

2012-2013 Teaching American History

Extended Discussion/Writing Lesson Plan Template

Lesson Title: Next to Normal

Author Name: Johanna Sergott

Contact Information: 6055 Lancer Street

Reno, NV 89523

775-746-5880 ext. 32170

Appropriate for Grade Level: 10th grade US history

US History Standards: H2.[9-12].7 Discuss the consequences of U.S. policies regarding expansion and diplomacy.

H2[9-12].8 Discuss the effects of WWI on the U.S.

H.3[9-12].6 Examine social tension in the post-WWI era

H3[9-12].11 Compare and contrast the social impacts of early conflicts to the War of Terror on the U.S.

CCSS: Reading Standard 1-Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

Reading Standard 2-Determine the central ideas of primary and secondary sources, and provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

Reading Standard 4-Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text.

Reading Standard 6-Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

Reading Standard 7-Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats to address a question.

Writing Standard 1-Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

Writing Standard 1a-Introduce precise, knowledgeable claims and create organization that logically sequences the claim, reasons, and evidence.

Writing Standard 1b-Develop claims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence.

Discussion Question: What is normalcy according to Harding? What is normalcy according to Mencken? What is normalcy according to Thompson? What are the consequences of normalcy? What should normalcy be and who should determine normalcy?

Student Readings/Sources List: Warren G. Harding Calls for a “Return to Normalcy” (1920)

H.L. Mencken Critiques America (1922)

Are Today’s Youth Really a Lost Generation by Derek Thompson from the Atlantic Monthly (2012)

Description of writing assignment and criteria/rubric used for assessment of student writing:

Prompt: Argue for or against Mencken’s claim that the U.S. is a 4-ring circus. Use at least 3 pieces of evidence from the readings with reasoning to justify your argument.

Rubric: Complete claim that addresses the prompt=10 points

Relevant and sufficient evidence=15 points

Valid reasoning=15 points

Total Time Needed: 4-50 minute class periods

Lesson Outline:

Time Frame	What is the teacher doing?	What are students doing?
Day 1		
15 minutes	Teacher asks: “What is normal?”	Students talk in triads, rotating 3 times. 1 person per triad shares what they discussed.
5 minutes	Teacher says: “In the wake of WWI, a lot of Americans wanted normalcy.” Teacher explains that in the next few days, the students will analyze the causes and effects of normalcy for different Americans, and how the concept applies to today. Teacher asks you can explain the objectives in their own words.	Students listen in anticipation of putting the objectives in their own words. Several students share.
5 minutes	Teacher says that the phrase normalcy was coined by president Warren G. Harding. Students will listen to and read his speech, underlining causes and making asterisks next to effects of normalcy.	Students listen to speech and read along, looking for causes and effects of normalcy.

15 minutes	Teacher rotates and assists with t-chart creation.	Working in pairs, students make t-charts for the causes and effects of normalcy according to Harding's speech.
10 minutes	Teacher asks for students to share causes and effects.	Students share and add to their charts.
Day 2		
5 minutes	Teacher goes over objectives for a close read of Mencken's Prejudices. Students will become problem solvers after reading complex text closely to find main ideas and determine relevant evidence. Students will examine and understand social tensions in post-WWI America.	Students listen.
5 minutes	Teacher tells students to read the text.	Students read the text on their own.
5 minutes	Teacher reads the text.	Students follow along as the teacher reads.
35 minutes	Teacher presents questions, with clarification. Teacher rotates to ensure that students are on track. Teacher asks for students from each group to share findings.	Working in heterogenous, pre-determined groups, students answer questions 1-4 of the Mencken close read. All students write answers in their packets. Students share their findings with the whole class after each question.
Day 3		
5 minutes	Teacher goes over objectives and asks students what they have learned so far about the text.	Students share findings.
25 minutes	Teacher presents questions, rotates, and facilitates whole class discussion about answers.	Students answer the remainder of the questions.
5 minutes	Teacher introduces writing prompt: Argue for or against Mencken's claim that the U.S. is a 4-ring circus. Tell students that before they write, they will be reading an article about normalcy in the current era and having a discussion.	Students listen.
15 minutes	Teacher asks students to read the article, "Are Today's Youth Really a Lost Generation?" Teacher asks students to re-	Students read the article. They re-name the article with what they have determined to be the main idea and list supporting

	name the article with the main idea and to list supporting evidence for the main idea.	evidence that led them to this conclusion.
Day 4		
10 minutes	Teacher goes over discussion questions, rubric, tools, and observation requirements.	Students listen.
15-35 minutes	Teacher rotates, making a tally mark next to student's names when he/she makes a good contribution.	Students engage in a small group scored discussion with 3 classmates.
Remainder of class time	Teacher asks students if the discussion was a success or failure. Why? Teacher asks students how they can use the information gained from the discussion to answer the writing prompt.	Students share their thoughts on the discussion. Students share what they will use from the discussion in their writing prompt.
Day 5 50 minutes	Teacher gives students the writing prompt.	Students write a speech to the press from a politician about normalcy.

Next to Normal Writing Prompt

Instructions: Write a short speech to the press from a politician about normalcy. You must address the following in your statement: 1) the evolution of normalcy in American history, 2) societal consequences of normalcy in the past and present, and 3) your evaluation of normalcy, including plans for new norms. Use evidence and reasoning from all 3 articles in your response.

Rubric:

Understanding of content: 10 points

Ability to analyze,
synthesize, and evaluate text: 10 points

Claim 5 points

Use of relevant evidence
to support claim: 10 points

Use of valid reasoning
to explain relevance
of evidence: 10 points

Total: 45 points

Next to Normal

Good evening America. I'm here tonight to address a very important issue in our society: normalcy. The term "normalcy" was introduced after WWI and has had societal consequences ever since. Normalcy has translated to tranquility for some, mockery for others, and most recently, chaos has been the norm. It's time to embrace what's next to normal.

Many Americans craved normalcy in the wake of WWI. The concept was introduced by Warren G. Harding in a 1920 speech called "Return to Normalcy." In the speech, Harding said, "a cataclysmal war" caused the need for normalcy. He was referring to WWI. Harding said that because of the war, "poise has been disturbed, and nerves have been racked, and fever has rendered men irrational." He also says WWI hurt the economy. Normalcy would end false economics and result in overall tranquility. Harding believed normalcy in the form of equilibrium, serenity, restoration, and isolation would heal America.

Harding's notion of normalcy didn't bode well with some Americans. Mencken, for example, claimed America was a "4 ring circus" in his 1922 "Critique of America. Mencken had much to say of Harding's America. He said the government was incompetent (8). Mencken even went so far as to compare 1920 candidates Cox and Harding to Tweedledum and Tweedledee (49). He was implying that American politicians and their platforms were not to be taken seriously. Mencken further likened America to a 4-ring circus. He called American people "timorous, sniveling, poltroonish, ignominious serfs, and goose-steppes," (13-14). He thought they were ignorant cowards; they couldn't think for themselves. The term "4-ring circus" alone supports Mencken's dissatisfaction with America. It was even more ridiculous than a standard 3-ring circus. Mencken's critique clearly conveys that Harding's normalcy didn't satisfy all Americans.

Many Americans are still dissatisfied with the current definition of normalcy. Thompson outlines modern norms for today's youth in his September 2011 *Atlantic Monthly* article, "Is Today's Youth Really a Lost Generation?" Thompson argues that the economic recession resulted in young people living at home into adulthood. He writes, "The money they're not making is the problem." People are going to college, but they aren't getting jobs when they graduate. It seems as if normalcy nowadays is chaos, and it's unfair because an older generation caused it to be this way.

Let this message be a warning my dear, fellow Americans. Having one definition of normal has drastic societal effects. The concept may be appealing because ideally it alleviates drama. Yet, in reality, normalcy hinders happiness. Some people rebel against what is deemed to be normal. Other people are punished if they aren't normal, either by being bullied or getting sent to jail or rehab. People worry about whether their paths or choices are normal. The time has come to reject the phrase "That's not normal." We must embrace a new, multi-dimensional normal; a normal where we embrace the present as a gift and celebrate the challenges and joys that we encounter instead of worrying about how they conflict with normalcy. Thank you for your time.