

Title: New Commons Project Lesson Plan

Grades: 9-12

Estimated Time: Four 80-minute class periods, or 6-7 50-minute class periods

Subject(s): English, social studies; can be adapted for most other subjects

I. Learning Objectives

1. Students will understand the concept of a “commons” as described by the University of Maine Farmington’s New Commons Project, including how art, literature, and ideas are a type of “commons.”
2. Students will know how art, literature, and ideas can be used as cultural tools to benefit a given community in the present day.
3. Students will be able to evaluate, select, and, using persuasive techniques, present at least one cultural work that they feel ought to be of value or of use to their twenty-first century community. (According to the New Commons Project, “cultural works” may include “novels, plays, poems, graphic novels, essays, paintings, songs, symphonies, albums, films, videos, performances, philosophical treatises, scientific works, manifestos...” etc.)

II. Materials and Resources

- Sticky notes or index cards
- Pens, pencils
- Laptops with word processing and video-making software
- Projector
- New Commons Project website: <http://wpsites.maine.edu/newcommonsproject/>
- Mellon Foundation grant for New Commons Project press release:
<http://www2.umf.maine.edu/inside/2017/08/02/umf-awarded-mellon-foundation-grant-to-create-digital-arts-and-humanities-commons/>
- List of Suggested Names/Titles for Day 1 Activity (see PDF)
- Graphic Organizer: Evaluating Existing Nomination Videos (see PDF)
- Peer Feedback Forms (see PDF)

III. Standards

The following lists include standards for English and Social Studies; teachers may choose to focus on certain standards and eliminate others depending on content area, students' prior knowledge, and/or the lesson's area of focus in respect to individualized learning goals and outcomes.

Common Core English Language Arts Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1](#)
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2](#)
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.3](#)
Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4](#)
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.5](#)
Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6](#)
Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

NCTE English Language Arts Standards

- 1 Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
- 4 Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- 6 Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
- 7 Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- 11 Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
- 12 Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Maine Learning Results: Social Studies

Standard Label: A. Applications of Social Studies Processes, Knowledge, and Skills

Standard: A1, Researching and Developing Positions on Current Social Studies Issues

Grade Level: 9-Diploma

Students research, develop, present, and defend positions on current social studies issues by developing and modifying research questions, and locating, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing information from multiple and varied sources.

Performance Indicators: a, e, g, h, i, j

Standard Label: A. Applications of Social Studies Processes, Knowledge, and Skills

Standard: A2, Making Decisions Using Social Studies Knowledge and Skills

Grade Level: 9-Diploma

Students make individual and collaborative decisions on matters related to social studies using relevant information and research, discussion, and ethical reasoning skills.

Performance Indicators: a, b

Standards Label: A. Applications of Social Studies Processes, Knowledge, and Skills

Standard: A3, Taking Action Using Social Studies Knowledge and Skills

Grade Level: 9-Diploma

Students select, plan, and implement a civic action or service-learning project based on a community, school, State, national, or international asset or need, and evaluate the project's effectiveness and civic contribution.

Standards Label: D. Geography

Standard: D2, Individual, Cultural, International, and Global Connections in Geography

Grade Level: 9-Diploma

Students understand geographic aspects of unity and diversity in Maine, the United States, and the world, including Maine Native American communities.

Performance Indicators: b

IV. Assessment

- **Pre:** Students will work collaboratively to generate a list of current issues or "needs" within their community ("community" can span the entire state of Maine). These can range from the specific to the general -- "we need better tax policy" and "we need more empathy" are both good answers. Students will write issue/need they brainstorm on a sticky note. Once they've come up with a substantial list, they will begin to pair these notes with a corresponding group of sticky notes that name various works of art and/or literature generated by the class and the teacher. The pairing of notes will be based on the connections they draw between each

need/issue and different works of art/literature. For example, “poverty” might be paired with *The Glass Castle* by Jeanette Walls; “environmental degradation” might be paired with “Big Yellow Taxi” by Joni Mitchell; “bullying” might be paired with “Mean Girls” by Tina Fey.

- **Formative:** Individually or in pairs, students will select a work of art/literature that they would like to nominate to the New Commons Project and write a one-page pitch which will state their reasoning for choosing that particular work and providing examples as to how and why it could be of use to their community.
- **Summative:** Individually or in pairs, students will create a nomination video for their selected work of art/literature and present it to the class before uploading it to the New Commons website (if they wish to officially nominate it).

V. Instructional Plan

Day 1

10-15 minutes (hook): Students will generate a list of current issues or needs found within the state of Maine. They may work alone, in groups, or as a whole class. Each issue/need must be written on its own sticky note. The notes will be placed on a wall or board where they are visible to everyone.

15 minutes: Students compile a list of songs, books, movies, and other cultural works they love. *This list should be completely open* -- the only criteria is that the students think the work has value. While students are brainstorming, the teacher will write titles on sticky notes. After the session, the teacher distribute them to the students. The students will match these sticky notes with those that name the issues/needs they have observed within their community. Students should match notes based on the connections they can draw between each cultural work and the issues/needs they have identified. (Not all notes of cultural works need to be used, but students should try to make as many connections as possible, and one issue/need may be paired with multiple works of art/literature.)

35 minutes: The teacher introduces the New Commons Project and directs students to the project’s website for further exploration. Students are asked to view at least 3 nomination videos, and will then discuss what they found within roundtable groups of 3-4. In the same roundtable groups, students will work together to answer the following questions (these questions are presented in a PDF linked in the resource section):

- Did you notice any similarities between the needs/issues your class came up with and the needs/issues identified in any of the 3 nomination videos you watched?

- What kinds of “cultural works” were nominated in the videos you watched? (Were they novels? Poems? Plays? Songs? Music videos? Paintings?) Were any of these findings surprising to you?
- What persuasive techniques did the speakers use in the videos that you watched?
- How was technology used to enhance these videos?
- Overall, how effective were these videos? Would you consider any of the cultural works they present to be of value or of use to the Maine community? Why or why not?

15 minutes: Introduce formative and summative assessments to students (one-page pitch and nomination video); if giving students the option to work in pairs, have them select partners; give them the remainder of class to begin thinking of works to nominate and have them continue viewing submitted videos for more examples.

Homework: Choose a cultural work to nominate by next class. Students may narrow their decisions down as much as they can and make their final decision after they share their ideas in roundtable groups at the start of the class’s next meeting.

DAY 2

15 minutes: Students share their nomination ideas in roundtable groups for oral feedback that is based on how well the cultural work(s) they have chosen meets the need/issue that they wish to focus on. Students who have not made a final selection must do so after this feedback session.

15-25 minutes: Mini lesson on persuasive techniques in writing and speaking. Before moving on, have students reflect back on the New Commons videos they watched in the previous class and discuss which ones they found to be the most persuasive and why. (They may wish to look back on their graphic organizers.)

Remainder of class: Students begin writing one-page pitches for the cultural work they have chosen while the teacher is available for conferencing/answering questions.

Homework: Finish writing one-page pitch.

DAY 3

Throughout class: Teacher conferences with each student/pair about their pitch while other students familiarize themselves with video-making software (e.g., iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, or whatever is available to them) and/or work on other assignments. Once

the teacher has approved each pitch, students may begin creating their individual nomination videos.

Homework: Complete and polish nomination videos (it is the teacher's discretion on how many days this may take his/her class).

DAY 4

Students will participate in an in-class showing of each nomination video and evaluate their peer's videos by filling out a peer feedback form (sample form can be found in resource section). The teacher will make feedback notes as well.

Once all the videos have been shown and students have had a chance to review their peer and teacher feedback forms and make desired changes, they may upload their videos to the New Commons Project website.