

Unit 9

The Modern Era 1970-Present

Modern trends that shape our cultural values

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Unit 9 Overview

This unit is designed to help students consider how some modern day trends have influenced our culture today. The unit helps students explore how they fit into our modern day culture and how the decisions they make have an influence on our culture.

Critical Thinking

The students are asked to consider how some modern day trends and events have influenced our culture today. One of the components of analysis is based on making **connections** from personal and cultural values to events and trends to individual decisions. The students are also asked to consider how their own individual **values** correlates with our cultural values.

Decision Making

The students are asked to consider where Nixon went wrong in the decisions he made during the Watergate crisis. Some of the **decision links** are used to help students break down at what point Nixon no longer became rational in his thinking. In the supplemental lesson the students are asked to make use the decision links to make a decision that has some kind of impact on our culture today.

Lesson #1: Overview of the 1970s

The teacher uses the power-point to go over the general aspects of the 1970s

Lesson #2: Where did Nixon go wrong?

Students consider evidence that unfolded in the Watergate period to determine where Nixon went wrong in the decisions he made

Lesson #3: Reagan and the 1980s

The teacher uses the power-point to pose the question of Reagan being a good president or not

Lesson #4: Modern day trends and cultural values

The students use the Pew survey to answer questions about cultural trends prevalent in recent years

Lesson #5: The Decisions We Make

The students look at recent trends and events to determine what has the biggest impact on them

Supplemental Lesson: How to make a good decision

The teacher can use the in-depth decision making links to serve as a tool on how to make good decisions

Lesson #1

Accepting Limits in the 1970s

The 1970s was a decade when our country was forced to accept major limits in terms of foreign influence, economic growth, and political leadership. The power-point on the 1970s highlights some of the major political, economic, and foreign policy trends of the decade with particular emphasis on how the idealism of the 1960s blended into a more cynical perspective in the 1970s.

Use the power-point entitled *The 1970s* to go over the general trends of the decadeⁱ

Lesson #2

Considering Alternatives: Nixon and the Watergate Scandal

The Watergate Scandal proved to be a major event in modern history that helped create a more cynical perception about trusting political leaders. Part of the public perception about political leadership was influenced by the events that unfolded in the Watergate Scandal. Why did Nixon choose the alternatives he did during the Watergate Scandal? This lesson asks students to consider how the alternatives Nixon chose to consider created the worst possible scenario for his presidency.

1. You can begin by giving the students the sheet, *The Watergate Scandal Brief Timeline of Events*. You can also supplement the timeline with an extremely insightful documentary on the Watergate Scandal from the PBS American Experience film entitled, *Nixon*.
2. The pass out the questions entitled, *Considering Alternatives: Nixon and the Watergate Scandal*.

The Watergate Scandal Brief Timeline of Events



Richard M. Nixon's famous farewell upon leaving the White House after his resignation, August 1974.

- November 1968: Richard Milhous Nixon, the 55-year-old former vice president who lost the presidency for the Republicans in 1960, reclaims it by defeating Hubert Humphrey in one of the closest elections in U.S. history.
- June 13, 1971: The New York Times begins publishing the Pentagon Papers -- the Defense Department's secret history of the Vietnam War. The Washington Post will begin publishing the papers later in the week.
- September 9, 1971: The White House "plumbers" unit - named for their orders to plug leaks in the administration - burglarizes a psychiatrist's office to find files on Daniel Ellsberg, the former defense analyst who leaked the Pentagon Papers.
- June 17, 1972: Five men are arrested trying to bug the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate hotel and office complex.
- June 19, 1972: A GOP security aide is among the Watergate burglars, The Washington Post reports. Former attorney general John Mitchell, head of the Nixon reelection campaign, denies any link to the operation.
- August 1, 1972: A \$25,000 cashier's check, apparently earmarked for the Nixon campaign, wound up in the bank account of a Watergate burglar, The Washington Post reports.
- September 29, 1972: John Mitchell, while serving as attorney general, controlled a secret Republican fund used to finance widespread intelligence-gathering operations against the Democrats, The Post reports.
- October 10, 1972: FBI agents establish that the Watergate break-in stems from a massive campaign of political spying and sabotage conducted on behalf of the Nixon reelection effort, The Post reports.
- November 11, 1972: Nixon is reelected in one of the largest landslides in American political history, taking more than 60 percent of the vote and crushing the Democratic nominee, Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota.
- January 30, 1973: Former Nixon aides G. Gordon Liddy and James W. McCord Jr. are convicted of conspiracy, burglary and wiretapping in the Watergate incident. Five other men plead guilty, but mysteries remain.

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- April 30, 1973: Nixon's top White House staffers resign over the scandal.
- May 18, 1973: The Senate Watergate committee begins its nationally televised hearings. Attorney General-designate Elliot Richardson taps former solicitor general Archibald Cox as the Justice Department's special prosecutor for Watergate.
- June 13, 1973: Watergate prosecutors find a memo addressed to John Ehrlichman describing in detail the plans to burglarize the office of Pentagon Papers defendant Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, The Post reports.
- July 13, 1973: Alexander Butterfield, former presidential appointments secretary, reveals in congressional testimony that since 1971 Nixon had recorded all conversations and telephone calls in his offices.
- July 18, 1973: Nixon reportedly orders the White House taping system disconnected.
- July 23, 1973: Nixon refuses to turn over the presidential tape recordings to the Senate Watergate committee or the special prosecutor.
- October 20, 1973: Saturday Night Massacre: Nixon fires Archibald Cox and abolishes the office of the special prosecutor. Attorney General Richardson and Deputy Attorney General William D. Ruckelshaus resign. Pressure for impeachment mounts in Congress.
- November 17, 1973: Nixon declares, "I'm not a crook," maintaining his innocence in the Watergate case.
- December 7, 1973: The White House can't explain an 18 1/2 -minute gap in one of the subpoenaed tapes.
- April 30, 1974: The White House releases more than 1,200 pages of edited transcripts of the Nixon tapes to the House Judiciary Committee, but the committee insists that the tapes themselves must be turned over.
- July 24, 1974: The Supreme Court rules unanimously that Nixon must turn over the tape recordings of 64 White House conversations, rejecting the president's claims of executive privilege.
- July 27, 1974: House Judiciary Committee passes the first of three articles of impeachment, charging obstruction of justice.
- August 8, 1974: Richard Nixon becomes the first U.S. president to resign. Vice President Gerald R. Ford assumes the country's highest office. He will later pardon Nixon of all charges related to the Watergate case.ⁱⁱ

Considering Alternatives

Nixon and the Watergate Scandal

Based on information you have been presented with in the Watergate Scandal, analyze the following questions related to the alternatives Nixon faced during the scandal.

1. Once the break-in took place of the Democratic headquarters, what alternatives did Nixon face about how to deal with the media and public being aware of the incident? List 3 possible alternatives he faced.
2. Did Nixon face any good alternatives once the public became aware of the break-in?
3. Did Nixon seek good counsel about how to proceed once the public became aware of the break-in?
4. When Nixon decided to cover up the break-in, was he primarily concerned about protecting his own interests or was he, as he stated, more concerned about the general welfare of the American citizens?
5. Can you pinpoint one particular point where Nixon made his most serious mistake in how he chose to deal with the Watergate Scandal?
6. Was the break-in of the Democratic headquarters or the cover-up of the break-in the most damaging impact on Nixon during his presidency?

Lesson #3

Was Ronald Reagan a Great President?

Ronald Reagan's presidency created a clear dividing line between liberal and conservative interpretations about the role of government in our contemporary culture. This power-point is designed to reinforce how Ronald Reagan represented the banner of conservatism in the late 20th century.

1. You should begin this lesson by using the power-point *Ronald Reagan's Presidency*. The power-point includes clips of the 1981 Inaugural Address by Ronald Reagan. This speech is incredibly insightful in regards to laying a framework for a conservative perspective on the role of government. The remaining parts of the power-point includes the controversial components of Reaganomics in the 1980s
2. After the power-point you can use the student handout *The Controversy of the Reagan Presidency* to ask students to consider some of the ramifications of the Reagan presidency

The Controversy of the Reagan Presidency

The Ronald Reagan presidency was controversial because Reagan raised many issues about the role of government in our modern society. Many people who lived through the Reagan presidency held strong views about his presidency. Try to answer the questions below that relate to Reagan's presidency and his legacy afterward. There are not necessarily right or wrong answers to the questions below. Your response to each question depends on your own values. The more you are aware of your own values, the more clearly you can analyze the questions below. Try to answer each question in a 2-3 sentence response.

1. Should the federal government primarily emphasize programs that benefit the top half of the economic ladder or the bottom half?
2. Does trickle-down economics work primarily for wealthy individuals and large corporations or does everyone benefit?
3. Should the U.S. deal with other countries from a position of absolute military strength or should we emphasize more diplomatic measures with a smaller military?
4. Should the government primarily spend money on the military and aiding large corporations or social programs such as education and health care?
5. Are economic growth and tax cuts worth government deficits?
6. What role does the federal government play in helping create the most opportunity for the most people?
7. Should the federal government play a bigger or smaller role in the economy such as tax cuts, bailouts, protection of certain corporations, etc.?

Lesson #4

Our Cultural Values 1990-2010

The Pew Report survey is a respected organization that studies prevailing trends in American culture. This lesson asks students to answer questions gathered by the Pew study. After the students answer the questions they can then be given the statistics on how their responses correlate with the national survey taken by other Americans. The second part of the survey asks the students to compare questions answered by other Americans their own age. The idea of the survey is to identify cultural values. The questions in the survey highlight some of the major issues we face today in our modern culture.

1. Pass out the sheet entitled *Survey of Cultural Values*
2. Once the survey is complete you can pass out the statistics key that shows how other Americans responded to each question.
3. Finally, let students answer the questions on *Modern Day Trends and Values* to help students consider recent trends and values in American culture and how their own individual values correlate with the general trends.

Survey of Cultural Values

Question	Yes	No
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The following questions were asked to Americans all over the country. Please answer each question below with then compare your answers to other

r Americans.

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1. Should women return to their traditional roles of staying at home?		
2. Should the government take responsibility to take care of people who cannot take care of themselves even if it means adding to the deficit?		
3. Do you agree with the statement, "Today it's really true that the rich just get richer while the poor get poorer"?		
4. Do you affiliate with any kind of religious group?		
5. Do you agree with the statement that "most elected officials care what people like me think"?		
6. Do you think the government should provide health insurance for all citizens?		
7. Do you think we should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home?		
8. Do you agree that "it is my belief that we should get even with any country that tries to take advantage of the United States"?		
9. Would you agree with the statement that "I am very patriotic"?		
10. Do you agree that it is justified to use torture as a way of gaining important information from suspected terrorists?		
11. Do you think the government is doing very well, or fairly well, in reducing the threat of terrorism?		

Question	Yes	No
12. Do you agree with the statement that, "I have no doubt that God exists."?		
13. Do you agree that school boards should have the right to fire teachers who are known to be homosexual?		
14. Do you agree that homosexuality should be accepted by society?		
15. Do you support stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment?		
16. Do you agree that society should do what is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity?		
17. Do you think that now more than 20 years ago you have more opportunity for educational opportunities?		
18. Do you think you will get a body piercing, color your hair in a nontraditional way, or a body piercing?		
19. Do you keep up with government and public affairs events in the news most of the time?		
20. Do you identify more with the Democratic Party?		
21. Do you identify more with the Republican Party?		
22. Overall, would you say you are very happy with how things are going with your life?		
23. Are you satisfied with the way things are going in the country today?		
24. Do you think in the near future you will have a better chance than previous generations of enjoying financial security?		
25. Do you think it is OK for people to smoke		

marijuana regularly?		
Question	Yes	No
26. Do you use the internet consistently?		
27. Do you use social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, or Formspring?		
28. Do you agree that it is a good thing that the internet makes it possible to share pictures and other personal things about themselves?		
29. Did you send or receive a text message in the past day?		
30. Do you think people around your age post too much personal information on the internet?		
31. Do you think the use of technology makes people more lazy and isolated?		
32. Do you think the use of new technologies makes it easier to make new friends?		
33. Do you play games that can be hooked up to a television such as Playstation, Xbox, or Gamecube?		

Pew Survey Results

Compare your answers with how other Americans responded

Question	Yes	No
1. Should women return to their traditional roles of staying at home?	19%	
2. Should the government take responsibility to take care of people who cannot take care of themselves even if it means adding to the deficit?	54%	
3. Do you agree with the statement, "Today it's really true that the rich just get richer while the poor get poorer"?	73%	
4. Do you affiliate with any kind of religious group?	88%	
5. Do you agree with the statement that "most elected officials care what people like me think" ?	34%	
6. Do you think the government should provide health insurance for all citizens?	66%	
7. Do you think we should pay less attention to problems overseas and concentrate on problems here at home?	77%	
8. Do you agree that "it is my belief that we should get even with any country that tries to take advantage of the United States"?	40%	
9. Would you agree with the statement that "I am very patriotic"?	49%	
10. Do you agree that it is justified to use torture as a way of gaining important information from suspected terrorists?	43%	
11. Do you think the government is doing very well, or fairly well, in reducing the threat of terrorism?	54%	

Question	Yes	No
12. Do you agree with the statement that, "I have no doubt that God exists."?	80%	
13. Do you agree that school boards should have the right to fire teachers who are known to be homosexual?	28%	
14. Do you agree that homosexuality should be accepted by society?	50%	
15. Do you support stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment?	83%	
16. Do you agree that society should do what is necessary to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity?	90%	
17. Do you think that now more than 20 years ago you have more opportunity for educational opportunities?	84%	
18. Do you think you will get a body piercing, color your hair in a nontraditional way, or a body piercing?	50%	
19. Do you keep up with government and public affairs events in the news most of the time?	33%	
20. Do you identify more with the Democratic Party?	48%	
21. Do you identify more with the Republican Party?	35%	
22. Overall, would you say you are very happy with how things are going with your life?	30%	
23. Are you satisfied with the way things are going in the country today?	43%	
24. Do you think in the near future you will have a better chance than previous generations of enjoying financial security?	79%	
25. Do you think it is OK for people to smoke marijuana regularly?	41%	

Question	Yes	No
26. Do you use the internet consistently?	93%	
27. Do you use social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, or Formspring?	70%	
28. Do you agree that it is a good thing that the internet makes it possible to share pictures and other personal things about themselves?	62%	
29. Did you send or receive a text message in the past day?	51%	
30. Do you think people around your age post too much personal information on the internet?	72%	
31. Do you think the use of technology makes people more lazy and isolated?	70%	
32. Do you think the use of new technologies makes it easier to make new friends?	69%	
33. Do you play games that can be hooked up to a television such as Playstation, Xbox, or Gamecube?	49%	

Modern Day Trends and Values

1. Based on the survey, what are 5 kinds of trends that are most prevalent in our modern day culture?
2. What 5 cultural values are revealed the most in the survey results? Consider some of the following cultural values that has been consistent throughout our history:
 - Achievement and Success
 - Individualism
 - Efficiency and Practicality
 - Freedom
 - Equality
 - Racism and Group Superiority
 - Material Comfort/ Leisure
 - Education
 - Cynicism towards government
 - Science and Technology
 - Physical Fitness
 - Self- Fulfillment
 - Environment
3. Please list 5 individual values you believe in the most. In what areas are your own individual values consistent with the trends revealed in the survey? In what ways are your values most inconsistent with the survey results?

Lesson #5

You and Your Culture

The decisions we make connect to the cultural values we are taught and the trends evident in our culture. As individual citizens we also impact our culture by making decisions that connect with the decisions made by other individuals. One increasingly dominant trend among young people today is that they use media and technology devices more than any previous generation. This lesson asks the students to use the decision links to consider if the constant use of media and technology is a good decision for them to make.

1. Pass out the sheet entitled, *Events in Our Culture*, *Recent Trends in American Culture*, and *The Decisions We Make*. Ask the students to analyze which events and trends has the most impact on their own life. The students are also asked to consider how the decisions they make correlates with our modern day culture.

Events in our Culture

The following is a list of some events that have taken place in our culture in recent years. Which events seem to have the biggest impact on you? Why?

1. Tattoos
2. 2009 Poker Face, Lady Gaga
3. Nelson Mandela released from prison†
4. Baggy Clothes
5. Nintendo Wii
6. Freaking
7. Bill Clinton (1993-2000)
8. Techno
9. Rwanda Genocide
10. Piercings
11. FDA approves AIDS treatment
12. Princess Diana dies in a car accident
13. "Sagging"
14. Yahoo! /Google
15. Clean Air Act passed
16. Hubble Space Telescopes
17. North America Free Trade Agreement: eliminated tariffs between Mexico, U.S., and Canada
18. Game Boy
19. George H.W. Bush (1989-2008)
20. 9/11
21. 40% of people attend regular religious services
22. Genetically engineered crops
23. Facebook/ Twitter/ MySpace
24. Instant Messaging/ Texting
25. Hip Hop
26. Barack Obama Elected (2008)
27. Aviators
28. Global Warming
29. Hybrid Cars: Prius & Electric Cars: Smart Car
30. Mobile Phone usage rises
31. Digital Cameras
32. Hurricane Katrina
33. Apple Computer Inc.
34. Anthrax Scare
35. British Petroleum Oil Spill

Recent Trends in American Culture

Economic

- Jobs continue to be outsourced to developing regions of the world
- The economy has experienced swings up and down
- Globalization continues to connect regions of the world together economically
- The gap continues to widen between the richest and poorest people in America. 12% of all Americans are still considered impoverished
- The richest 20% receive 50% of the nation's income
- Nearly half of all workers in the work place are women

Science

- The debate continues about stem cell research and cloning in animals and humans
- One out of every two marriages end in divorce

Social

- Americans were living longer. 1 American in 8 was over 65. More Americans than ever rely on social security benefits paid for by current workers
- Suburbs grew faster in the West and Southwest

Immigration

- The Southwest experienced the biggest rise in immigration
- Latinos made up nearly 1/3 of the population in California, Arizona, and Texas, and nearly 40% in New Mexico
- 11.5% of foreign-born people accounted for the US population
- In 2003, the average Asian household was 25% better off than that of the average white household
- In 2002, 52% of blacks and only 21% of whites lived in central cities
- By 2002 33% of black families were considered middle class

Education

- 1 in 4 25-34 year old age group was a 4 year college graduate

Environment

- Environmental concerns continue to be a concern
- Alternative energy resources continues to become more popular such as solar power, hybrid cars, an affordable hydrogen fuel cell

Technology

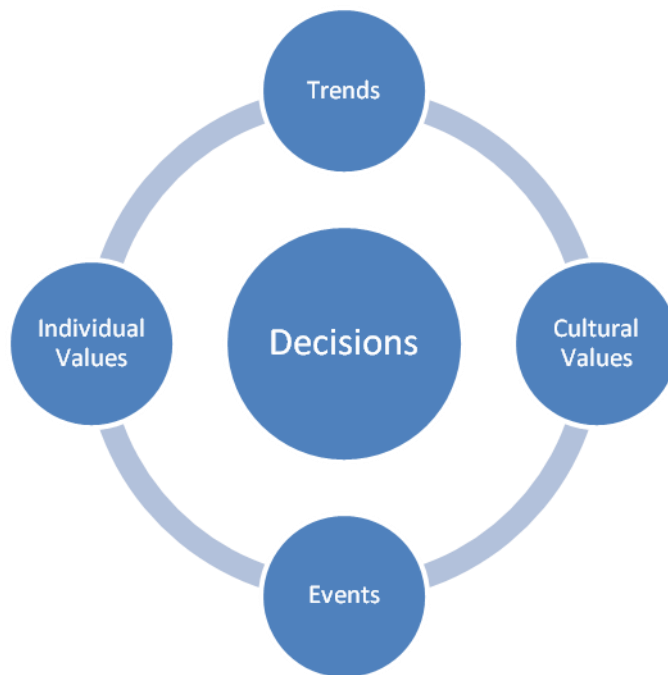
The use of cell phones and social networking continues to become increasingly more popular

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What recent trends seem to have the biggest impact on you? Why? What trends would you add to the list?

The Decisions We Make

Decisions we make are in part based on the trends and events that take place in the time period in which we live. Some decisions we make also heavily influence our culture. The interplay between individual decisions and cultural trends creates the historical movements we have studied.



The quality of our lifestyles is determined by the quality of our decisions

How do you make a good decision?

Supplemental Lesson

The Quality of Your Decisions

The teacher can design a lesson using the decision links that follow to ask students to make a decision that somehow connects with our modern culture.

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