



RISE UP! AN AMERICAN CURRICULUM INSPIRED BY HAMILTON: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL



DISRUPTING THE MASTER NARRATIVE

By Jessa Brie Moreno

THEME
Narrative

LENGTH
50 min

GRADE LEVEL
9-12

SUBJECT
ELA/Performing Arts
Civics
History
Social Studies

Learners are invited to explore a range of narratives to examine their purpose and function and to develop and share their own.

This lesson explores the creation and re-creation of Master Narratives. Students will conduct artistic research on core “American Stories” and make connections to current narratives, news, and social outcomes.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

CREATIVE INQUIRIES

**What are the core “American Stories” or Master Narratives and what purpose do they serve?
How do we disrupt the Master Narrative and systems of erasure and embody New Narratives that serve the community?
What are our Collective Needs?**

FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE

Students will know...

- How narratives are constructed
- American narratives that serve deliberate purposes

PROCEDURAL KNOWLEDGE

Students will be able to...

- Analyze through comparison and rationale, the intentions and purposes of narratives
- Think and construct new narratives

CONCEPTUAL INQUIRY

Students will understand...

- How to create and build new narratives for new purposes
- The power in sharing personal story

PERFORMANCES OF UNDERSTANDING

- Journal writings *Journaling for metacognition*
- Participation in discussion

OUTLINE

Session 1: Disrupting the Master Narrative

HAMILTON HOOKS

How to build anticipation for learning



LISTEN: HAMILTON'S MY SHOT

Writing prompt or group discussion:

Which of these American Stories do you see evidence of in the song “My Shot” and which characters seem to represent these narratives?

LESSON PREREQUISITE/ARTISTIC RESEARCH

Read the *Four Essential American Stories* (or assign one section each to small groups) and then follow the prompts for writing and discussion.

■ FOUR ESSENTIAL AMERICAN STORIES

Read the following document (or assign one section each to small groups) and then follow the prompts for writing and discussion.

Robert Reich, Professor at the University of California at Berkeley and former Labor Secretary, has written about four “parables” that shape American politics and public debate. Reich suggests that:

“ . . . there are four essential American stories. The first two are about hope; the second two are about fear:”

THE TRIUMPHANT INDIVIDUAL

This is the familiar tale of the little guy who works hard, takes risks, believes in himself, and eventually gains wealth, fame, and honor. It’s the story of the self-made man (or, more recently, woman) who bucks the odds, spurns the naysayers, and shows what can be done with enough gumption and guts. He’s instantly recognizable: plainspoken, self-reliant, and uncompromising in his ideals—the underdog who makes it through hard work and faith in himself.

THE BENEVOLENT COMMUNITY

This is the story of neighbors and friends who roll up their sleeves and pitch in for the common good. The story is captured in the iconic New England town meeting, in frontier settlers erecting one another’s barns, in neighbors volunteering as firefighters and librarians, and in small towns sending their high school achievers to college and their boys off to fight foreign wars. It suffuses Norman Rockwell’s paintings and Frank Capra’s movies. Consider the last scene in *It’s a Wonderful Life*, when George learns he can count on his neighbor’s’ generosity and goodness, just as they had always counted on him.

THE MOB AT THE GATES

In this story, the United States is a beacon light of virtue in a world of darkness, uniquely blessed but continuously endangered by foreign menaces. Hence our endless efforts to contain the barbarism and tyranny beyond our borders. The story is found in the Whig’s anti-English and pro-tariff histories of the United States, in the anti-immigration harangues of the late nineteenth century, and in World War II accounts of Nazi and Japanese barbarism. The narrative gave special force to cold war tales during the ‘50s of an international communist plot to undermine U.S. democracy and subsequently of “evil” empires and axes. The underlying lesson: We must maintain vigilance, lest diabolical forces overwhelm us.

THE ROT AT THE TOP

The last story concerns the malevolence of powerful elites. It’s a tale of corruption, decadence, and irresponsibility in high places—of conspiracy against the common citizen. It started with King George III, and, to this day, it shapes the way we view government—mostly with distrust. The myth has also given force to the great populist movements of U.S. history, from Andrew Jackson’s attack on the Bank of the United States in the 1830s through William Jennings Bryan’s prairie populism of the 1890s.

As we work to rebuild support for the public sector’s role in the challenges and opportunities of a new century, one of our tasks is to “re-balance” the first two stories – The Triumphant Individual and The Benevolent Community in a culture so dominated by stories of individualism and consumerism. How can we tell a story about government that reconnects to its common good mission – at its best, the very embodiment of a “benevolent” community? And how can we harness the power of individual initiative that hums in the heart of the “triumphant individual” and turn its energy to working with others to solve problems and create new opportunities for all? When we attempt to engage the public in the tough policy questions of the day and gain their support for collective, public responses we must use and tap into American Master Narratives that can move opinion and action in the right direction.”

Source: publicworks.org

SESSION 1 OF 1

DISRUPTING THE MASTER NARRATIVE

This lesson explores the creation and re-creation of Master Narratives. Students will conduct artistic research on core “American Stories” and make connections to current narratives, news, and social outcomes.

SESSION OVERVIEW

LENGTH
50 min

GRADE LEVEL
9-12

SUBJECT
Theatre
Performing Arts

CREATIVE INQUIRIES

- What are the core “American Stories” or Master Narratives and what purpose do they serve?
- How do we disrupt the Master Narrative and systems of erasure and embody New Narratives that serve the community?
- What are our Collective Needs?

EQUIPMENT

- Laptop/ computer, wifi
- Speakers

MATERIALS

- Writing instrument and journal
- **Hamilton Soundtrack: My Shot**

OUTLINE

Activity #1: Read and reflect
Activity #2: Listen & Explore: My Shot
Activity #3: Critical Reflection

1 READ & REFLECT
20 MIN

SET-UP 5 MIN

Read the four essential American Stories (or assign one section each to small groups) and then follow the prompts for writing and discussion.

PROMPT 5 MIN

As we work to rebuild support for the public sector’s role in the challenges and opportunities of a new century, one of our tasks is to “re-balance” the first two stories – The Triumphant Individual and The Benevolent Community. In a culture so dominated by stories of individualism and consumerism:

How can we tell a story about government that reconnects to its common good mission – at its best, the very embodiment of a “benevolent” community?

How can we harness the power of individual initiative that hums in the heart of the “triumphant individual” and turn its energy to working with others to solve problems and create new opportunities for all?

2 LISTEN & EXPLORE

30 MIN

PLAY 
Hamilton Soundtrack:
My Shot

TASK 10 MIN

When we attempt to engage the public in the tough policy questions of the day and gain their support for collective, public responses we must use and tap into American Master Narratives that can move opinion and action in the right direction.

Write and discuss based on the reading and prompt.

SET-UP 3 MIN

Re-listen to Hamilton Hook “My Shot”

PROMPT 5 MIN

Discussion and/or journal writing prompts:

Past: Which of these American Stories do you see evidence of in the song “My Shot” and which characters seem to represent these narratives?

Present: Which do you see evidence of in our public debate today?

TASK 10 MIN

Write and discuss based on the reading and prompt.

CRITICAL REFLECTION 3 MIN

Have students share out in pairs/small group/whole group, time permitting.

What/who did you have to disrupt or include to create this New Narrative seed idea?

DIVE DEEPER 9 MIN

Flip the script! **The “Elevator Pitch”**

Write an idea for a short story/play/film describing an altered New Narrative. This should be a summary that can be shared verbally in less than 60 seconds.

For example:

“THE TRIUMPHANT COMMUNITY: When faced with biased standardized test results, a classroom of learners decide to develop software that measures collective intelligence, shifting the values from individualized success to uplifting one another.”