

## **The American Dream Becomes Reality through Art**

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### Introduction

Teachers are constantly trying to convey to their students the idea of the American dream and how their own dreams and aspirations can be fulfilled through education. Elementary school students are just starting to identify themselves as individuals and, along with that, discovering how they are a part of the collective national identity. Who we are as a nation and who we are as individuals are not easy questions for the intermediate student as they are not easy questions for the adults around them to answer. However, through careful study and self-evaluation, we can see how who we are as individuals today has a lot to do with our own ancestors as well as the generations that came before us in America. As Elizabeth Broun states in her commentary "Telling the Story of America",

Personal selfhood; family relationships; ancestry, heritage, and clans; township or city; section and region, nation-these identities are like widening circles in water, most defined at the center, blurring at a distance. But in America, unlike countries with more homogeneous populations, our national identity is the sum of innumerable other identities. Each person, family, or cultural group has an "origin myth" about coming to the United States and becoming, sooner or later, in sum or in part, a participant in this many-cultures society. Our social contract makes all who come here shareholders in the country's culture, which accounts for the vitality and richness of this society.... Acceptance of others as a way of life means the fulfillment of America's promise.<sup>1</sup>

In this way we can conclude that we all have a stake in our collective futures, and our lives can only be grasped through the understanding of our collective pasts.

### Objectives

This project's objectives will be to answer these questions: What is the American Dream? From where did the idea of the American Dream come? How has the focus of the American Dream changed? Because, in this nation of visual learners, fifth grade students respond most profoundly to visual stimuli, the project can most effectively utilize art – paintings and sculptures - to explore the American Dream. The students will explore how art depicts the struggle for and the achievement of the American Dream at various times in American history. We will examine art objects from the Colonial and Revolutionary War era as this is the time period that is studied in the fifth grade curriculum. The unit will explore what the images can teach us about why people came to the New World, the ideals for which they fought the American Revolution, how and why the image of the family changed, and what art shows us about who we are as nation. It will also explore the attitudes the colonists had toward different major ethnic groups as portrayed in the images.

The students will also explore their own dreams for the future and how art can depict a vision of who they are and who they want to be. So, in essence, the students will be paralleling the study of the images with their own artwork. This art will reflect their own self-vision as they will utilize what they learn to create a portrait of themselves and who they want to be. They will be required to not only study the art historically but to actually utilize it to realize their own place in the collective American Dream.

The curriculum unit will help instill the idea that America is made up of dreamers who fulfill their own dreams through hard work, honesty and education. This is relevant to our students on many levels. With so much cynicism and mistrust of the major components of our culture - government, religion, family life – our children are often left with the idea that they have little choice in the world. Examples of the frustrations that our youth face are rampant on the evening news, with the Columbine and Edinboro tragedies, the rise in gang related activities, and the breakdown of the family unit. Children need to know that there are options for them and that

these options are available in our country even if they are not the advertised norm. The sentiment that the American Dream is not dead is an important lesson for children to embrace, for the American Dream lives in them.

## The American Dream

For the purpose of this unit the definition of the "American Dream" will be the one that is most universally accepted. Horatio Alger coined this definition in the 1800's. Alger wrote a series of stories, the most famous being "Ragged Dick; or Street Life in New York." This series depicted young poor boys, who through their hard work and various virtues rose to riches and success. Through creative narratives these original "rags to riches" stories solidified the concept and definition of the American Dream, as described by John Tebbel in his book Rags to Riches: Horatio Alger and the American Dream who notes,

The universal acceptance which attends the one idea dominant in American life for a hundred and fifty years or longer – that the United States is a place where anyone, no matter what his origins, no matter how poor and obscure he may be, can rise to fame and fortune . . . It is possible in other countries, too, but to the average American the rise from obscurity to fame is peculiarly the special virtue of his country.<sup>2</sup>

Although we preach that success can be defined in many ways in our society, material and monetary wealth have much to do with the measurement of success. Alger's stories permeated our collective consciousness; he convinced us that wealth and honor were attainable goals and that we could all surpass the success of our parents and our parents' parents. In modern times, this definition for the American Dream has changed very little and this interpretation is also very understandable to children who often see success as the expensive clothes and shoes they wear or the type of car their parents drive.

As Alger packaged the American Dream in the 1800's, so our media does today. Since the days of Levittown, the American Dream has been interpreted to be a suburban, nuclear family existence. We now need a car, a house, a green lawn, a television, and a video game to prove our worth and success. The popularity of the lottery and "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" are symbols today of our need for material wealth to exemplify our success. An important part of this unit will be to explore the propaganda that is depicted in the images and enable the children to differentiate between fact and fiction. Even the Pittsburgh Public Schools Content Standards (See Appendix 5– Communications Standard 5) requires that the children "analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication." Perhaps with this understanding of the bombardment of sometimes fictionalized images of the American Dream the students will be able to interpret what they can offer society and the Dream will not be one wrought with frustration but will be made an achievable, real goal.

The American Dream was very real to even those who explored and colonized America. There are two major themes that fifth graders can explore in their search for reasons for colonization. First, people came to America in search of a better life. Conditions were difficult even for the more wealthy in the 1600's and the promise of cheap, if not free, land to start a new life was very appealing to the early settlers. The dangers in crossing the Atlantic Ocean to the New World and arriving in often uncharted, uncivilized land was worth it in the journey to unimaginable wealth. Although many did not come to realize this unlimited wealth, it was clear that America offered opportunities to those who had no opportunity to realize their potential in Europe. Have not we all had times when we wished we could have a fresh start? The New World provided this new beginning. Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, a 1769 English colonist, points out that the American success story is one of the rise from poverty to prosperity with hard work and plain living.<sup>3</sup> Even the convicts and debtors that came to the South later in the century were able to fulfill this dream of starting over and, in some cases, could lead the successful lives that they were never able to fulfill in the Old Country.

The other major theme and perhaps the more difficult concept for American fifth graders to fathom, is the idea that many gave up a civilized world to fulfill their dreams of religious freedom. Where Captain John Smith came to America to expand English interests overseas, Puritans such as William Bradford saw that America

offered a chance, sometimes even with the blessings of the European monarchs, for settlers to practice their religion of choice without persecution. Religion was a source of identity to the early colonists. The Pilgrims, Puritans, and Quakers are all groups that came from England to practice their religions. Heaven was the model for the society and New England was a "City upon a Hill," whose mission was to revitalize Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The Puritans believed that all the happiness achieved in the New World would be because of the blessings of God on the followers of Christ. Even the epidemics of small pox that nearly wiped out entire tribes of native Americans were signs that God favored the Christians over the "creatures of the devil."<sup>5</sup> The Spanish were also coming to the New World as missionaries to convert the Native American "savage." Again, even the inherent dangers of traveling to the new land did not stop them from coming.<sup>6</sup>

The role of the family is also an integral part of the American Dream. In the new millennium there has been much discussion over the loss of traditional family values. These values of a happy two-parent family that share responsibilities of the household, is also a way of measuring success and the fulfillment of the American Dream. People want others to view their lives with this ideal of home, hearth, and a happy nuclear family even if the ideal has not really been reached. This ideal is exemplified in the pervasive media presentation of the American family. One is only considered successful if there is an airtight family unit. The rise of suburbia perpetuated this notion and it permeated through our society. No longer was the extended family with aunts, uncles, and grandparents living under one roof considered either normal or desired. However, many of our students, in fact rising numbers of them, live with and are cared for by grandparents and other relatives outside of the traditional nuclear family. Does this mean that their families are not successful? Only if viewed from the media's point of view. This is again why it is so important for children to address what their views of success are and to analyze what the outside world is presenting to them as the American Dream.

The roles of family members in the colonial period were really quite different than today although they also wanted others to see perfection even if it was not there. The society was largely patriarchal. For instance, fathers took very little notice of the children in colonial America. A father's main duty was to run the business or the farm and talk politics with his cronies. The women's duty was in the home with the children. However, children were not looked at as growing, in need of nurturing individuals, but instead were thought of as little adults who should be seen and not heard. Anne Bradstreet's poem "Stain'd from birth with Adams sinfull fact/ Thence I began to sin as soon as act,"<sup>7</sup> is indicative of society's attitude toward children. Childhood was not a stage but what had to be endured to reach adulthood. It was not until Jean Jacques Rousseau wrote Emile in 1762 that there was any understanding that there were developmental stages of growth. The stages of development that he recognized were infancy (birth to age five), childhood (age five to twelve), the age of reason (age twelve to fifteen) and the social stage (age fifteen to twenty). With these new theories he created a fresh optimism for educational reform after the stagnation in educational practice that had occurred up until this time. Education was only a means to promote religious beliefs before his important treatise. You needed to learn to read primarily so that you could read the Bible. His emphasis on the individual child helped children become recognized as an important subject of study and concern.<sup>8</sup> This change in emphasis and Rousseau's influence is also evident in the paintings of the time where children suddenly were painted cavorting like children do instead of standing rigidly and adult-like. John Locke also helped develop the change in attitudes toward children and education by exploring the need for education to extend beyond the religious to education that could be useful for promoting public responsibility. In art, the father's role changes from one who is separated from the child in an authoritative stance to one who looks at or even touches the child.<sup>9</sup> Women are depicted as Madonna-like figures who chastely hold their children as caretakers and a central part of the happy American family rather as a the separate entity from their children and husbands.

Early American art depicts these themes very clearly. To the casual observer portraits and landscapes are often overlooked as "decorative" or "illustrative." But with study we can actually "read" a painting and discover what its creator was really trying to depict just with color, design, costume and props. Although this may be an unpopular way of dealing with art for we want to experience and "feel" the value of it emotionally, images can also tell us a lot about ourselves and become a didactic visual text that our students can experience rather than read about. We can find its meaning or message and one that is not beyond our students to understand or see

for themselves. Elizabeth Broun, the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art points out:

...That artists express deep structures of society in seemingly incidental portraits and landscapes... artists sometimes paint a subject the way people wish it were, indulging in an active form of forgetting, glossing over harsh realities. Gradually, we understand that the artworks present a subtle but powerful kind of evidence about larger issues. They are emissaries from their age, and we can actually see how ideas work in them.<sup>10</sup>

An elementary student's understanding of an historical subject may be limited (and therefore difficult for them to read in the painting), but with background knowledge from their social studies lessons and text, they should be able to determine many of the basic ideas that artists would convey. In this unit they will be looking specifically for representations of the American Dream by different immigrant and colonial groups. The five themes of history and geography - location, place, human/environment interaction, movement, and region - are also included as key components in the understanding of the paintings especially those that are already a part of their social studies text.

I have briefly summarized some of the key characteristics of the paintings that are included in this unit. Hopefully this will help with the questioning techniques that will be utilized in activities.

*Elizabeth Freake and Baby Mary* – Anonymous (Worcester Art Museum – <http://www.worcesterart.org/Collection/American/1963.135.html> )

This painting of a wealthy Bostonian's wife and daughter are important examples of early American portraiture. The portrait does not reflect the sitters' real appearance; instead it emphasizes their clothing and artifacts from the sitters' home as evidence of their wealth and standing in the community. The clothing is ornate, with the yoke around the mother's neck, and the brocade or lace on the red undergarment. There are beautiful ribbons on her sleeve and the whiteness of the ensemble depicts cleanliness, purity and respect true signs of her success in the New World. She also wears pearls, a garnet bracelet, and a gold ring. This jewelry also gives us a clue to her standing in the community as the wife of a prominent merchant. The baby's dress is also ornate and she is represented as a little adult. She is prim, proper and standing in a position not generally considered a childlike pose in today's world. However, it is indicative of the attitudes noted above that people in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century would have held concerning childhood. They considered children prior to the Enlightenment and the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke as little adults. The portrait also showcases a chair with turkey-worked upholstery that would indicate wealth and social status. This portrait does not, however cross the line of being too showy or ostentatious. The early Bostonians looked at wealth as a sign of God's favor on them so they would not have gone so far as to brag in their portraits.<sup>11</sup> So this portrait was not painted to reveal the true likeness of the sitters, but rather, to reveal social and economic status. Therefore, this portrait clearly depicts not the beauty of Mary Freake and her daughter but it shows how they have fulfilled the American Dream in the New World by gaining wealth and social status with the blessings of God.

*Henry Darnell III* – Justus Englehardt Kuhn (Collection of the Maryland Historical Society)

This portrait also reveals much about the social and economic status of the sitter. This portrait of the young boy, Henry Darnell, shows him dressed in fancy clothing with a lace collar that would have been imported. He is holding toys; the bow and arrow would also be indicative of his wealth and status in the community. More surprising perhaps is the slave who is waiting on the boy who kneels and wears a collar around his neck. A slave holder would have been thought of as part of high society and the fact that a slave was included in the portrait was not meant as a commentary on attitudes toward slavery (although, it can always open up a lively discussion in the classroom) but rather, a commentary on the wealth of the owner. This is one of the first representations of the slave in early American art. Also important to this painting is the background. A scene such as this, a formal English garden with grandiose buildings, would not have even existed in America at this

time, so therefore, it is only there to show the wealth and fulfillment of the American Dream that the subject enjoys or, more accurately, envisioned for themselves.<sup>12</sup>

*Paul Revere* – John Singleton Copley ([www.tigtail.org](http://www.tigtail.org))

Here we do not have the beauty and refinement of elegant clothing and expensive surroundings to clue the viewer into the idealistic world of the American Dream. On the contrary, this portrait of Paul Revere shows him not as a wealthy landowner but of a respectable and hardworking craftsman. Again, the importance of hard work and the virtue of diligence are recognized as a key component of the making of the American Dream. In this modern world where few children are privy to the pride of a craftsman for his work, this painting exemplifies the pride Revere had in his work. His expression is caught in a thoughtful gaze and the pose of his hand emphasizes his contemplation of his next silver creation. Therefore he is seen as an intelligent and respected member of society. Copley also depicts his subject realistically and completes the idea that subject could reach fame and fortune, warts and all. "Art, design, architecture, and literature should be didactic, stoic, and radiant with the values of restraint, self-sacrifice, and patriotism."<sup>13</sup> *Paul Revere* does all this to exemplify the American Dream.

*The Architect's Dream* – Thomas Cole (Toledo Museum of Art)

Although this landscape is dated somewhat after the colonial period (1840), it is included to illustrate how landscapes can also be used to explore the American Dream. This landscape is complete fantasy, mixing Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Gothic architectural styles to show a beautiful world. Again the ideal is here with an architect reclining comfortably atop a Roman column as if the beauty of the world is in front of him and ready for him to create. The American Dream idealized in this painting show that even we could create a perfect world.

*The Beeches* – Asher B. Durand ([www.tigtail.org/tvm/X2/f.%20new%20world/2.%20pre-civil%2.../durand\\_the\\_Beeches.jpg](http://www.tigtail.org/tvm/X2/f.%20new%20world/2.%20pre-civil%2.../durand_the_Beeches.jpg))

Durand paints the beauty of nature in this scene. The curving boughs of the trees welcome us to the inspiring American landscape and envelop us in the lane with the wandering sheep. We have again captured the American Dream in its song to the simple, rural life that is not only respectable but also beautiful. We have looked at how paintings depict the desire for wealth, however, this painting shows us how the beauty of the American Dream is all around us in nature.

## **The Unit Plan**

### **Lesson 1: Define the American Dream**

Background: The students will explore the definition of the American Dream. Keep in mind that this unit is meant to promote the idea that through hard work and education the American Dream can be fulfilled.

#### Activity 1

*Objectives:* The students will create a working definition of the American Dream. (Communication Standards 4, 6)

*Procedure:*

Brainstorm goals and dreams for the future on the overhead or blackboard. Use questioning techniques to elicit in depth answers for example,

What do you want to be when you grow up?

What impact do you want to make on the world?

What major accomplishments do you want to have completed?

What do you want to be famous for?

What do you want to be remembered for?

Separate these dreams into categories that can include monetary success, family success, relationship success, national and world success, etc. (See appendix 1) Discuss how combinations of these types of success are what everyone is really striving for.

Through discussion, the children should be able to come up with a workable definition of the American Dream as Horatio Alger defined it. They should add the definition to their social studies vocabulary folder, as it will be referenced in later lessons.

Using the brainstorming from Activity 1, the students will write a paragraph that defines what their dream is for the future. This paragraph can be utilized as a rough draft for their final project and will change as the unit progresses. Emphasize that the American Dream is a work in progress and that their dreams may change as they get older and gain more experience.

## **Activity 2**

*Objectives:* The students will develop a self-portrait. (Art and Humanities Standard 4)

*Procedures:*

Using their rough draft as a reference, the students will draw their own self-portrait. It is important that they do not get too much assistance on this preliminary self-portrait as this image will change as they progress through the unit. This activity will also serve as an example of how difficult it is to capture the true person in a portrait and will lead to the discussions of how paintings represent less of who the people are and more of what people wanted others to believe about them. There will undoubtedly be complaints by some students that their portrait is not good enough artistically, please stress that this project is not graded on artistic ability but on the student's willingness to try their best. (Exemplifying the American Dream – hard work will reap its rewards!)

Display the self-portraits in the classroom for all to see and promote positive, constructive criticism.

## **Activity 3**

*Objectives:* The students will read and respond in writing to a story that is a modern day example of the American Dream at work. (Communications Standards 2, 3, 4)

*Procedure:*

Read The Marble Champ by Gary Soto. Discuss how this story exemplifies the American Dream with the main character working hard to become a champion and succeeding because of her hard work.

Write a performance task based on this question. (See appendix 2)

## **Lesson 2 – Read the Paintings**

Background: By the end of the lesson the students will be able to understand some aspects of reading paintings. They will explore the clothing of the revolutionary period as a means to identify it in images. They will then explore other symbols of the American Dream that artists may use to get across their views of the American Dream.

### **Activity 1**

*Objectives:* The students will compare and contrast current styles of dress with those of colonial dress and determine what clothing would be indicative of a person who wanted to demonstrate their fulfillment of the American Dream. (Communication Standard 5)

#### *Procedure:*

Students will dress in colonial period costumes. A wealthy woman, a wealthy gentlemen landowner, a Pilgrim, a Puritan, a poor woman and man, and any working class costume are just a few examples of what can be used. (See <http://www.nga.gov/collection/gallery/iadcast/iadcost-main1.html> ) or ideas of what costumes would entail in colonial America. If you do not have access to a high school drama costume department, local drama companies are usually very helpful in providing costumes for school groups. Also a local museum is a good source and since historic costuming is thought of as an art form, small local galleries may have access to some of the artist's designs.

Compare and contrast current styles of dress with the colonial dress. Students should take particular note of the fabrics and elaborate nature in the dress of the wealthy. This observation will serve them well when reading the paintings. Discuss also how they feel in the costumes and answer the following question either as a handout or orally as class discussion.

Does the more ornate costume make them feel more important?

Are the clothes comfortable?

Are they hot?

Can you move easily in them?

Why might the comfort of the clothing be an indicator of the success of the wearer?

Are the poor going to have clothes they can move around easily in or that they can work in?

Why might the rich have the more binding clothes?

What is the difference in the fabrics?

Is silk considered a better fabric than cotton today? Why? Would that have been true in colonial times as well?

How might the American Dream be shown in a person's clothing?

What clothes would you wear if you wanted someone to think you were successful?

## **Activity 2**

*Objectives:* Discuss and "read" some paintings as a group. (Communications Standard 5, Arts and Humanities Standards 1, 2, 3; Citizenship Standards 1, 2, 4, 7, 9)

*Procedure:*

Utilizing the brief art summaries above or images of your own choosing, point out the significant elements of the images including evidence of wealth, cultural values, and religious doctrine. Some of the questions that you may include are:

What are the subjects wearing?

Where are the subjects?

What other things are in the picture besides the people?

What is the background like?

What colors are used?

What conclusions can you draw about the people in the picture?

Are the subjects fulfilling an American Dream? How can you tell?

How do you think the artist felt about the subject? Why?

This lesson is meant to be a teacher-guided lesson with the teacher demonstrating the reading of the paintings. These particular paintings are available on the Internet and can be copied on floppy disc and incorporated in a PowerPoint projection so the whole class can view them at once. If a projection screen is not available at your school, the students could bring up the paintings in the computer lab and discussion can ensue from there. If all else fails the paintings can be printed out and copied individually from the Internet.

## **Activity 3**

*Objectives:* The students will be able to identify icons that are used to convey the American Dream. (Communications Standards 1, 3, 5; Arts and Humanities Standard 1, 2)

*Procedures:*

Look at familiar modern art – ads, famous paintings, etc. and brainstorm what icons are used to convey the American Dream. See appendix for some examples.

Students will complete the question sheet in their cooperative groups about each work of art. Utilize similar questions to those in activity 1.

What are the subjects wearing?

Where are the subjects?

What other things are in the picture besides the people?

What is the background like?

What colors are used?

What conclusions can you draw about the people in the picture?

Are the subjects fulfilling an American Dream? How can you tell?

How do you think the artist felt about the subject? Why?

Who is the audience for this image?

What are some of the things the artist uses to convey his message?

Is the message that the artist is conveying true or is it just what people wish were true?

What technique of advertising is the artist using – bandwagon, celebrity endorsement, or loaded words?

Why would people buy this product? Will it truly deliver what the artist is promising?

### **Lesson 3 – Historical American Dream Collage**

Background:

At the end of this lesson the students will have a collage of words and pictures that will help them define what the American Dream was for many of the early Americans. Each of these activities can be done in small groups or as a class discussion. For each lesson point out that what they will be looking at may not have been the reality of the situation of the subjects in the paintings but rather how the subjects wanted to be seen. In this lesson the students will read the paintings of several different groups of early Americans and analyze what their purpose for coming to the New World may have been. The students will also come up with a picture of family life in early America and compare it to today's view of family and the role of each member in the family. The change from a purely patriarchal family life is evident in many of the paintings. The change in the attitudes toward children after Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Emile is also evident. Native American and African-Americans subjects will also be by contrasting what we know of the reality of Native American lives, and what the images express.

#### **Activity 1**

*Objectives:* Students will view paintings from their social studies book and answer questions concerning each painting. They will also draw a picture of each symbol of the American Dream that they see represented. (Communications Standard 2, 4, 5; Citizenship Standards 1, 2, 3, 8, 9)

*Procedures:*

View each of the following images in from the United States: Adventures in Time and Place (James A. Banks et al. New York: Macmillan McGraw-Hill, 1997) text.

*Christopher Columbus* - Museo Navale, Genoa - p. 140.

Columbus' serious expression, which would be a sign of intelligence and creativity, his dark clothing as a sign of piety (it almost looks like religious attire) are examples of the American Dream fulfilled. Note also that this painting was not created in Columbus' lifetime so the students should question who the audience would have been for this painting. (Perhaps to advertise the intelligence of a man who represented Spain.)

*The Landing of Columbus* – John Vanderlyn – p. 146

Columbus is viewed as the conquering hero. He is the central character in the painting wearing the color red; a sign of royalty. He holds a sword, stabbing the earth as if he has vanquished an enemy in battle. The American Dream themes are shown in two ways here. The search for a better life is apparent with the kneeling child grasping his heart to the right in the painting. We are led to believe that in arriving in the New World he has been saved. The Spanish flag is also apparent to tell us how the Spanish would have claimed this rich land for the welfare of their country. We also see the Christian cross which explains another reason that explorers coveted this new land. The opportunity to convert to Christianity any native the Spanish met in the New World was an important one, for anyone who was not Christian would not find their way to heaven.

*Disembarkation of the Spanish at Vera Cruz* – Diego Rivera – p. 159

This painting is rich with American Dream images. Notice the money changing hands between the two foreground characters and the accountant immediately behind them with his register in hand. The Africans are shown enslaved and vanquished in the left foreground and in the center back of the painting. This painting was done in 1951, so the audience would be more sympathetic to the plight of the African slave at this time rather than if it had been done at the time. Missionaries are also shown in the rear of the painting as well as the upper left-hand corner. This missionary is interesting because of the almost monster-like face. This is another indication that the conquistadors and missionaries were not viewed in a positive light in the conquering of Mexico.

*Sir Walter Raleigh* – The Granger Collection - p. 169.

Raleigh is pictured here as both a strong leader as well as a wealthy, respected member of English society. His lace and buttoned shirt as well as the embroidery on his tunic indicate his wealth and standing in the community. He has peacock feathers in his hat, which were a sign of leadership. His stance even indicates his power with his hands on his hips as if no one could challenge him. He gazes out at the viewer with quiet reserve and satisfaction. He was, after all, the man who convinced Queen Elizabeth I that building a colony in the New World was a good idea. He fulfills his dream of conquering this new land and starting the colony at Roanoke.

*Hudson the Dreamer* - J. L. Ferris - p. 175.

Henry Hudson was an explorer in search of the Northwest Passage and this painting shows vividly what visionary he was thought to be. He stands as a conquering hero who the Native Americans welcome with peace pipe in hand. They bring him food and bow down to his authority. Hudson is seen gazing into the distance as if he sees the future of this great land. His mighty ship is in the background where it is about to sail to some new exotic locale. Again the American Dream is exemplified by his vision for the future.

*Captain John Smith* – The Granger Collection - p. 180.

This portrait of the adventurer shows him as a soldier in his armor. His sword is readily available in the lower right and he seems to gaze at the viewer with confidence and intelligence. This portrait is especially interesting when viewed with the following engraving.

*Captain John Smith and Pocahontas* – Captain John Smith - p. 181.

This etching shows Smith being saved by Pocahontas with her arms draped over his body in protection while the Native Americans are about to dismember him. Pocahontas is also seen as a larger figure defending Smith with her hands outstretched in a peaceful gesture. Smith did this etching in 1624 for his book on the history of the Jamestown colony and his other exploits.

*Portrait of Pocahontas* – National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution/Art Resource - and the *Wedding of John Rolfe and Pocahontas* – The Granger Collection - p. 182-183.

The most surprising of these two paintings is Pocahontas' portrait. She is dressed as a member of English high society with extensive embroidery and lace. She holds a fan of feathers to further indicate her high place in society. But, as the students are quick to point out, she looks English not Native American. Her hair is even a brown color rather than the black that we associate with Native Americans. The purpose for this has much to do with the American Dream. The English did not want the heroine to be seen as a savage. The only people who would see this portrait were the English merchant and aristocratic class and they wanted people to want to go to the New World. If she looked or dressed like a "savage" the realities of colonial living might come to light and people would not want to make the journey.

In the painting *The Wedding of John Rolfe and Pocahontas*, Pocahontas looks much more like a Native American with dark hair and feathers in her hair. People surround her from both ethnic groups and, from studying this painting, you would never guess that there was ever any conflict between the English and the Natives. A young English girl is holding a Native American walking stick, and Native Americans and Englishmen are shaking hands.

*Freedom from Want* – Norman Rockwell p. 192 and *First Thanksgiving* - Jerome Brownscombe p. 190.

This is another pair of images that help the students realize the differences and similarities between paintings. In *First Thanksgiving* the Pilgrims and Native Americans sit down to a peaceful meal and pray. A beautiful family life is depicted with a child sleeping peacefully in a cradle, dressed in white or praying piously, as young children should. In *Freedom from Want* we see a modern 1950's setting where the children seem to have a private joke they are keeping from the adults. Again, this family situation is idealized and we can see the abundance and happiness with which this family has come to fulfill the American Dream. The title is important here because it shows that the subjects have fulfilled the Dream, which is shown so well with not only the abundance of food but of the china on the table and the sit down dinner with extended family.

Have the students identify the elements of each image that identifies the American Dream as included above.

The students should then draw four of the icons of the American Dream that they identified and explain briefly why this is an example of the American Dream. They can also compare and contrast some of these images particularly the John Smith and Pocahontas images (f, g, and h) and the images of Thanksgiving (i.).

## **Activity 2**

*Objectives:* The students will visit [www.tigtail.com](http://www.tigtail.com) or [www.thinker.org](http://www.thinker.org) in the computer lab and view selected Revolutionary works. They will answer questions about each image. They will copy and paste into a Microsoft Word document a list of icons that they found in these painting. (Communication Standards 1, 3; Arts and Humanities Standards 1, 3; Citizenship Standard 1)

*Procedures:*

Have students open Microsoft Word and [www.thinker.org](http://www.thinker.org). The students may also use the question sheet in appendix 3 that can be scanned into their files instead of a blank Word file.

Students should view the following images;

*Thanksgiving – Illustration to the Landing of the Pilgrims – James Henry Daugherty*

*Home to Thanksgiving – Henry Durrie*

*Pocahontas saving the Life of Captain John Smith – Currier and Ives*

*Mrs. Daniel Sargent – John Singleton Copley*

*The Mason Children: David, Johanna, and Abigail – Freake-Gibbs painter*

3. Students should be able to identify the symbols of the American Dream and cut and paste these images into the Word document. If the image will not move then they can write a sentence or two about the symbol that is represented.

## **Activity 3**

*Objectives:* The students will be able to identify characteristics of the family and draw a picture of their own family. They will then compare images of various family scenes and discuss similarities and differences between the images and their own renderings. They will discuss the changing definition of family and its place in the American Dream. (Arts and Humanities Standards 1, 2, 3, 4)

*Procedure:*

Draw a picture of your family. You can make the decision if this picture should include just those living in the students' home or should include the extended family. The students should label the family portrait with the names of the family members.

The students will view the following family portraits from colonial America.

*Elizabeth Freake and Baby Mary – Freake-Gibbs painter*

*Isaac Royal and Family – Robert Feke*

*Portrait of John and Elizabeth Lloyd Cadwalader and Their Daughter Anne* – Charles Willson Peale

*Four Children of Marcus L. Ward* – Lilly Martin Spencer

Discuss the changes in the family view and why that might be. You may choose from the paintings and questions below or add more of your own.

How are the subjects of the painting dressed?

What are the subjects doing in the painting? Is this a natural thing for them to do?

What are the adults doing? Where are they looking? Are they touching anyone or anything?

What conclusions can you draw about how children, fathers and mothers were viewed from the paintings.

Students should be given the opportunity to change their family portrait as they choose, utilizing the different ideas that they have seen in the historic images.

#### **Lesson 4 – Culminating Activity – Self Portrait of the American Dream**

*Background* – The result of this lesson will be a completed self-portrait with two paragraphs of description - one describing the American Dream and one describing their own portraits or their own reading of the portrait that they make. Again, the point of this exercise is not the accuracy of the likeness but the assessment of what the students understand about the meaning of the American Dream and their understanding of the importance of art in depicting the American Dream.

##### **Activity 1**

*Objectives:* The students will utilize the collage and the unit's images to develop their own self-portraits that include backgrounds and understandable icons. (Arts and Humanities Standard 4)

*Procedure:*

Have students review their collages and their definitions of the American Dream. Determine if their Dream has changed throughout the unit and what types of icons can exemplify their Dream.

Begin to draw their final self-portrait, which includes meaningful backgrounds and objects to illustrate their American Dream. For example, if student dreams of becoming rich doctor his self-portrait may include a stethoscope and he may be wearing surgical scrubs or a white lab coat. His background might include a hospital, some patients whose life he has saved or other signs of caring. He may also include a big house or fancy car to depict his wealth and standing in the community. If the student's dreams of becoming a teacher he may show a blackboard, chalk, whistle, book and apple. He would show his success through smiling children who are reaching their academic potential with A's on their report card.

##### **Activity 2**

*Objectives:* The students will write the final draft of their American Dream paragraph and relate it to their self-portrait. (Communications Standard 4)

*Procedures:*

Using the writing process the students will complete their American Dream essay. The rough draft was completed in Lesson 1 and they can use their self-portrait as a starting point for the pre-writing. The second draft is really what they are completing at this point.

Peer edit the second drafts with the partner editor viewing the self-portrait and determining if all the icons are discussed in their essay. Explanation will also be an important component of this essay. See appendix 4 for a possible rubric for peer editors to utilize.

Write the final draft of the essay.

**Activity 3**

*Objective:* The students will present orally to the class their American Dream portrait and read their essay to the class. (Communication Standard 8)

*Procedures:*

The students will present their project to the class.

The students will ask questions of their fellow classmates concerning their project being careful to give positive feedback. It is always a good idea to have the students make a positive comment to the author before they are allowed to ask a question.

Display the portraits and essays in a prominent place in the classroom or hallway.

**Appendix 1 – Lesson 1, Activity 1**

**The American Dream**

**Types of Success**

<u>Monetary Success</u>	Family Success	National/World Success

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Definition of American Dream \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix 2: Lesson 1, Activity 3**

#### The Marble Champ Performance Task

The task below requires that you provide a written response. Use the scratch paper your teacher gave you to help you develop your answer. Write your answer in the space below the task. Remember, you may go back to the story, and you may use a dictionary or thesaurus to help you with your writing.

Lupe did a lot in the Marble Champ to solve her problem. Explain why Lupe acted the way she did. Use information from the story and your own ideas to explain her actions.

As you write be sure to:

Tell what it was about Lupe that made her a champion.

Explain if her actions similar to what you think other champions would do to be successful.

Use examples from the story.

Include your own ideas and understandings.

Write neatly and clearly.

Use only the space provided.

### **Appendix 3 – Lesson 3, Activity 2**

Identify American Dream Icons from Art on the World-Wide Web

Directions: Find the following images in [www.thinker.org](http://www.thinker.org). Click and paste the main icon or symbol of the American Dream that you see in the art work. If the icon will not paste then describe the icon and its place in the American Dream.

Image: Icon:	Image: Icon:	Image: Icon:
Image: Icon:	Image: Icon:	Image: Icon:
Image: Icon:	Image: Icon:	Image: Icon:

## **Peer Edit Checklist**

1) What symbols are used in your partner's self-portrait?

2) What is your partner's America Dream?

3) Check off the appropriate box

Does the author:

Indent paragraphs?

Use capitals at the beginning of sentences?

Use end punctuation?

Have a topic sentence for each paragraph?

Have a concluding sentence for each paragraph?

Relate their American Dream to his portrait?

4. What are your suggestions for making this essay even better?

## **Appendix 5**

### **The Pittsburgh Public Schools Content Standards**

The Standards

Pittsburgh Public School's content standards are an integral part of this unit. It will focus on the communication standards, arts and humanities and citizenship standards. More than one standard is addressed in most of the lessons and activities.

#### Communications Standards

All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies. (Unit lessons: 2 Activity 3; 3 Activity 2)

All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts. (Unit lessons: 1 Activity 3; 3 Activity 1)

All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems. (Unit lessons: 1 Activity 3; 2 Activity 3; 3 Activity 2)

All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas. (Unit lessons: 1 Activity 1,3; 2 Activity 1; 4 Activity 2)

All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence. (Unit lessons: 2 Activity 1,2,3; 3 Activity 1)

All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communication. (Unit lessons: 1 Activity 1)

All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform, or describe. (Unit lessons: 4 activity 3)

#### Arts and Humanities Standards

All students describe meanings they find in various works from the visual and performing arts and literature on the basis of aesthetic understanding of the art form. (Unit lessons: 1 Activity 2; 2 Activity 3; 3 Activity 2,3)

All students evaluate and respond critically to works from the visual and performing arts and literature of various individuals and cultures, showing that they understand the important features of the works. (Unit lessons: 1 Activity 2; Activity 3; 3 Activity 3)

All students relate various works from the visual and performing arts and literature to the historical and cultural context within which they were created. (Unit lessons: 1 Activity 2; 3 Activity 2,3; 4 Activity 1)

All students produce, perform, or exhibit their work in the visual arts, music, dance or theater, and describe the meanings their work has for them. (Unit lessons 3 Activity 3)

#### Citizenship (Social Studies) Standards

All students demonstrate an understanding of major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of Pennsylvania, the United States and other nations, and describe themes and patterns of historical development. (Unit lessons: 2 Activity 2,3; 3 Activity 1,2)

All students demonstrate understanding of themes and patterns of geography, know the location of major bodies of water, landmasses and nations, and describe the relationships between geography and historical, economic and cultural development. (Unit lessons: 2 Activity 2; 3 Activity 1)

All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation and world by incorporating concepts and methods of inquiry of the various social sciences. (Unit lessons: 2 Activity 2)

All students demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating and cooperating with others. (Unit lessons: 4 Activity 2)

All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others. (Unit lessons: 2 Activity 2)

All students demonstrate an understanding of history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing communities, the United States and other nations. (Unit lessons: 3 Activity 1)

All students demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing communities, the United States and other nations. (Unit lessons: 2 Activity 2; 3 Activity 1)

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#### Online Resources

[www.worcesterart.org](http://www.worcesterart.org)

[www.thinker.org](http://www.thinker.org)

[www.tigtail.org](http://www.tigtail.org)

<http://www.nga.gov>

<http://www.nmaa.si.edu/>

<http://www.bmalearningcenter.org>