Introduction to the Study of U.S. History

Modern Day Trends in America

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Unit Overview

Context of the Introductory Unit

Students are introduced to how the study of history relates to decision making. The decision making lessons included in the unit will be reinforced throughout the year as students engage in the study of U.S. History.

Objectives of the Introductory Unit

The primary goals of this introductory unit are to introduce students to decision making concepts and to introduce strategies for analyzing the study of U.S. History. The students will be able to recognize the principles used in how to make a good decision. Further, students will observe and analyze how current day decisions we make can have an impact on our contemporary culture. Students will also be able to understand how to approach the study of history using the perspective of decision making.

Critical Thinking

This short unit is designed to help students recognize that placing events in similar categories helps us gain a perspective on how to interpret events. Categories will be used throughout the year as a method for how to interpret historical events. We also emphasize the fact that there are not necessarily right or wrong answers in how to interpret historical events. However, our interpretation needs to be based on sound reasoning. In order to teach critical thinking skills, certain words and ideas need to be reinforced throughout the curriculum. The first idea is **categories**. Categories are simply a method used to organize information. Once a category is established then we begin to offer interpretation on what the categories mean. Another key word students should also understand is **analysis**. Analysis is our primary goal in critical thinking. Analysis contrasts sharply with simply **describing** what happened in history. Our goal is to **interpret** events rather than regurgitate facts.

Decision Making

This unit introduces students to the basic components of how to make a good decision. Each component of decision making is emphasized as an introduction to how to make a good decision. **Helpful Frame, Clear Values, Creative Alternatives, Useful Information, Sound Reasoning,** and **Commitment to Follow Through** is introduced as a method the students can use to a personal decision and as a criteria to use to analyze historical decisions.

The Lessons

Lesson #1 – Categorizing Events in History
Students are asked to place current day events into historical categories.

Lesson #2-Analyzing the Categories
Once the students can place similar events into categories, they explore possible interpretations about what the categories mean.

Lesson #3-Decisions about Media and Technology
Using the decision diagram, students explore how to make a good decision as related to spending time with technology

Lesson #4-The Historical Impact of a Decision
The students are asked to consider how some individual decisions can have historical impact

Supplemental Lesson: The teacher can also use the Teacher Note section to analyze teenage decisions that influence culture.

Comments on the Lessons

Lesson	Used	Not Used	Comments or Suggestions on the Lesson
#1			
#2			
#3			

#4			

General Comments on the Unit

Lesson #1

Categorizing Events in History

Students recognize that events in culture and personal issues take place continually. The number of events and issues we face is so overwhelming at times that we often don't know how to make sense out of what is taking place. The study of history can help students gain perspective on events and issues they face. The ability to break down and analyze events is an important step in critical thinking. This first lesson is designed to present a series of events that have taken place in the lifetime of the students. Their initial goal is to put the events into appropriate historical categories.

1. Pass out the sheet entitled *Historical Categories* and the sheet entitled *100 Events in Your Lifetime*. The *100 Events in Your Lifetime* list is a random assortment of events that have taken place the last 15-20 years. The students simply need to put as many of the events into categories as designated by the *Historical Categories* sheet. You may go over the categories sheet briefly but the students tend to think about the categories once they start reading the events sheet. The students can also put events into their own categories such as technology, media, etc.

2. Once they complete the categories you can ask the students to consider the meaning behind the events and categories. The students may be able to recognize powerful forces in our culture today. It is also interesting to consider why certain events would be considered important while other events are not. The students can also add some events to the list that they think should be included.

3. After the students finish the events list you can discuss how to make sense out of the list by posing some of the questions below.
   - What trends seemed to have the biggest impact on American culture today?

   - What major themes appear with each category?

   - How did technological advancements impact both social and economic trends?

   - How is a consumer culture represented in the trends and events?

   - What plays a bigger role in American culture today: the media or politics?

   - What events should be added to the list?

   - What categories could be added to the list?

Historical Categories

To make sense out of seemingly random events that take place in society, we first need to place events into categories. Categories are similar events that take place in the same time period. There are many other categories beyond those listed below, but the following list can be used as the most general way of understanding similar historical events.

Political

Power, Rights, Benefit, Laws
- Who exercises power? Who's in charge?
- Why do certain groups have more power than others?
- Who has the power to make decisions for everyone else?
- How are the decisions enacted into laws and policies? How do the decisions of those in power affect the country or group they represent?
- In whose interest did the political decision represent? Who benefited from the policy?

*The U.S. political system is based upon the notion of **democracy** where political power, theoretically, is in the hands of the people to vote for representatives who enact policies on behalf of the people.*

Economic

Class Struggles, Money, Opportunity,
- How do people in the society provide for the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter?
- How are resources distributed?
- Who is making a profit and how are they doing it?
- How are profits made by exploiting other groups?

*The U.S. economic system is based upon the theory of **capitalism** where the free market and supply and demand determine the price of products and the type of work needed at a given time.*

Social

Beliefs, Values, Attitudes, Rights, Reforms, Lifestyles
- How do people live their life on a day-to-day basis?
- How is family life and community life organized?
- How do religion, the arts, intellectual ideas, and leisure time influence the lives of people?
- How do the media influence society?

*One of the major notions of American society is reverence for the idea of **freedom**. Much of our history is the story of people in search of more individual freedom in the context of a democratic system based on capitalism.*

Foreign Policy

Power, Conflicts, Resources, War, Trade
- How does one nation relate to another nation?
- Is the relationship with another country based on economic, security, or ideological interests?
- What are the reasons for going to war or allying with another country?
- Who benefits more from the relationship?

Throughout our history our foreign policy has been based on establishing our economic interests, protecting our security interests, and promoting our ideological interests.

Religious

Beliefs, Values, Reforms
- How do people express their beliefs about God?
- How does religion influence other institutions like legal issues and reform movements?
- How much power does religion have in the period?
- How were differences in religions tolerated?

Cultural/Intellectual

Trends, Ideas, Artistic Expressions
- What are the qualities, characteristics, attitudes and ideas within a society which reflect life in art, architecture, literature, drama, music, etc?
- What are the trends in society? What's popular?

Legal

Laws, Supreme Court Decisions
- What are the rules and regulations that promote order in society?
- How are these laws justified and enforced?
- What is controversial about the regulation?
- Who benefits?

Geography

Crops, Climate, Regions
- How does the physical environment influence the culture?

100 Events in Your Lifetime

Based on the Historical Categories sheet, try to place these events in appropriate categories.

1. Tattoos
2. 2009 Poker Face, Lady Gaga
3. Iraq invades Kuwait: U.S. sends 500,000 troops to defend Saudi Arabia to prepare for an invasion
4. Flat Irons
5. Nelson Mandela released from prison
6. Baggy Clothes
7. First Cloned Mammal Dolly the Sheep
8. Oscar Grant Shooting
9. Nintendo Wii
10. Freaking
11. OJ Simpson Trial
12. Bill Clinton (1993-2000)
13. Techno
14. Rwanda Genocide: major criticism of the U.S.'s lack of help
15. Piercings
16. FDA approves AIDS treatment
17. Princess Diana dies in a car accident
18. "Sagging"
19. Yahoo! /Google
20. Bush Vetoes Civil Rights Bill
21. Computers (Windows)
22. Thrift Store Look
23. First Black Female Astronaut
24. Largest shopping mall in the U.S. is constructed
25. *The Simpson's*
26. *Forrest Gump*
27. Clean Air Act passed
28. Hubble Space Telescopes
29. North America Free Trade Agreement: eliminated tariffs between Mexico, U.S., and Canada
30. Game Boy
31. UN forces attack Iraq
32. Flannels
33. George H.W. Bush (1989-2008)
34. 9/11
35. 40% of people attend regular religious services
36. *Fight Club*
37. PC Computer Games
38. World Wide Web
39. Alternative rock music
40. Passage of the 27th Amendment: Congress could not get a raise until the next election
41. Combat roles for women in the U.S. Military
42. Microsoft
43. Hate Crimes Statistics Act is passed: required information with prejudice based crimes such as race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity
44. Rap Music
45. Michael Jackson dies
46. Nicoderm: first nicotine patch
47. Super Nintendo Entertainment System
48. Catholics and Protestants dominate religion
49. Youtube
50. Genetically engineered crops

51. George Bush Re-elected (2004)
52. Reality TV shows: *Survivor, American Idol, The Real World, Rock of Love with Brett Michaels, Beauty and the Geek, The Hills, Laguna Beach*
53. Hannah Montana/Disney Channel
54. Kobe Bryant scandal
55. Mad Cow Disease
56. Barry Bonds- steroids and HR record
57. Facebook/ Twitter/ MySpace
58. Dennis Tito becomes the first Space Tourist
59. Civil War escalated in the Gaza Strip
60. High-wasted skirts
61. ABC and NBC TV shows: *The Office, Lost, Ugly Betty, Desperate Housewives, Grey's Anatomy, The OC, Heroes*
62. Instant Messaging/ Texting
63. The International Criminal Court (ICC)
64. Parachute pants (Gauchos)
65. Concern for personal privacy increases
66. Gossip Girl
67. Hip Hop
68. Barack Obama Elected (2008)
69. Aviators
70. Global Warming
71. Severe Acute Respiratory System (SARS) & Swine Flu (H1N1) spread around the globe
72. Saddam Hussein is hanged in Baghdad
73. Ipod (MP3 Players)
74. Completion of the Human Genome Project
76. X-Box 360/ PS3/Nintendo
77. December 26, 2004: Tsunami in the Indian Ocean
78. Response to Sept. 11, U.S. & British launch bombing campaign against Taliban Gov't & al-Qaeda terrorist camps
79. Economic Downfall of 2008/2009
80. Snuggies
81. Michael Vick scandal
82. Bohemian style
83. Hybrid Cars: Prius & Electric Cars: Smart Car
84. Space shuttle Columbia
85. Abercrombie and Fitch/ Hollister
86. Roller Backpacks
87. Virginia Tech Shootings
88. U.S. Airways plane in the Hudson River
89. War in Iraq/ Afghanistan
90. Vaccine for cervical cancer
91. Bombings by Islamic militants
92. Personal Computers
93. The "Skate" Look (skinny jeans)
94. Mobile Phone usage rises
95. Digital Cameras
96. Mars Exploration Rover Lands on Mars- *Opportunity*
97. Hurricane Katrina
98. Apple Computer Inc.
99. Anthrax Scare
100. British Petroleum Oil Spill

Lesson #2

Analyzing the Categories

This lesson is designed to allow students to offer an interpretation of the events listed on the previous sheet. The goal is not to look for the "right" answer. We want the students to offer a variety of interpretations about the meaning of the events. Specific strategies for how to analyze certain historical time periods will be offered later in the curriculum.

1. Once the students place the 100 events into specific categories, they should try to analyze what some of the categories mean. You can use the sheet, *Analyzing the Categories,* to help students to interpret what the events mean when the events are placed into similar categories. Some examples of analysis statements for different categories would be as follows:

   o Political Category Analysis Statement:
     One of the biggest challenges in politics today is addressing major environmental issues such as climate change.

   o Economic Category Analysis Statement:
     Much of our economy today is based on technological innovations.

   o Foreign Policy Category Analysis Statement:
     The threat of terrorism is a major foreign policy concern today.

   o Social Category Analysis Statement:
     Pop culture and the media influence many of our values today.

2. A second way to analyze historical events is to look at a single event or term from a variety of perspectives. Use the sheet, *Analyzing a Single Term* to ask students to analyze the term *Facebook* from a variety of categories. Some examples of this type of analysis would be:
   o Political: Most political candidates now have Facebook pages and use social networking to promote themselves.

   o Economic: Facebook is making millions through advertising due to its popularity.

   o Social: Many young people now connect via Facebook. If you want to connect with your friends you do it on Facebook.

   o Geography: Sites like Facebook are making geography irrelevant by allowing people who live across the country from each other to connect with a click.

Analyzing the Categories

How do we interpret what some of the events mean? Much of the study of history is based on analyzing similar events from the perspective of a single category. After you put the events into categories, try to offer some kind of an interpretation of the category. Answer the questions below that relates to a few of the categories.

Political

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of politics?

2. Do the political events taken together have anything in common with each other? Can you place the political events into several more specific political categories?

3. Can you add any political events to the list?

4. What are the general political themes?

5. In 1-2 sentences can you analyze the political category? Keep in mind that your interpretation is just as valid as someone else's interpretation. You just have to learn to support your interpretation.

Economic

1. Based on the events, is the economy doing well or not right now?

2. Do economic issues influence more people than political events? Explain.

3. Can you add any economic events to the list?

4. What are the main economic themes?

5. In 1-2 sentences can you analyze anything about our economy?

Foreign Policy
1. Why are foreign policy events important to our country right now?

2. Can you add any foreign policy events to the list?

3. What are the main foreign policy themes right now?

4. In 1-2 sentences can you give an interpretation of the foreign policy events?

Social
1. Should the social themes be placed into more specific sub-categories? What could be some other more specific sub-categories for the social events?

2. Do you recognize more social events than political, economic, or foreign policy events? Why?

3. How would individual teenage decisions like buying an I-pod or spending time on *Facebook* become a major issue in our culture? Are these decisions primarily economic or a social issue?

4. In 1-2 sentences can you analyze what the social events mean?

Lesson #3

Decisions about Media and Technology

The Modern Day Life of a Teenager
When a single choice is repeated millions of times over by millions of individuals across the nation, it becomes a historical event. These types of historical events directly affect the course of the history of the United States. As the statistics below reveal, the migration of American teens to *Facebook* more than constitutes a social trend.

The life of a modern teen is infinitely more complex than the teen life of previous generations. Teens of today have a variety of socializing options, as they can call, text, send images/video, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, instant message, video chat, etc. Naturally, these myriad options present a difficult choice to modern day teens. To make the choice between studies and socializing, teens use the same process as many influential leaders in American history. By reviewing the mental stages of an everyday decision in the life of a modern day teen, we can better understand the stages used to make influential decisions that shaped our nation's history.

The Lesson
The goal of this lesson is to help students understand that some everyday decisions they make have historical implications. The lesson is designed to give the students a choice about a typical decision they make about studying for a test or going on Facebook. Begin by passing out the sheet on *Elements of a Good Decision*. This sheet is going to be used throughout the curriculum. You can briefly explain each link in the chain or you may allow the students to read the links as they work on the sheet, *Making a Good Decision*. In the *Making a Good Decision* sheet the students should apply the decision links to a typical decision they may make about studying for a math test or going on Facebook.
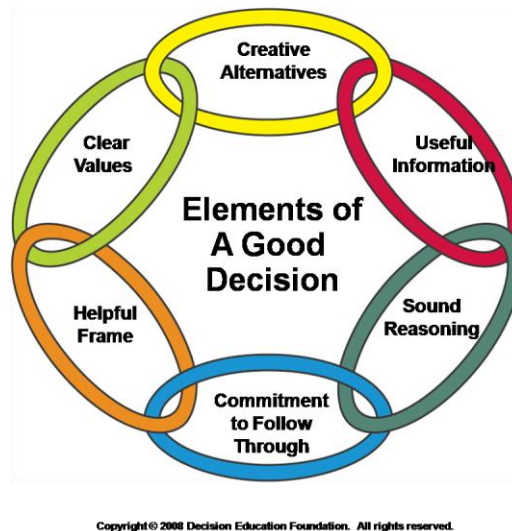
The Decision Diagram above identifies the key characteristics of good decision making. This diagram and the brief definitions of each element provide a way for you to consider how to make a good decision and to analyze how well historic figures made the decision that shaped our country.

Frame is to clarify the situation we are going to solve. By situation, we mean the problem or opportunity that gives rise to the need to make a decision. What is it that will be decided**?** What is not going to be included in this decision? What goals do we wish to achieve? What dire consequences do we wish to avoid? Framing is a crucial step because an answer, no matter how good, is useless if the situation is poorly framed. Much of the study of history is based on analyzing decisions made by people at particular times. Did they have the right information? Did they use the information at hand to frame the situation correctly? A natural tendency is to quickly move from an understanding of a situation to its solution. It is important to acknowledge that a rush to act or even to defer is not the best course. The best course is to think carefully about the problem or opportunity at hand and frame it correctly so the purpose of your interest is clear, the scope of what you want to consider is complete – not too large and not too narrow. And, you have a complete perspective of the situation – that is, you've considered the situation from all possible angles and interpretations.

Information is what we know and want or need to know to address the situation. Information includes factual information and judgments about current and future situations that assist us in anticipating the consequences of our alternative courses of action. For example, if a student wants to get a job after school then information needs to be collected on the wages to be paid, the hours to be worked and the consequences include not only the cash to be received but also the impact of the work on the student's performance in school. The information we collect will influence the alternatives we consider and eventually select. Thus, information must be complete to be useful in decision making. Some of the information we need may be uncertain yet if it is important information to our decision, then it must be estimated with probabilities. For example, if a student is considering college; what is the probability of their being accepted to the schools of their choice? Thinking through the probabilities will help the student from being overly optimistic about admission and also assist the student from being too modest about their chances for admission.

Alternatives are the courses of action available to us. Alternatives are essential for good decision making because if there is only one alternative as a course of action, there is no decision to be made. Alternatives need to be under the decision-makers control, significantly different from each other, potentially attractive, and acted on to produce a solid basis for a good decision

Often students find that alternatives are difficult to generate. Usually, there are many more alternatives than appear at first glance. By taking time and avoiding the sense that you need to rush will enable more ideas to percolate and more alternatives will emerge. Also, by thinking outside of the box is a way to encourage creativity in developing alternatives. Friends, other people you respect, people with more experience are additional sources for the generation of alternatives. The alternatives that are developed should speak to the head and to the heart in that they should be logically complete and they should feel like a complete set.

Values are what we care about and address our wants, needs and dislikes. Our values drive our preference of one consequence of a decision over another. When the alternatives are complete and all the information on them assembled, the consequences of each alternative should be clear. The information on the consequences will highlight the question; what do I really care about in this situation? The clarity of our values will direct us toward the alternative that satisfies those values best. For example, the student that wants an engineering program at university level and also has a preference for an engineering program at a small college will be more satisfied by acceptance at a small school than at a program within a large university even if the large university program is more prestigious.

Sound Reasoning is how we combine our alternatives, information and values to reach a decision. It is the answer to:" I am choosing this alternative because…." The choice of an alternative must be more substantial than it "feels right". It must have a substantial rationale. For example, if a student selects a part-time job to be near his friends then the student is likely to feel good. Yet, there may be other jobs that offer better pay or more personal development and these facts should enter the rationale for the ultimate choice as well. Poor reasoning leads to poor decisions. A common trap is undue optimism or pessimism. If a student with a car assumes no accidents and avoids car insurance to save money, the student is ignoring the risk inherent in driving a car. Ignoring the risks in our decisions is a pitfall that undermines sound reasoning. Tests of sound reasoning include reviewing your reasoning with people you respect and assuring that your reasoning is consistent with your values.

Commitment to Follow Through Too often students (and all of us) make decisions with the best of intentions yet the results we get fall short of our expectations. Once a decision is made, action to realize the benefits of this choice must follow. The student needs to have the ability to act on the commitments implicit in the decision and be able do so in a purposeful manner. If a decision is followed through in a half-hearted manner, it is unlikely to achieve the best results. Making the mental commitment is not sufficient; it is the decision to put forth the necessary effort to follow through that brings the decision to full reality. For example, the swimmer or track athlete who wants to be the best in their conference and has developed the best program for training will only approach the goal if they do all the training specified in the workouts. Fears, such as fear of failure, prevent many good decisions to be realized. These obstacles need to be recognized in the alternatives and need to be addressed in the reasoning to select the proper course of action. The swimmer with all the talent necessary to be the best in the conference will not succeed unless there is a full commitment in the decision to be the best.

Making a Good Decision

To study for a Math test or chat with your Friends on Facebook

If you only have a few hours in the evening to study, how should you spend your time? You have a big Math test midterm the next morning. It is now 10:00pm. To prepare adequately for the Math test, you need to spend about 2 more hours studying. After about midnight you tend not to be able to concentrate very well on your homework. You have your computer on in your room. Many of your Friends are on-line with Facebook.

Frame
- What is it that you must decide to do right now?

Information
- This test is 15% of your total semester grade
- You now have an 84% in the class
- You got an 74% on the last Math test because you did not study very much for that test

Alternatives
- What are the options to consider in either preparing for the Math test or spending time on Facebook?

- Could you compromise by socializing some of the time and working some of the time? If so, how much time should be spent on each?

- Can you study for a certain period of time, then go on Facebook for a little while?

- What are the consequences for not studying at all or just studying a little bit?

- Can you come up with any more alternatives?

Values
- If you had to make a choice, do you values getting good grades over networking with your friends?

- Do you value the immediate gratification of networking with your friends over the future implications of getting bad grades?

Sound Reasoning:
- Now try to answer this statement as related to studying for your Math test or networking with your friends:

    I am choosing this alternative because...

Commitment to Follow-Through
- Are you committed to follow through with the decision you have made?

Lesson #4

The Historical Implications of a Decision

When you think about it, the quality of your life is measured to a great degree by the decisions you make. When a significant number of people desire to do something, the action can become historical. The same pattern holds through in our history when enough people make a decision about how to earn a living, fight a war, start a reform, enact a law, or even engage in a similar leisure activity. Our culture is constantly changing due to individual decisions people make. Our culture also influences our values and our decisions. The study of history is the study of the interplay between individuals and their culture.

The Lesson
Pass out the sheet, *The Historical Implications of a Decision, Analysis from a Variety of Perspectives*, and *Analyzing the Impact of Facebook* to help students consider the historical implications of a modern day trend such as Facebook.

# The Historical Implications of a Decision

Facebook is a good example of how individual decisions can have major implications in our culture. Facebook and other forms of social networking is radically impacting our culture today. How do we analyze if this type of change is good or not? Consider some of the statistics below:

- Teens constitute 20% of the total U.S. population
- The average American teen sends and receives 50 text messages a day
- 25% of all text messages are sent during class in school
- Texting has increased 566% in the last two years. That means teens text more than five times as much as they did two years ago
- Half of all Americans have profiles on social networking sites.
- Currently Facebook and other social networking sites have about 170 million members. If Facebook were a country, it would be the world's third largest by population.
- 55% of 12-17 year olds have profiles on Facebook
- To make money, Facebook and other social networking sites sells personal information to advertisers and marketing agencies

Analysis from a Variety of Perspectives

One way to analyze an issue like Facebook is to consider a variety of perspectives. On the back side, write a one sentence statement analyzing how Facebook can be analyzed from each category below. Refer to the Historical Categories sheet to write your analysis.

Cultural

Economic

Political

Facebook

Social

Religious
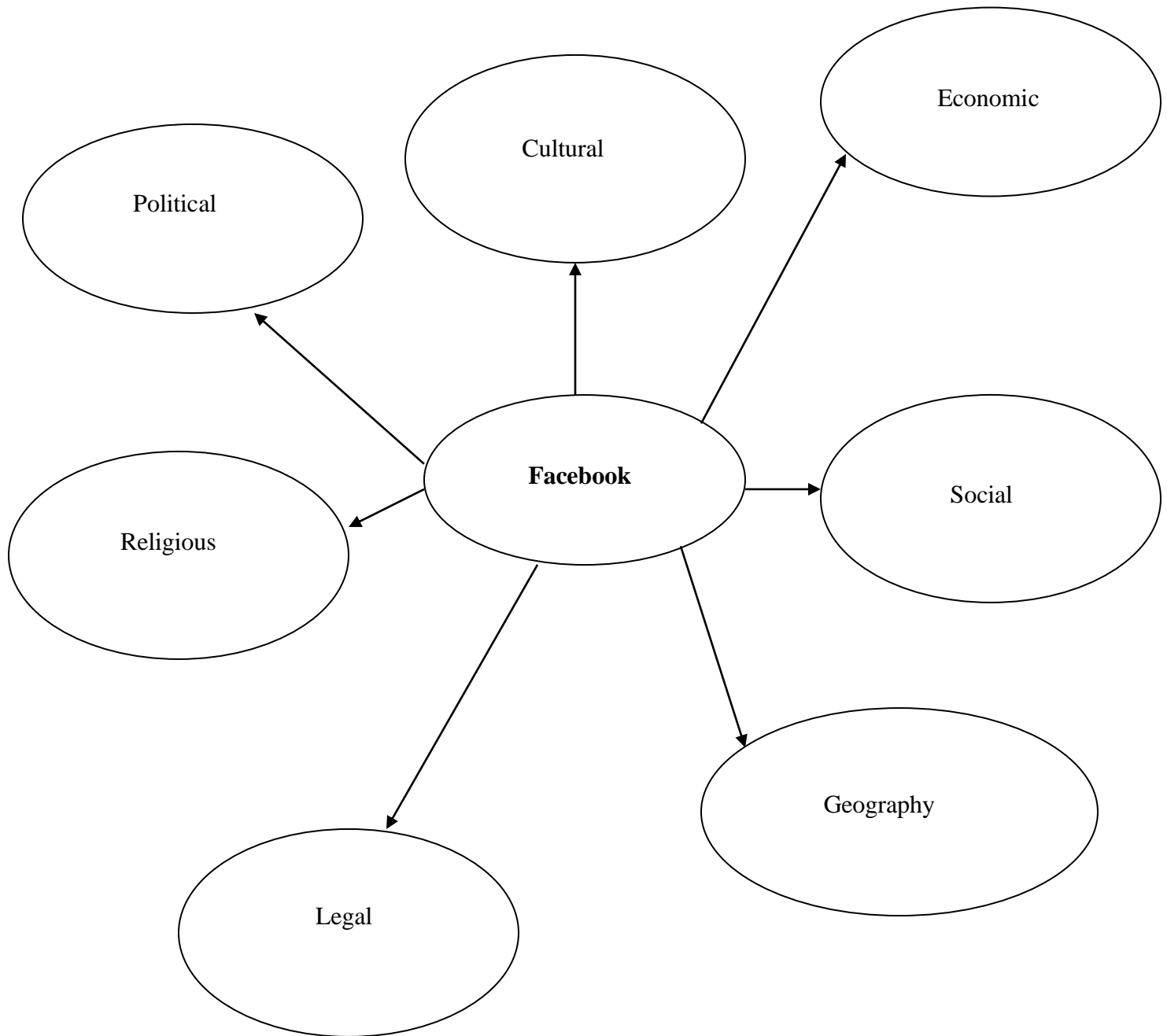
Geography

Legal

Analyzing the Impact of Facebook

Analysis from a Specific Perspective

Political Perspective

Cultural Perspective

Economic Perspective

Religious Perspective

Social Perspective

Legal Perspective

Geographic Perspective

Teacher Note

The Teacher Note sections in the curriculum are designed to help teachers who want to explore decision making concepts on a deeper level with students. The Teacher Note sections can be found throughout the curriculum as a supplement to the U.S. History curriculum.

Initial Introduction to Decision Making
In this **Introductory Unit** it is useful to convey the key principles of decision making to the students in a manner that does not overwhelm them with concepts. We propose that you distribute Decision Quality Chain and the basic definitions of a good decision. This sheet should be placed in the students file or notebook to be referenced as selected lessons call for its use.

In this session we suggest that you quickly review the objectives of the course, the basic organizational structure of **Categorizing History** and then turn to either one of the categories of history or a personal (student) situation to illustrate the application of decision making principles.

If you select Categorizing History, one example is the Political category and you can consider the current national health care insurance issue or any current issue of the day. By using the links of the chain (see the last page of this note), you can tease apart how key decision makers understand the situation (**frame**) what the decision makers know (**information**), what **values** drive their perspective and positions, what **alternatives** they will consider, how they will make their final decisions (**correct reasoning)** and their commitment to act (**commitment to action**) on their alternatives.

If you select a student situation such as, what does a student plan to do upon graduation from high school? Then, the chain of decision making principles can be applied to this situation in a similar manner.

It is most effective to start with the frame of the situation – that is, what is going on, how do I think about it, how does it relate to me, to my family, friends, community, country? Then move to what we know about the situation, what we need to know before we can determine our alternative courses of action. And, continue on through the chain.

It is useful, in this exercise, to make clear that all decisions involve the **head** and the **heart**. The decision making principles tend to indicate a more rational approach to making our choices. Yet, everyone is strongly influenced by emotions and other strong sensations which, for simplifying reasons, are identified as arising from the heart. Students should be aware that leading exclusively from the head or the heart can lead to poor choices. There needs to be a balance of head and heart; a good decision will make sense and feel right.

See the next page for illustration of the Decision Making Chain. The chain is a quick snapshot and review for you as are the brief definitions of each segment in the chain. For more complete definitions please refer to your training materials from the DEF program and refer also to the booklet "The Fundamental of Making Good Decisions"

Supplemental Lesson on Decision Making

1. Select one or more units from "Categorizing History" and divide the class into teams of 5 to 7 students. Assign each team a category, such as Political or Religious, and ask the team to devote 30 minutes to developing their definition and explanations of the Frame of the issue, the Information, the Values, the Alternatives, the Reasoning Process and the Commitment to Action. Attached in *Illustrative Decision Examples* are examples of decision situations for each Category of History for student use; or, your own examples can be used here as well.

2. For a summary of this teaching module, you can display the decision chain and introduce a discussion about:

   (1)   What links in the chain were most difficult for the students and/or the historical characters they covered in the class? Difficult in the sense it was hard to get that link in the chain right and to high quality.

   (2)   What links in the chain were most helpful for them (or, for the historical characters) to get the decision right and ready for action?

In summary, it is useful to review that some decisions need to be made very quickly and while the individual will go through the same set of considerations (frame, information, alternatives, etc.), the process will occur very fast, in the blink of the eye. The more one uses the decision making principles advanced here, the fast decisions will be better – of higher quality. For the more important decisions where time is not a significant constraint, a more deliberate process is preferred where each element in the decision chain can be carefully brought to full quality.

Illustrative Decision Examples

Political Decisions

The foundations of political institutions in America began to take shape in the early 1600s first in Virginia and later in Massachusetts. In Virginia, the King of England took an active role in the governance of the colony and established a charter which prescribed, by 1619, an assembly composed of two representatives from each local town. From 1624 to the American Revolution, the Virginia government was made up of a representative assembly called the House of Burgesses which acted as a lower house and of a governor and six councilors, appointed by the king, who acted as the executive, the high court of justice and the upper house of the legislature. The assembly made laws but their laws were subject to the approval of the king. The power in this system was initially local but dependent on the policies of the King of England.

When the Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620, they found themselves without any government and were forced to establish one. The Pilgrims were less dependent on the policies of the King of England so they, in the simplest manner, established a governor. They promised to obey "such just and equal laws" as were necessary for the general good of the colony. These laws were made, initially, in town meetings by those members of the community who were accepted as citizens. As the colony expanded, a simple government of town meetings became impossible and an assembly of representatives from various towns met to make laws for the colony.

Areas of inquiry for the students:

Why is the situation different in Virginia than in the Plymouth Colony?

What is the *Frame* of the political situation in each colony?
➢ Virginia is a closed frame with the King and the colony charter defining the governance structure.
➢ Plymouth Colony is a more open frame as the colonists can decide their governance structure.

If the frames are different, is it because the *values* of the citizens are different? What are these values?
➢ One value in Plymouth was relief from religious persecution
➢ One value in Virginia was economic opportunity
➢ These value differences did not make a major difference in governance
➢ The common value between these very different colonies is their desire for representation of all colonists in political issues and decisions.

From the structure of the early government of the Plymouth Colony, what other *alternatives* (from the open town meeting structure) could they have selected for governance?
➢ They could have used the English model as was done in Virginia
➢ They could have selected an authoritarian Theocracy (Puritan Beliefs)

What is the main difference in *logical correct reasoning* in the decisions made in Virgina and Plymouth Colonies?

> ➢ In Virginia, the process involved a few colonists negotiating with the King and his ministers on the charter for the colony and that charter defined all power
> ➢ In Plymouth, the process was left to the local colonists to decide

Economic Decisions

In 1840, the population of the country was 17,000,000 and most of the nation's workers were involved in agriculture or in services to support agricultural products. By 1900, that had all changed as the population had grown to 76,000,000. What had happened and what activities employed all those new workers?

This was the period of the Industrial Revolution as resources shifted from the farm to the small shop and the large factory. This shift brought vast new employment choices to Americans and offered an alternative from living in small towns to living in large, growing cities.

If you were 18 years old in 1880 and looking for the right type of job, what would you have considered?

Would your *frame* be to do what your parents have done, live near your parents or would you frame your future in terms of the trends and risks emerging in the industrial changes occurring in America.

The new *alternatives* in the job market are:

> ➢ factory work
> ➢ farming - large scale farms
> ➢ railroad
> ➢ shipping, ocean or river
> ➢ retail shops
> ➢ petroleum exploration & production
> ➢ meat packing

What dominant *value* emerged during this period and is still with us today and what value(s) would you use to select your job? Would you use the dominant value that emerged in this period (e.g., make lots of money)

What *information* would you seek and where would you find it in 1880 to understand the best job for you?

How would you apply *logic and correct reasoning* in this choice? Who would you involve in the decision if anyone?

Social Decisions

In all periods of American history, from the earliest of colonial times to present day, there have been social dimensions to our society that shape our choices and our lives. In 1600, the social choices were few as survival, particularly in the Northern colonies, was a paramount concern. Housing was a very primitive wood or brick house, clothing was often made from animal hides with woolen goods scarce and expensive. Life was centered around the family and once a week around the church. Community gatherings would occur occasionally around religious days, harvest days, barn raisings and warm weather community gatherings. The life styles differed among the colonies based on climate and on the economic advancement of the colony. Virginia with its strong exports of tobacco and cotton to England had more riches hence more choices in clothing, housing, art and culture than other colonies.

As time moved into the 1800s, social conditions changed with many more activities and choices for Americans. Cities began to grow and in them developed libraries, theatres, colleges, concert halls and educational options became available in even the smallest of communities. Yet, choices on how to live were few compared to today.

As more disposable income became available between 1800 and 1850, what did people do with it?

- ➢ As a citizen of the country in 1835, what is your *frame* on the social activities that interest you or is your frame what activities will most benefit my community?
- ➢ Some of the activities emerging during this era included:
    - o Community organizations such as local clubs
    - o Religious organizations
    - o Cultural organizations such as museums, theatre, concert halls
    - o Business or labor organizations
    - o Political organizations

- ➢ Or, would you prefer - No Activities – keep your time and money at home
- ➢ What *information* do you need to determine if one or more of these activities interest you or will benefit your community?
- ➢ What do you want to see happening in your community; what *values* best represent what you want for yourself and for your community?
- ➢ What *alternatives* among the wide range of possible activities are the most compelling for you?
- ➢ And, how will you decide on your preferred alternative; what *logic and reasoning process* will you use to make the decision?

Religious Decisions

Samuel Clements, aka Mark Twain, said that America was a religious nation, "we've got lots of them". Religious decisions brought many different sects to America to escape religious persecution in Europe. Persecution brought the Catholics to the mid- Atlantic colonies, the Pilgrims to New England, the Quakers followed by the Mennonites to Pennsylvania and the list goes on. In the early 1800s orthodox religion found itself confronted by eighteenth century rationalism. The rationalist movement, a product of the Enlightenment period, was dominated by advancements in science, philosophy and mathematics. Many of the leading intellectuals of the period were convinced that mankind was only on the threshold of its possibilities. They viewed man as a rational being and that, given an encouraging environment, there was no limit to his progress. This optimistic philosophy, which had undermined the sacredness of

divine right monarchy and prepared the way for democracy, was even more critical of orthodox religion. To eighteenth century philosophers organized religion seemed overly focused on the sins of mankind and insufficiently focused on the potential for good in mankind. They believed that an all-wise god might be at the center of the universe but individuals, they believed, must determine their own basis for rational morality.

During this period, pioneers poured through the mountain passes into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys and they represented all dominations.

If you were a member of a church in an established community, such as Albany, New York on the edge of the frontier, how would your church support the extension of its religion in the new territories?

> What is your *frame* ? Is it to continue and expand the religious beliefs of your faith such as Methodist, Baptist or Presbyterians or is it to use your faith to provide the basis for laws and rules in the new territories? Or is it both of these considerations that are important to you? Or, is your frame to keep your faith strong in Albany and leave the spiritual development of the new territories to the pioneers?
> *Information* depends heavily on your frame. If you believe your faith has a basic responsibility to support religion in the new territories, then information is needed on where the settlers are going and when there are sufficient numbers to support a church or some form of religious gatherings. List the information you would collect and how you would use this information.
> *Alternatives* depend on the frame as well. If your church wants to spread its religion; how will this be done? List the alternative ways the church can support the settlers such as how the teachings will be provided, how materials such as bibles will be provided and how new developments in your church will be disseminated to the new territories.
> What are the *values* of your faith and demonstrate how you can use these values to select the right alternative for your church to support (or not) the expansion of your faith to the new territories. Will the values of your church influence the perspective of the settlers on the issue of slavery in the new territories?
> What process of *logic and correct reasoning* will you use to select the right course of action for your church. Will this be decided by your minister or will the larger congregation be involved or will a committee of the congregation be the deciding body?
> How will you know if your course of *action* is fully committed and is being implemented in the new territories?

Do the policies and strategies of your faith have any influence on the laws of the land at this time? For example, what is your church's position on slavery in the new territories or
does it have a position?

Cultural/Intellectual Decisions

The Enlightenment Period gave rise to rational thinking and advanced the concept of the rights of man. These concepts became incorporated into our Constitution which shaped much of the cultural and intellectual background of the 1800s and beyond. These European ideas influenced the thinking in America in many fields including architecture, recreation, medicine, literature, religion, education and newspapers.

In South Carolina, there developed a culture, a society of large plantations producing cotton and tobacco for export to England. The "planter" society became quite wealthy and reflected the clothing, food, wine, architecture, recreation, music and amusements of their English customers.

Can you recreate the information, values, alternatives and reasoning process a planter in South Carolina went through to establish the architectural style of his home?

> ➢ What *information* did they observe or collect regarding homes?
> ➢ What *values* were they trying to realize as they designed and built their   plantations?
> ➢ What *alternative* housing designs were available to them?
> ➢ What type of *reasoning* process did they go through as they selected their plantation style home?

Foreign Policy Decisions

The fourth president of the United States, James Madison, faced a newly elected Congress of young "Warhawks" in 1810. The war spirit of the Congress came from representatives of the new states, such as Ohio, who had pushed into Indian territory and experienced periodic conflict with the natives. These states experienced an intense revival of Indian wars between 1805 and 1809. Their representatives believed that the English were responsible for the Indian uprisings as a way to weaken and control the size of the new nation. At the same time there was war between England and France and these countries attempted to blockade commercial goods shipped from America to the other country. The blockades hurt the U.S. export trade and the actions of both countries on the high seas resulted in confiscation of U.S. ships, illegal impressments of U.S. sailors as well as the blockade of our shores. The hostility in Congress was directed more toward the British than the French due to the lasting frontier hatred of the British for inciting the Indian uprisings and the recognition of Britain's superior command of the high seas.

President Madison declared war on England in 1812 and his war message to Congress emphasized the violation of maritime rights and mentioned England's role in the Indian uprisings as well. Three days later war was voted by both houses of Congress.

If you were President Madison, what would you have done to address these issues? Was war necessary? Was diplomacy or enhanced communication possible? Were reparations from confiscated ships possible? How did Madison *frame* the issue and should the frame have included France?

What *information* should the president have collected prior to his act of war?

Could the president influence and alter the revenge *value* held by many members of Congress from the Western states? The settlers blamed the British for the Indian uprisings and sought revenge to punish the British for their actions. What other values would have been appropriate in this situation?

What other *alternatives* were available to the president other than a course of war?

Legal Decisions

Recently there has been public pressure on federal agencies including the Congress, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Transportation to increase the miles per gallon performance standards of passenger automobiles. The automobile industry is resisting this pressure and its lobbyists are working hard on federal lawmakers and agency regulators to postpone and/or weaken the performance standards.

What is the *frame* of this issue? Is this an opportunity to limit car pollutants? Or, is this an attempt to use scarce petroleum resources more wisely? Or, is this a move to provide more government control over the automobile industry? Or, is it something else like attempting to determine that this role belongs to the Federal government and not to the state governments?

Do we have all the *information* we need to determine the possible and best level of miles per gallon standards for passenger automobiles? What information do we need?

In addition to (1) no new standards and (2) a standard of 30 miles per gallon, are there any other *alternatives*?

If you change the frame of the issue, do you change your alternatives?

What *values* are at stake here? Do we want to limit the number of people who can buy cars and put fewer cars on the road? Do we want a cleaner environment and do miles per gallon standards impact pollutant levels? Do we want to be more efficient in the use of petroleum? Do we want cars with less weight or more efficient fuel burning engines or both? Is there some other value at stake here?

What is the most *logical and best reasoning process* to address this issue. Should the above decision elements be done by a federal agency, by Congressional staff, by state government agencies, by some mix of federal and state organizations or should this issue be left to the Research and Development Departments of the automobile industry?

Geographical Decisions

Is Geography a decision or can geography be a decision? The answer is yes and yes and not always. The geography of a country or region in a country is given; it is what it is and there are limits to what can be changed. It will be difficult to transform the Sahara Desert into the wheat fields of Nebraska or into the pine forests of Maine. And, it is impossible to develop the oil fields of Switzerland as there are none. The physical environment is a constraint for most countries and in the United States it is less of a limit than almost any other country on earth. Hence, there are many geographical features in the U.S. that are open to decision making and to creating more opportunities for our citizens.

The floods in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina provide several examples of decision making. The floods decimated many neighborhoods in the city, wrecking the city's economy and sending thousands of citizens out of the city to find shelter and livelihood. If we limit our *frame* to a marine engineering perspective, can civil engineers design and build sufficiently strong and safe water work systems to enable commercial and residential buildings in a former swamp and river flood zone?

With that frame, an engineer would love that challenge. Looking at historic examples of land recovered from water, for example the Dutch reclaimed hundreds of thousands of acres from the sea between 1590 and 1640 with dikes to control water inflow and windmills to pump the water out, the American engineer would say "if the Dutch can recover that much land against the sea and especially from the storms of the North Sea, we can surely tame a river".

Is the marine engineering frame the correct one for the area at the mouth of the Mississippi river? What is the best frame to determine the right type of commercial activity, commercial buildings, city streets, piers and residential areas that can be safely and productively located there? Let's say, you are the governor of Louisiana in the 1850s and want to expand the city of New Orleans. What is your frame? Should you keep your frame narrow so it's manageable?

To validate any frame that proposes an expanded city and port there, the *information* requirements will be substantial. In addition to (1) a multiple year log of all water levels in the river, (2) all floods over time, all storms off the Caribbean during the same time periods as the river data, as governor, what other information would you wish to acquire before looking at your building alternatives?

If your frame includes that life and livelihood can be safe and productive there, what are the *alternatives* to create an environment of water works, civic and commercial buildings and residential areas?

What *values* would you apply to determine that the city was safe for living and for commerce and that your chosen alternative is likely to be successful?

What would be involved in your process of making the decision to build in New Orleans. Is your *correct reasoning process* going to include citizens, the federal government's civil engineering experts, local business people, fisherman, river boat operators. None of these, some of these, or others?

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