Section I

1. **Title of Lesson:** What is an American?: Defining an ever-changing concept

2. **Overview:** The idea of what an American is has changed constantly over the course of our country’s history. To explore this question and to develop their own definition of what an American is, students will explore how others have defined this idea in the past while considering how this idea can be defined in our present. Students will consider how an American acts, what an American thinks, as well as what an American looks like.

3. **Learning Goals:** Students will be able to…
   a. Understand that the meaning of "being an American" has enlarged and become more complicated.
   b. Develop their personal definition of what an American is.
   c. Read and evaluate primary sources for main ideas and supporting details.
   d. Find statements in primary sources to use as support in oral debate and written essay.
   e. Participate in small and large group dialogues about the topic under study, citing evidence from literary and informational texts.
   f. Become familiar with rich online collections of primary sources.
   g. Read an oral history and use such materials in historical analysis.
   h. Analyze visuals to create a statement of what an American looks like.

4. **Time Required/Duration of Activity:** estimated 10 forty-minute class periods

5. **Recommended Grade(s):** 8-12

6. **Subject:** Social Studies/ELA

7. **Credits:** Primary Author: Danielle Emings, English teacher, Union High School, Rimersburg, PA
Mary Virginia Attarian & Kathleen T. Isaacs - Lesson entitled “American Lives in Two Centuries: What is an American?”
(http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/american/index.html)

8. **LDC Teaching Task:**
   **Task #1 (Argumentation/Analysis)** What is an American? After researching informational texts and other primary sources that discusses being an American, write an essay that argues your position on what it means to be an American. Support your position with evidence from your research.

   **L2** Be sure to acknowledge competing views.

   **L3** Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

9. **PA Common Core Standards:**
   1.2.9.D Analyze inferences, citing textual support, drawn from a variety of public documents and all academic content area texts.

   1.2.9.E Read, understand, and respond to essential content in a variety of informational texts and documents across all academic content areas.

   1.5 Students present appropriately informal speaking situations, listen critically, and respond intelligently as individuals or in group discussions.

   8.5 Students read, understand, and respond to informational text – with emphasis on comprehension, making connections among ideas and between texts with focus on textual evidence.

   8.6 Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content.

10. **Materials Used:**
   - Library of Congress online primary source analysis worksheet and teacher guides for analyzing photographs, books and other printed texts and maps.
   - Selected primary source prints/photographs from the Library of Congress (various portraits of Americans)
   - Resource Verification Sheet to allow students to take notes to compile ideas for final essay
   - Teacher on Your Shoulder graphic organizer (modified for Crevecoeur’s “What is an American?”)
11. **Resources Used:**


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**Section III**

12. **Instructional Procedures:**

**Introductory writing task**

- Ask students to write a paragraph answering the question: What is an American?

- Collect paragraphs to return to students at end of unit (for comparison purposes). Discuss any challenges the students had in answering the question. Explain that the unit will focus on past definitions of what an American is while helping the students to create their personal definition.
Mini Task #1 – Analysis of 18th cent. Primary source

Student Skills:

• Read the text independently.

• Identify words and phrases that define key concepts, facts, and information.

• Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in context.

• Listen to an expert reader read the text: jotting down notes and questions to ask later.

• Engage effectively in a large group dialogue about the text by expressing ideas clearly and building upon others’ ideas.

• Follow the rules for a large group dialogue to ensure appropriate participation with peers and teacher.

Procedures:

• Introduce students to Crevecoeur (the person – background, history, life) and his writing entitled “What Is an American?”

• Pass out copies of chapter 3 of “Letters from an American farmer”.

• Instruct the students to underline important lines that help create Crevecoeur’s definition of American. Allow them to write any notes, questions, or ideas on the text.

• Read the text aloud to the students.

• Ask students questions about the text to clarify meaning. Allow students to share their notes.

• Allow students time to re-read using “Teacher on Your Shoulder” guided reading.

• Discuss responses and other open ended questions (facilitating dialogue only as needed).

Short-duration writing tasks:

Write a letter to Mrs. Emings (as if you are Crevecoeur) in which you define what an American was at this time in history, including quotations from the text to help support your definition from Crevecoeur’s point of view.
Mini Task #2 Exploring a collection of Primary Sources

Student Skills:

- Restate the definition of oral history and primary source.
- Locate and explore an online collection of primary sources.
- Explain the importance of a project like the Federal Writers’ Project.

Procedures:

- Introduce oral histories as primary sources.
- Read Using Primary Sources and discuss concepts with students as necessary.
- Introduce students to American Life Histories, 1936-1940, in American Memory.
- Students read American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940.
- Facilitate large group discussion to review oral histories, primary sources, and discuss the importance and value of a project like Federal Writers’ Project.

Short-duration writing tasks:

Write a letter persuading a local politician to re-institute the Federal Writers’ Project. Explain the importance and value of the project.
Mini Task #3 Applying Crevecoeur to American Memory Collections

Student Skills:

• Choose and read a text independently.

• Apply Crevecoeur’s definition of ‘American’ to an informant in the American Memory Collections.

• Discuss their findings with a partner.

• Compare and contrast two subjects of two different texts.

Procedures:

• Modeling: Whole class reads and discusses circus people using What Is an American? Student Guide.

• Give Instructions:
  
  o How to search in American Memory. See How to Search American Memory Collections.
  o Keyword development: class brainstorms occupations.

• Practice:
  
  o Students search for a life history by occupation.
  o Students record their search.
  o Students look at their life history through the lens of Crèvecoeur definition using What Is an American? Student Guide.

• Students prepare a mini-presentation in which they explain the findings of their compare/contrast.

• Students present the information about their informant and discuss.
Mini Task #4 – Analysis of photographs using Jigsaw grouping

Student Skills:

• Connect the task and new content to prior knowledge, skills, experiences, interests and concerns.

• Cite specific evidence from images to support visual literacy through analysis of images.

• Engage in collaborative discussions about photographs. Express ideas clearly and build upon others’ ideas through dialogue.

• Analyze the main ideas and supporting details from the photographs and explain how the ideas clarify their understandings as they relate to defining what an American looked like and acted like in the past.

Procedures:

• Place students into groups of 3. Explain task. Explain Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Photographs and Prints. Explain that the first group will collaborate to analyze their image. All students must record their findings. Then the students will move to their second group to report their findings and learn about other prints/photographs.

• Distribute photographs to each group and distribute paper copies of the primary source analysis tool. Allow time for initial groups to discuss their image and record findings.

• Move students to second group to present their findings and listen to others explain their findings.

• Conclude with a whole group discussion of findings through analysis of the prints/photographs. Compare/contrast group responses and ask groups to explain their responses to the class and prompt students to build on each other’s ideas during the discussions.

Short Duration Writing Tasks:

Compare/contrast the images that we discussed today. What differences do you notice? What similarities do you notice? How do the images shape your definition of what an American is?
Mini Task #5 - Analysis of Images: The Future Face of America

Student Skills:

• Summarize main ideas from sections of a nonfiction text.

• Cite specific evidence from images to support visual literacy through analysis of images.

• Engage in collaborative discussions about photographs. Express ideas clearly and build upon others’ ideas through dialogue.

• Analyze the main ideas and supporting details from the photographs and explain how the ideas clarify their understandings as they relate to defining what an American looked like and acted like in the past.

Procedures:

• Introduce National Geographic’s “The Changing Face of America” and photographer background information on Martin Schoeller.

• Read feature article together, stopping to summarize sections of the text.

• Allow students time to view gallery of images, using Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Photographs and Prints to take notes.

• Discuss student observations as a large group.

Short Duration Writing Tasks:

Compare/contrast the images that we discussed today with yesterday’s images. What differences do you notice? What similarities do you notice? How do the images shape your definition of what an American is?
Prompt:

Compare/contrast the images that we discussed today with yesterday’s images. What differences do you notice? What similarities do you notice? How do the images shape your definition of what an American is?

Scoring:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>The writing is <strong>very clear and focused</strong>. Student identifies and explains <strong>many</strong> similarities and differences between the images. Student uses information from notes taken on Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Photographs and Prints (observations, analysis, and questions) and <strong>goes beyond the basics of these categories by displaying in depth thinking</strong>. Student then proceeds to <strong>make connections</strong> between the previous images and current images by providing <strong>strong, supportive rationale</strong> for the writing. Critical analysis of primary sources, citing evidence from sources to support analysis and explanation, historical thinking and analysis skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>The writing is <strong>clear and focused</strong>. Student identifies and explains <strong>a few</strong> similarities and differences between the images. Student uses information from notes taken on Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Photographs and Prints (observations, analysis, and questions). Student then proceeds to make connections between the previous images and current images by providing <strong>some</strong> rationale for the writing. Critical analysis of primary sources, citing evidence from sources to support analysis and explanation, historical thinking and analysis skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>The writing is <strong>unclear and unfocused</strong>. Student identifies and explains <strong>only 1</strong> similarity and difference between the images. Student uses information from notes taken on Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Photographs and Prints (observations, analysis, and questions) but <strong>the information is base in nature</strong>. Student is <strong>lacking connections</strong> between the previous images and current images and lacks rationale for the writing. Critical analysis of primary sources, citing evidence from sources to support analysis and explanation, historical thinking and analysis skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs Work</td>
<td>The writing is off-prompt. The writing is incoherent. The writing is in need of major revisions to be accepted.</td>
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Mini Task #6 – Analysis of a Speech

Student Skills:

• Restate the main ideas from an audio recording of a speech
• Discuss ideas and thoughts from their observations, analysis, and questions
• Engage in collaborative discussions about an audio recording. Express ideas clearly and build upon others’ ideas through dialogue.

Procedures:

• Discuss the year 1941, background information on speaker, and other pre-listening information.
• Distribute copies of speech to allow students to follow along. Distribute Teacher’s Guide: Analyzing Sound Recordings.
• Play recording two times asking students to follow along the first time and take notes the second time. Allow time for students to complete Teacher’s Guide.
• Discuss student thoughts on the speech. Allow time for students to record information in Resource Verification Sheet.
Mini Task #7 – Analysis of Editorials

Student Skills:

- Identify pertinent information to develop a definition of an “American”
- Record quotations from texts to use in final essay
- Engage in collaborative discussions about editorials. Express ideas clearly and build upon others’ ideas through dialogue.

Procedures:

- Introduce definition of Editorial
- Read 2 editorials asking students to highlight statements that help foster ideas for defining an American
- Place students in small groups to compare highlighting and discuss
- Allow students time to complete Resource Verification Sheet

Short-duration writing tasks:

Write a paragraph explaining two new ideas you gained about how to answer the question What is an American?
What is an American? After researching informational texts and other primary sources that discuss being American, write an essay that argues your position on what it means to be an American. Support your position with evidence from your research. L2 Be sure to acknowledge competing views. L3 Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

• After students complete all of the mini-tasks analyzing various primary sources, students will be given class time to write an outline and draft of the essay.

• Students turn in their outlines/drafts for feedback (before proceeding to next step).

• Allow time for students to write final copy (based on suggested revisions) in class.

• Use the LCD rubric for writing argumentation to conduct a final evaluation of student writing for this task.
Section IV

13. **Assessment:**
   Mostly informal assessments will be used on the mini-tasks throughout this unit. In mini-task 5, I will be assessing the students’ abilities to make connections between sets of images. These images depict various Americans in different eras. The students will be asked to find similarities and differences while writing with a clear focus. Their writing will be assessed using the rubric found directly after the mini-task above.

In addition, the students will be assessed on their final writing prompt using the LDC argumentation rubric.
Teacher’s Comments and Other Resources:

**What does an American act like?**

Primary Source: http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/ickes.htm  Analyze speech
  Pre-read: Date  
  While listening: Analyze prim guide
  http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/resources/Analyzing_Primary_Sources.pdf
  After listening

Article 1 Peter Ferrara  
  Pre-read: Date  
  While read: find two statements  
  After reading: Discuss statements

Article 2 Edward L. Hudgins  
  Pre-read: Date  
  While read: Characteristics of an American

**What does an American look like?**

LOC: Eminent historical figures (Founding years)
  http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/pga.01700/

LOC: 30-50s  
Quick View
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/vanvechten/vvoccindx.html

LOC: 1945  
Americans celebrate VJ day
  http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97514494/

National Geographic: 2000s  
Explore website
  http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2013/10/changing-faces/schoeller-photography