people, and events. You may include up to 2 other people in your play.

**Presentation:**

You will present your project to the class and explain what it means to be American to you. Please keep in mind that there is no right or wrong answer, however it is extremely important that you put effort in to your work. Be creative! Use your imagination! If you need help exploring the options for this project please ask me!

***Teacher Note:*** This is designed to be the final project in which the students use their learning and create authentic work to explain how they fit in to the American Story. Students are given many different ways in which they can display their view of what it means to them to be American. Students should be encouraged to be as creative as possible. It may help to create a rubric in order to guide students on the outcome of their project. This will be a graded project for my students, however it could be used as a class project as well.