

## American Studies - Units of Study

### 1. Illusions

**Essential Question: How and why do people/groups develop illusions and why are some illusions maintained while others are broken down?**

Guiding Content Questions:

1. What is an illusion and how and why do individuals and groups form them?
2. To what extent do new perceptions, ideas, philosophies or occurrences alter illusions?
3. Is maintaining an illusion oppressive or liberating?
4. What is disillusionment and how and why do individuals and groups become disillusioned?
5. Is disillusionment oppressive or liberating?
6. What are the consequences of illusions?
7. What are the consequences of disillusionment?

What is the relationship and dynamic between those who subscribe to illusions and those who are disillusioned?

Possible Unit Activities:

Comparative analysis of the 1920s & 1930s; 1990s & 2000s

Literary analysis of: *The Great Gatsby*, excerpts of *Their Eyes were Watching God*, *Into the Wild* & analysis of various poetry and primary source documents

### 2. Conformity

**Essential Question: To what extent is conformity a right, a burden and a responsibility?**

Guiding Content Questions:

1. What is conformity?
2. To what extent is conformity necessary?
3. To what extent is rebellion necessary?
3. What values, traditions, beliefs and philosophies influence the consensus?
4. Why do individuals and groups deviate from the consensus?
5. Why do individuals and groups conform to the consensus?
7. What is the dynamic between the conformist and the nonconformist?
8. What are the consequences of conformity?
9. What are the consequences of rebellion?
10. To what extent does fear play a role in the decision of whether or not to join the consensus?

What is the result of existing in a society with both conformists and nonconformists?

Possible Unit Activities:

Assess the role of conformity on the US homefront, European theater and Pacific theater during World War Two.

Literary analysis of: *Snow Falling on Cedars*, excerpts from *Footsoldiers*, excerpts from *Unbroken* and analysis of various poetry and primary source documents

Historical inquiry into the causes of the Cold War and the impact of ideological struggle on social/cultural dynamics, economics, politics and international relations in the USA between 1946-1955

Literary analysis of: *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible* and analysis of various poetry and primary source documents

### 3. Power

**Essential Question: What role does power play in shaping the existence, experiences and opportunities of an individual, a community and a country?**

Guiding Content Questions:

1. What is power?
2. What factors determine which individuals and institutions hold power and which do not?
3. What is the relationship and dynamic between the powerful and the powerless?
4. What are the effects or consequences of the relationship between the powerful and the powerless?
5. Are the powerful permanently powerful and the powerless permanently powerless?
7. What are the results or consequences of changing power dynamics?
8. To what extent will people or groups go to maintain power?
9. To what extent will people or groups go to shift from powerless to powerful?
9. How does power contribute to or inhibit change?
10. To what extent does fear perpetuate power dynamics?

How does power to inform our choices and actions both consciously and subconsciously?

Possible Unit Activities:

Inquiry and analysis of systems of oppression and sociological examinations of dominant and minority group relations

African American Civil Rights Movement - Nonviolent movement & Black Power

Women's Liberation Movement

LGBT

Literary analysis of *Native Son*, excerpts from Paul Rudnick plays, New Yorker articles, etc

Analysis of various psychological and sociological research, scholarly articles on power dynamics, etc

### 4. Perception

**Essential Question: What role does perception play in shaping the truths of an individual, a community and a country?**

Guiding Content Questions:

1. What contributes to the perception of an individual?
2. What contributes to the perception of a group or society?
3. To what extent do politics, economics and social factors shape perception?
4. How do we define and distinguish between "truth" and "fact"?
5. Is there a universal truth?
6. Can diverse perspectives of the same event be true simultaneously?
7. What happens when perspectives differ?
8. What role do the following institutions have in shaping and/or manipulating truth: the government, the media, social media, education, religion, culture and the economy?
9. To what extent are our actions a result of our truth?
10. How do we use the consequences of multiple truths, whether positive or negative, to inform our future choices and actions?

Possible Unit Activities:

Differentiate between national interests and values and identify the degree to which interests and values play a role in *The Vietnam Conflict & The War in Afghanistan*

Literary Analysis of *The Things They Carried* and excerpts from *Where Men Win Glory*

Analysis of President Bush & Obama's foreign policy strategies (2002 & 2010)

View: Various presidential speeches 1964- 2013/2014,