

America 1828–1850

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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How to Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called “enduring understandings.” The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the “essential questions” listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won’t know which one.
2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.
3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide’s topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don’t need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it’s broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the “enduring understandings.” Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.
4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
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America 1828–1850: Backwards Planning Activities

Enduring understandings:

- The United States faced rapid economic growth and westward expansion between 1828 and 1850, an era characterized by an increasing sense of Manifest Destiny and a feeling of entitlement to North American lands
- During this era, the political party system continued to develop and posed significant political challenges to the expanding nation's governmental operations
- A number of social reform movements, including the temperance and abolition movements, gained strength during this time
- During this era, the U.S. government engaged in conflict with Native Americans and Mexico, and came close to another war with Britain
- The issue of slavery became increasingly contentious, and sectionalism escalated during this period

Essential questions:

- What challenges did the nation face between 1828 and 1850?
- In what ways did the two-party system and partisan politics both help and hinder the government's ability to address the nation's problems?
- How did governmental leaders and policies affect Native Americans during this time period?
- In what ways did the country evolve and grow between 1828 and 1850?
- How did social movements during this period work against the status quo?

Learning Experiences and Instruction

Students will need to know...	Students will need to be able to...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The major figures of the era, including presidents, members of Congress, and agents of social change 2. Policies that characterized the era's administrations, particularly Jacksonian Democracy and its basic elements 3. The major political controversies of the Jackson era 4. The policies and actions that led to Indian removal 5. The era's economic developments and difficulties 6. Important social and philosophical movements 7. The process of westward expansion during this era, including acquisition of new territories 8. Important events related to the Mexican-American War 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe Andrew Jackson's major actions and accomplishments as president and explain their opinion of his presidency 2. Identify major political and social events and developments of this period 3. Reflect on their overall impressions of the country during this era 4. Identify causal relationships between various events and developments of this period

Teaching and learning activities that equip students to demonstrate targeted understandings:

- An overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Class discussion of questions posed in the PowerPoint presentation
- Introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Providing students with primary source materials from which they will complete the unit's related projects
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and cooperative projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Delivering feedback and evaluations on projects and research reports
- Student creation and presentation of their projects
- A posttest on the presentation, made up of multiple-choice questions and one or more essential questions as essay questions

Project #1: Was Andrew Jackson a Great President?

Overview:

This lesson asks students to think critically about Andrew Jackson’s presidency. Students will review what they have learned about Jackson’s presidency and will conduct further research to learn more about his actions and accomplishments. They will then determine whether they think Jackson should be eligible for a Presidential Hall of Fame, and discuss whether their perspective might be different if they were living during Jackson’s time.

Objectives:

As a result of completing the lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify Andrew Jackson’s major actions and accomplishments as president
- Explain whether they think Andrew Jackson was a “great” president
- Consider how perspectives can vary in different historical periods

Time required:

Two class periods (one class period if you assign paragraphs for homework)

Methodology:

Ask students how they would define a “great” president. What qualities would they expect to see in someone who has earned this consideration? What sorts of accomplishments might a “great” president make? List their ideas on the board.

As a class, review the PowerPoint slides regarding Andrew Jackson. Check for understanding by posing these questions to the class:

- What were some of Andrew Jackson’s main beliefs and philosophies?
- What were some of his main accomplishments, both before and during his presidency?
- In what ways was Jackson truly a president for the “common folk?” In what ways was he not?
- In what ways might Jackson have been controversial? Who might have disagreed with Jackson’s philosophies and policies?

Read the following scenario to the class:

Imagine that a new Presidential Hall of Fame is being established in Washington, D.C. This institution’s mission is to highlight the careers and achievements of