

good night,
and good luck.



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Lesson Plan 6

"A '50s Diary"

Overview: Teens in the '50s watched the evening news in black and white and wondered what impact these events would have on their lives. They had plenty of issues to think about—serious ones such as the Korean War, nuclear war, McCarthy hearings, the threat of Communism and the Civil Rights movement and less serious ones such as taking the new polio vaccine, new technology and the birth of rock and roll.

Suggested time allotment: Length can vary depending on amount of time for research. Allow at least two days but up to two weeks for research about what the U.S. was like in the early 1950s. An additional week for writing the actual "diary."

Objectives

Students will:

1. Choose some aspect of the 1950s that interests them (i.e. the McCarthy hearing, the Red Scare, etc.).
2. Research the topic with links included below and with appropriate websites and books.
3. Imagine they are teenagers during a particular month in the 1950s. Each should choose the time based on his or her topic, making sure it coincides appropriately (i.e. If they choose McCarthyism, they might choose the month surrounding Murrow's March 9, 1954 "See It Now" program about him).

Our major obligation is not to...

4. Write at least five diary entries (totaling no less than 500 words) from that month. Although they don't need to all relate to the specific topic of concern, most should. Other topics could show the pop culture of the day (i.e. music of interest, television shows) and other items indicating research.
5. Include a bibliography with the diary to show research material.

Curriculum Standards from the National Council for the Social Studies: Thematic Strands, from "Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies:"

- V—Individuals, groups and institutions. Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions....High school students must understand the paradigms and traditions that undergird social and political institutions. They should be provided opportunities to examine, use, and add to the body of knowledge related to the behavioral sciences and social theory as it relates to the ways people and groups organize themselves around common needs, beliefs, and interests.
- X—Civic ideals and practices. Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic. ... High school students increasingly recognize the rights and responsibilities of citizens in identifying societal needs, setting directions for public policies, and working to support both individual dignity and the common good. They learn by experience how to participate in community service and political activities and how to use democratic process to influence public policy.

Resources and materials:

Websites with information:

- Reporter Julie Morris wrote about Milo Radulovich in The Detroit News, "The man who fought McCarthy's red smear." She tells how the original Detroit News article is what Murrow saw that led him to the "little story" he wanted, one that would explain the impact of McCarthy's "red scare."
<http://info.detroitnews.com/history/story/index.cfm?id=221&category=people>



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- To hear Murrow's program about McCarthy, the Old Time Radio site has an audio file.(Real Player required.)
http://www.otr.com/murrow_mccarthy.shtml
- The Discovery Channel site (www.discoveryschool.com) includes video clips of the era. These give some background on what the U.S. was like then. "Eisenhower: The Cold War"
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/eisenhower-coldwar/q.html>
"Eisenhower: The Contentious 1950s"
<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/contentiousyears/q.html>
- History Matters is an interesting site, and it has a set of links to McCarthy and the era. Start here and try them all.
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6444>
- The National Archives has a site that includes lessons on using documents. One uses a telegram and response between President Harry Truman and Sen. Joseph McCarthy and also backgrounds readers on how someone like this might rise to such power.
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/mccarthy-telegram/>