

P.O.V.'s Borders — American ID . For Educators

Activity 1: USA in Three Words

Purpose: To explore diverse perspectives of the United States.

Show students the approximately two-minute video clip, “USA in Three Words” (http://www.pbs.org/pov/apps/threewords/fr_usainthreewords_rec.php). Explain that the people in the video live in foreign countries. Ask students to choose their own three words that they think best describe the United States and explain their rationale. How do student word choices reflect their backgrounds, interests, and hopes for the future?

Ask students to then ask a parent, grandparent (or another person from the same generation), and a third person of their choosing how they would describe America in three words and why. Have students capture the perspectives of these individuals on audio or video, or create some type of visual display showcasing the points of view they’ve collected. Students should also write an essay that compares and contrasts their own word choices and reasoning with those that they interviewed. Showcase the student work at school and/or online and invite feedback.

Finally, have students contribute the descriptors they’ve gathered to the USA in Three Words interactive feature (http://www.pbs.org/pov/apps/threewords/fr_usainthreewords_rec.php) on the P.O.V. Borders | American ID Web site.

Additional Resources

How They See Us

http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/fr_global.html

Watch slightly extended versions of the interviews excerpted for the “USA in Three Words” video, featuring perspectives from Venezuela, Lebanon, and South Africa. Each video is less than six minutes long.

Ideology, Language, and Labels

http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/talk/robin_koerner/000262.html

Robin Koerner comments on American practices of labeling political ideology.

Related Standards

Civics, Standard 11: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society.

Geography, Standard 10: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Source: “Content Knowledge” (<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>) by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

P.O.V.'s Borders — American ID . For Educators

Activity 2:

The Internet's Impact on Political Participation

Purpose: To investigate how Internet features and culture make political waves.

Have students read "Overheard Online: Internet and Politics" (http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/fr_overheardonline2.html) and identify specific ways that people use the Internet to achieve political goals. Ask student pairs or small groups to each research one of the cited examples of how the Internet has influenced politics, and then create online slide presentations that highlight their findings. Discuss what aspects of the Internet and its culture affect individual participation in the political process at the local, state, and national level. How can the Internet help people attain individual and public goals? Can the Internet make the political process in the United States more democratic?

Additional Resources

Pew Internet and American Life Project: E-Gov and E-Policy Reports

<http://www.pewinternet.org/topics.asp?c=9>

Explore how the Internet influenced past political campaigns, its role in democratic debate, and how Americans use the Internet to communicate with government.

Related Standards

Civics, Standard 28: Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals.

Language Arts, Standard 10: Understands the characteristics and components of the media.

Source: "Content Knowledge" (<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>) by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

P.O.V.'s Borders — American ID . For Educators

Activity 3:

A Slogan That Captures America's Best Identity

Purpose: To explore the idea of “place branding” and develop a slogan that captures America’s best identity.

Tell students that money is no option and that they can choose anyplace to go on vacation. Then, give them a few minutes to select their vacation destination and write down *why* they want to go there. Ask a few students to share their thinking and then discuss why each vacation spot has the reputation that it does. Explain that a place’s reputation is its “brand,” and that effective or ineffective “place branding” plays a critical role in the success of that place.

Next, explain that this idea of “place branding” also applies to countries. Divide the class into small groups to read and discuss the article, “Nation Branding” (http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/talk/simon_anholt/000163.html). Why is a country’s reputation such an important asset? What is the United States known for? What are the characteristics of a good nation brand?

Each group should then develop a slogan that captures America’s best identity. It should be brief, memorable, and communicate what the group thinks the U.S. should be known for around the world. Then have groups contribute their slogans to the Go Ahead, Tag America! interactive feature (http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/de_tagamerica.html) on the P.O.V. Borders | American ID Web site.

Additional Resources

List of U.S. State Slogans

<http://www.answers.com/topic/list-of-u-s-state-slogans>

Stimulate student thinking about slogans by showing what U.S. states would like to be known for.

Related Standards

Geography, Standard 6: Understands that culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

U.S. History, Standard 31: Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

Source: “Content Knowledge” (<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>) by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

P.O.V.'s Borders — American ID . For Educators

Activity 4: American Image Abroad

Purpose: To develop strategies for improving world opinion of the United States.

Show students the sampling of foreign opinion about the United States featured in the approximately two-minute video clip, “USA in Three Words” (http://www.pbs.org/pov/apps/threewords/fr_usainthreewords_rec.php). Explain that world opinion about the U.S. is frequently negative. Then, discuss how a bad national image can impact areas like foreign policy, trade, travel abroad, and national security.

Give students some background on U.S. efforts to promote itself in foreign countries by having the class watch the 12-minute multimedia presentation, “Advertising Democracy” (http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/de_sellingamerica.html). Which aspects of each featured public relations strategy led to success or failure? How might the social and political circumstances of the day have influenced which strategies were used?

Based on this analysis, have student groups each develop an updated set of strategies for improving world opinion of the U.S. and then share these ideas with the class. Consider steps that students could take to get their plans implemented (e.g., sharing strategies with appropriate leaders).

Additional Resources

“Advertising Democracy”

http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/de_sellingamerica.html

Watch a 12-minute multimedia presentation that charts the ups and downs of selling American values abroad. Also, listen to several audio interviews with commentary on America’s image overseas.

Keith Reinhard: Business and Diplomacy (podcasts with transcripts)

http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/talk/keith_reinhard/index.html

Listen to or read comments on Anti-Americanism and its impact on business, plus what businesses can do to improve America’s image in the world.

Nation Branding

http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/talk/simon_anholt/000163.html

Simon Anholt defines “nation branding” and discusses its importance. An audio discussion of Anholt’s views on America as a brand is also available

(http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/de_sellingamerica.html).

Related Standards

Civics, Standard 22: Understands how the world is organized politically into nation-states, how nation-states interact with one another, and issues surrounding U.S. foreign policy.

Source: “Content Knowledge” (<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>) by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

P.O.V.'s Borders — American ID . For Educators

Activity 5: Cross-country Rhythms

Purpose: To explore the relationship between music, history, and culture.

Prepare for class by developing a playlist of five essential songs that would form the soundtrack for a road trip across the United States. Have one of these songs playing as students come in and get settled for class. Explain that the song would be required listening for you should you embark on a cross-country road trip and then give details about the song's significance to you, emphasizing its connection to your American identity. Share the rest of your playlist and allow students to react.

Next, divide students into small groups that are as diverse as possible. Ask group members to negotiate with one another to develop a group playlist of five songs that they would play on a road trip across America. You may wish to have groups use online music sites to sample songs that aren't familiar to everyone. Afterwards, discuss what criteria each group used to choose their songs. What kind of an image of America did these songs convey? What songs or musical genres did the groups have in common with one other? Discuss how music can be a transmitter of cultural tradition and a way to connect diverse groups of people.

Finally, have students contribute their playlists to Question 3 of the [E Pluribus Unum](http://www.pbs.org/pov/apps/epluribusunum/activities/03_playlist_input.php) interactive feature (http://www.pbs.org/pov/apps/epluribusunum/activities/03_playlist_input.php) on the P.O.V. Borders | American ID Web site.

Additional Resources

Jeff Chang: A Hip-Hop America

http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/talk/jeff_chang/index.html

Read Chang's review of hip hop origins and the genre's cultural significance.

NewMusicBox Magazine: The Role of Music in American Life

<http://www.newmusicbox.org/page.nmbx?id=18fp01>

This Web magazine from the American Music Center features a collection of quotes from American presidents about music, composers, and more.

Related Standards

Music, Standard 7: Understands the relationship between music and history and culture.

U.S. History, Standard 31: Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

Source: "Content Knowledge" (<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>) by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)

P.O.V.'s Borders — American ID . For Educators

Activity 6: Patriotism and American Identity

Purpose: To explore the concepts of “patriotism” and “American identity.”

Ask students to respond in their journals to the question, “What is patriotism?” Then, have students share headlines from their thinking and discuss where the thoughts of some agree or disagree with those of others. Point out that the term “patriotism” means different things to different people, and that in a multicultural society, a person’s identity as an American may be built on a complex foundation.

To illustrate this point, introduce students to author and playwright Ariel Dorfman who is featured in the six-minute video, “Patriotism” (http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/ch_americanshadows.html). Help students follow Dorfman’s path from the U.S., where his father’s dissidence triggered the family’s expulsion, to Chile where he became a rebel in the revolution there and says he felt like a true patriot as he struggled to bring about democracy. Then, a U.S.-backed coup forced him to leave Chile and move to several cities before he eventually returned to the U.S. and settled in North Carolina. Determined to not move anymore, he became a U.S. citizen, saying he’d rather go to jail than be deported. He now continues the democratic tradition by quietly casting his vote on election days.

Discuss with students the contradictions Dorfman has faced in his relationship with the U.S. How do students think these factors influence his patriotism and identity as an American? Have other immigrants faced similar contradictions? What makes a person “American?”

Additional Resources

American Shadows: Ariel Dorfman Reflects on His American Identity

http://www.pbs.org/pov/borders/2006/ch_americanshadows.html

This feature includes two other video pieces with Dorfman’s reflections on American identity.

Related Standards

Civics, Standard 11: Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society.

Civics, Standard 28: Understands how participation in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals.

Geography, Standard 6: Understands that culture and experience influence people’s perceptions of places and regions.

World History, Standard 44: Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world.

Source: “Content Knowledge” (<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>) by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning)