

★ The American's Creed ★

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is for students to gain an understanding of the creed that was written in response to a contest to provide a summary of the fundamentals of American history and tradition. The American's Creed provides a summary of the freedoms and history of the nation.

Objective

The student will be able to discuss the elements of American history and tradition found in the American's Creed.

Theme-Responsibility

Citizens have both personal and civic responsibilities which need to be recognized and upheld. The American's Creed is a citizen's statement of his or her responsibility, care, and service for our nation.

NCSS Standards

IVa. articulate personal connections to time, place, and social/cultural systems.
Xa. explain the origins and interpret the continuing influence of key ideals of the democratic republican form of government.

Xd. practice forms of civic discussion and participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic republic.

Xh. evaluate the degree to which public policies and citizen behaviors reflect or foster the stated ideals of a democratic republican form of government.

Time

2 class periods

Materials

- ★ The American's Creed reading
- ★ Dictionaries
- ★ Poster paper, tape and glue
- ★ Website - www.americanheritage.org

Preparation

- ★ Copy handouts
- ★ Arrange a location in the community to post the posters.

Focus

Students will gain an understanding of the American's Creed and the ideas represented within it. The creed was commissioned as a tool to be used to reinforce the freedoms of the nation at a time when half of the world was at war. The creed is not an official government document, but it was created as a gift to the nation by the people of Baltimore, Maryland. (See Links page on www.americanheritage.org for additional resources on the American's Creed.)

Activity

Students divide into four groups, and each group creates a paragraph that represents a brief summary of American political faith as it is founded upon the fundamentals of American history and tradition. Students will read, compare, and explain their creed to the other class members. Ask students to make a comparison between the creed they write and the version by William Tyler Page.

Closure

Students can enter into a discussion about the creed and identify an order of importance for the ideas and principles expressed in it.

The American's Creed

In 1916, when half the world was at war, there were many in America who believed that citizens should think more about their blessings, privileges, and obligations as Americans. By 1917, magazines and newspapers from coast to coast were announcing a contest for the writing of the best national creed, a “brief summary of American political faith . . . founded upon the fundamentals of American history and tradition.”

In March, the city of Baltimore offered the prize of \$1,000 for the winning creed. Every state in the Union responded. In all, 3,000 entries were submitted. Judges chose a 100 word creed by William Tyler Page compiled from phrases found in American documents and in the words of American patriots.

The American's Creed

by William Tyler Page, 1918

I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed; a democracy in a republic, a sovereign nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies.

Appel, David H., ed. *An Album for Americans: A Treasury of American Patriotism*. New York: Triangle Publications, Crown Publishers, 1983, pp. 132 and 170.