

## *Symbols of America: Teacher's Guide*

**Grade Level:** 3-5

**Curriculum Focus:** U.S. History

**Lesson Duration:** One to two class periods

### **Program Description**

“Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness” are ideas that united early Americans and formed the bedrock of a young nation. Learn how these principles helped inspire many of America's greatest symbols of democracy: The Declaration of Independence, the Statue of Liberty, and presidential monuments.

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### **Onscreen Activities**

Segment 1, Declaration of Independence

- Activity: The Declaration of Independence is a document that outlines the rights of all United States citizens. Using the Declaration of Independence as a guide, work in groups to draft a document that outlines your rights and freedoms at school.

Segment 2, Presidential Monuments

- Activity: Choose a person who has made an important contribution to your life and design a monument in his or her honor. Describe what the monument symbolizes and what it will tell others about the person being honored.

Segment 3, Statue of Liberty

- Activity: Measure the length of your body, arms, hands, legs, feet, and head. Then divide those measurements by ten and make a scale drawing of yourself using the new measurements.
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### **Lesson Plan**

#### *Student Objectives*

- Use primary sources to learn about the events, victims, heroes, and emotions of September 11.
- Design a memorial to commemorate, honor, and remember this day in American history.

#### *Materials*

- *Symbols of America* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Computers with Internet access

- Newspapers, magazines, or other primary sources about September 11th
- Large mural paper
- Pencils, colored pencils, crayons.

### Procedures

1. Begin the lesson by reviewing the definition of a *symbol*. What symbols of America does the program feature? In what ways can memorials symbolize people, ideas, or events? Ask students if they can name other symbols of American that were not included in the program.
2. Have students share what they learned from the video about the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty. What does this statue symbolize to Americans, immigrants, and people elsewhere in the world? Why was it placed in New York Harbor? What do specific parts of the statue symbolize (its size, broken chains, torch, seven rays of light in the crown, the direction the statue faces, and the words on the tablet)? Discuss with students why people who design monuments give so much time and thought to symbolism.
3. Explain to students that the Statue of Liberty symbolizes the idea of freedom, but monuments can also help us remember people and historical events. Have students list such examples of American structures. Using the examples in the list, have students brainstorm why it might be important for Americans to have monuments that symbolize people and events. Why do they think we visit these monuments?
4. Have the class list events that have occurred during their lives that would be important for future generations to remember. The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, will most likely be mentioned. You may want to review the events of that day, as well as stories of courage, heroism, and patriotism. Why do students think it is important for future generations to remember September 11?
5. Divide the class into groups. Have the groups think of plans for memorials that commemorate the events, victims, heroes, and emotions of September 11. For younger students, you may want to focus on the heroism and patriotism.
6. Explain that one way to learn about events or people is by reading primary sources. Describe a primary source as one that reflects the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer. Have students review primary sources about September 11: newspaper and magazine articles, photographs, essays, journals, interviews, Web resources, and television programs. A list of Web sites and additional resources can be found at <http://911digitalarchive.org/websites/content/essays>.
7. Using information from these sources, have students create three lists about September 11: events, people, and emotions and ideas. Have students cite their sources accurately.
8. Next, have the groups brainstorm the type of memorial that would best symbolize the details in their lists. Then have them begin their memorial plan.
9. Their memorial plans should include the following:
  - A sketch of the design and a physical description, size specifications, colors, and building materials.



- A proposed location for their memorial and an explanation for why this is the best location.
  - How their memorial captures the events and emotions of September 11.
  - Information from at least three primary sources that helped inspire the design.
10. Once students have completed their plans, they should present them to the class. If appropriate, have students discuss the merits of each group's plan.

## Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students worked cooperatively in groups; were able to find and use primary sources as a research tool; design plan met all four criteria; presented a complete, well-organized plan.
- 2 points: Students worked somewhat cooperatively in groups; were able somewhat to find and use primary sources as a research tool; design plan met three criteria; presented a complete plan.
- 1 point: Students worked somewhat cooperatively in groups; were able somewhat to find and use primary sources as a research tool; design plan met one or two criteria; presented an incomplete or disorganized plan.

## Vocabulary

### **commemorate**

*Definition:* To keep alive the memory of something or someone

*Context:* We can commemorate the lives of those lost in Vietnam by visiting the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

### **hero**

*Definition:* A person noted for feats of courage or nobility of purpose

*Context:* The New York City firefighters and police officers are considered heroes of September 11.

### **memorial**

*Definition:* Something intended to honor the memory of a person or event

*Context:* Mount Rushmore is a memorial to four U.S. Presidents who changed our nation for the better.

### **monument**

*Definition:* A structure, such as a building or sculpture, erected as a memorial

*Context:* The Washington Monument honors the life and ideals of President George Washington.

### **primary source**



*Definition:* A document or other evidence that reflects the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer.

*Context:* A photograph taken by someone who witnessed the attack on the World Trade Center is a primary source of information about the events of September 11.

### **symbol**

*Definition:* Something visible that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention

*Context:* The Statue of Liberty is a symbol of freedom.

## *Academic Standards*

### **The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)**

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Culture
  - Time, Continuity and Change
  - People, Places and Environments
  - Individual Development and Identity
  - Civic Ideals and Practices
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