

# Teaching American History For All

A series of lessons incorporating literacy strategies for  
Mt Diablo Unified School District  
5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade teachers,  
in partnership with  
University Of California, Berkeley  
History-Social Science Project

## **11th Grade Lesson: “1980s – Reagan and the New Conservative Movement”**

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**Teaching American History for All**  
**MDUSD/UCB H-SSP**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Grade Lesson: “1980s – Reagan and the New Conservative Movement”**

**Developed by:** Paula Dillon, 11<sup>th</sup> grade teacher (Clayton Valley High School / MDUSD) and Brian Tickler, 11<sup>th</sup> grade teacher (Concord High School / MDUSD)

**Teaching American History Grant Focus Question:**

How did definitions of citizenship change from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

**11<sup>th</sup> Grade Yearlong Focus Question:**

How have the powers of the United States federal government expanded or been limited since the Civil War?

**Unit Focus:**

Unit 11: Passage to a New Century

**Unit Focus Question:**

How did the U.S. social and economic changes of the late 1970's to the 1990's affect the political landscape?

**Unit Working Thesis:**

Political scandals, such as Watergate, the failures of U.S. military policy abroad, and the oil crisis of the 1970s, shook Americans' faith in their political system.

**Lesson Focus Question and / or Writing Prompt Question:**

To what extent did the conservative movement under the Reagan administration achieve its goals?

**Lesson Working Thesis:**

The conservative movement sought to increase economic freedom, shrink the size of the federal government, and reduce spending. The Reagan administration succeeded in promoting economic growth, yet failed to reduce government's size and created a large budget deficit.

**Reading Strategy:**

Sentence Level Deconstruction

Compare and Contrast - Passage Level (*The Americans*, 2006, pages 834 – 838.)

Analyzing Primary Source – A.P.P.A.R.T.S.

**Writing Strategy:**

Thesis Practice

**Suggested Amount of Time:**

3 Class Periods

**Textbook:**

Danzer, Gerald et al. *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Littell Inc., 2006, pp. 834 – 848.

**Other Resources:**

*An American Renaissance: A Strategy for the 1980's*, Jack Kemp, 1978, Harper and Row.  
Chapter 1: "A Republican Revolution"

**Context of the lesson in the unit:**

This lesson would be a portion of the larger unit on the time period from Watergate to the present day. This unit is typically at the end of the school year and often left out due to time constraints.

**Concept of citizenship embedded in the lesson:**

This lesson should look at the role of the federal government and its impact on the average U.S. citizen. The relationship between the general populace and its government is a constant theme in American history.

**Lesson Procedure:**

## Day One

- I. Introduction
  - a. Hand out Sentence Level Deconstruction.
  - b. Students will read short passage and will complete the Sentence Deconstruction Chart.
  - c. Teacher will review with students to assure accuracy and to discuss the "Questions or Conclusions" that students develop.
  - d. Students will answer the corresponding lesson question after completion.
  - e. Teacher will lead discussion of student answers.
  - f. Teacher will lecture or discuss with students about the basic ideals of conservatism and the context of the conservative movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a response to the political chaos under the Carter administration.
- II. Reading Strategy – Compare and Contrast
  - a. Teacher will pass out the "Compare and Contrast Reading Guide"
  - b. Teacher will introduce the focus question and explain the directions for students.
  - c. Students will read chapter 25, section 2, pages 834 – 838. Students will complete the handout by explaining examples of how conservatives under the Reagan administration attempted to meet each goal and the argue how it was either a success or failure.
  - d. Teacher will lead a discussion of student answers to ensure comprehension.

## Day Two

- III. Writing Strategy – Developing Thesis Statements
  - a. Teacher will pass out the "Developing Thesis Statements" worksheet.
  - b. Teacher will review the focus question with the students. Teacher will encourage student to draw their own conclusions referring to the multiple viewpoints of the outcomes of conservative goals.
  - c. Following the directions on the worksheet, the teacher will lead the students through steps 1 – 4 (rewriting question, listing evidence, categorizing and evaluating evidence, stating thesis)
  - d. Students will analyze the evidence they have chosen by using their arguments for success and/or failure from the "Compare and Contrast Reading Guide."
  - e. Teacher will then lead a class discussion based on the thesis statements and evidence shared by students.

## Day Three

- IV. Reading Strategy - Primary Source Analysis
- a. Teacher will pass out excerpt from “An American Renaissance” by Jack Kemp along with the A.P.P.A.R.T.S. worksheet.
  - b. Per teacher discretion, teacher may read aloud, have students read aloud or have students read the excerpt on their own.
  - c. Once reading is completed, students will be partnered up to complete the “Primary Source Analysis” as dictated by the A.P.P.A.R.T.S. worksheet.
  - d. Teacher will lead a class discussion based on student answers.
  - e. Teacher will pass out “Writing Prompt.”
  - f. Using the information from their Primary Source Analysis, students will answer the given question: How does Jack Kemp’s argument in this excerpt support the goals of the Conservative Movement?
  - g. Teacher will collect, read, and grade the “Primary Source Analysis” and “Writing Prompt” for assessment.

### **History-Social Science Content Standards:**

**11.11** Students analyze the major social problems and domestic policy issues in Contemporary American Society

**11.11.2** Discuss the significant domestic policy speeches of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton (e.g., with regard to education, civil rights, economic policy, environmental policy).

### **Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills:**

Show connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, political trends and developments.

### **Reading/Language Arts Content Standards:**

#### **2.0 Reading Comprehension (Focus on Informational Materials)**

##### *Structural Features of Informational Materials*

2.1 Analyze both the features and the rhetorical devices of different types of public documents (e.g., policy statements, speeches, debates, platforms) and the way in which authors use those features and devices.

#### **1.0 Writing Strategies**

##### *Organization and Focus*

1.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the elements of discourse (e.g., purpose, speaker, audience, form) when completing narrative, expository, persuasive, or descriptive writing assignments.

#### **2.0 Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)**

2.4 Write historical investigation reports:

- a. Use exposition, narration, description, argumentation, or some combination of rhetorical strategies to support the main proposition.
- b. Analyze several historical records of a single event, examining critical relationships between elements of the research topic.



**Sentence Deconstruction**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

As soon as Reagan took office, he worked to reduce the size and influence of the federal government, which, he thought would encourage private investment. Because people were anxious about the economy in 1980, their concern opened the door for new approaches to taxes and the federal budget.

*The Americans*, (2006), page 834

<b>Time marker/ connector words</b>	<b>Who (subject) <i>Participants</i></b>	<b>Action words (verbs/ verb phrases)</b>	<b>Who, What, Where <i>Message</i></b>	<b>Questions or conclusions- What connections can you make from this information?</b>
		worked to reduce		
		thought would encourage		
		were		
		opened the door		

**Lesson Question:** What were Reagan’s immediate goals, and what existing conditions in the country allowed him to pursue these goals with little public complaint?

**Sentence Deconstruction (Teacher Key)**

As soon as Reagan took office, he worked to reduce the size and influence of the federal government, which, he thought would encourage private investment. Because people were anxious about the economy in 1980, their concern opened the door for new approaches to taxes and the federal budget.

*The Americans*, (2006), page 834

<b>Time marker/ connector words</b>	<b>Who (subject) <i>Participants</i></b>	<b>Action words (verbs/ verb phrases)</b>	<b>Who, What, Where <i>Message</i></b>	<b>Questions or conclusions- What connections can you make from this information?</b>
As soon as Reagan took office,	he (Reagan)	worked to reduce	the size and influence of the federal government,	Why would Reagan want to shrink the federal government? How big or influential was the federal government?
which,	he (Reagan)	thought (reducing the size and influence of the federal government) would encourage	private investment.	How would reducing the size of the federal government encourage private investment? What is private investment?
Because	people	were	anxious about the economy	Why were they anxious about the economy?
in 1980,	their concern	opened the door	for new approaches to taxes and the federal budget.	What were these new approaches?

**Lesson Question:** What were Reagan’s immediate goals, and what existing conditions in the country allowed him to pursue these goals with little public complaint?

*Reagan and the conservatives hoped to decrease the size and influence of the federal government in the hopes of stimulating the economy. Economic issues facing the general public in the late 1970s authorized the conservatives to make changes to the tax system and the federal budget.*

**Compare and Contrast Reading Guide**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

*The Americans*, 2006, pages 834 – 838.

**Focus Question:** To what extent did the conservative movement under the Reagan administration achieve its goals?

**Directions:** Give and explain examples of how conservatives, under the Reagan administration, attempted to meet each goal, and argue how it was either a success or a failure.

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Success?</b>	<b>Failure?</b>
<b><u>1. PROVIDE ECONOMIC FREEDOM</u></b>		
<b><u>2. SHRINK THE SIZE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT</u></b>		
<b><u>3. REDUCE SPENDING</u></b>		

**Compare and Contrast Reading Guide (Teacher Key)**

*The Americans*, 2006, pages 834 – 838.

**Focus Question:** To what extent did the conservative movement under the Reagan administration achieve its goals?

**Working Thesis:** The conservative movement sought to increase economic freedom, shrink the size of the federal government, and reduce spending. The Reagan administration succeeded in promoting economic growth, yet failed to reduce government’s size and created a large budget deficit.

**Directions:** Explain examples of how conservatives, under the Reagan administration, attempted to meet each goal, and argue how it was either a success or a failure.

Goal	Success?	Failure?
<p><b><u>1. PROVIDE ECONOMIC FREEDOM</u></b></p> <p><i>EX: Tax Cuts: (Supply Side) if people paid lower taxes they would save more money, banks could then loan that money to businesses to invest the money in resources to improve productivity (reference Trickle Down Econ. Policy of the 1920’s)</i></p> <p><i>EX: Deregulation: Cutting federal programs that regulated industry. Removed price controls on oil, eliminated federal health and safety inspections for nursing homes, deregulated airlines and savings and loan industry</i></p>	<p><b>Lowered income taxes by 25%, which encouraged spending brought the country out of a severe recession in 1983.</b></p> <p><b>Economic confidence grew, decline in interest rates, unemployment decline, stock market surge, GNP went up almost 10%.</b></p> <p><b>Deregulation increased competition and often resulted in lower prices for consumers.</b></p>	<p><b>Tax cuts helped the rich, while social welfare cuts hurt the lower classes.</b></p> <p><b>Deregulation led to poor quality control and poor health and safety standards. Deregulation of the EPA increased environmental pollution and decreased natural resources.</b></p>
<p><b><u>2. SHRINK THE SIZE OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT</u></b></p> <p><i>EX: Budget Cuts: deep cuts in government spending on social programs.</i></p>	<p><b>Benefited the middle class by not cutting Social Security, Medicare, and Veterans Pensions. Allowed the government to save money or spend money elsewhere.</b></p>	<p><b>Hurt the lower class by cutting budgets for urban mass transit, food stamps, welfare benefits, job training, Medicaid, school lunches and student loans</b></p>
<p><b><u>3. REDUCE SPENDING</u></b></p> <p><i>EX: Budget cuts on social programs (see above)</i></p> <p><i>Versus</i></p> <p><i>EX: Increased military spending which offset other cuts</i></p>	<p><b>Allowed the government to better allocate money.</b></p>	<p><b>Defense budget doubled between 1981-1984. In 1983, the development of Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) better known as “Star Wars” with costs estimated at trillions of dollars.</b></p> <p><b>Federal spending still outstripped federal revenue resulting in a budget deficit that had almost double by the end of the first term. (teacher probably will want to explain deficit)</b></p>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Developing Thesis Statements**

Steps to developing a thesis from evidence:

1. Rewrite the question in your own words.
2. Write a rough draft thesis statement.
3. Select evidence from your Compare and Contrast Reading Guide to support your thesis statement.
4. Categorize and analyze your evidence; form an argument based on what you can prove.
5. State your thesis clearly and concisely.

**Question:** To what extent did the conservative movement under the Reagan administration achieve its goals?

**Argument (Thesis Statement):**

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**Choose Evidence:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Analyzing Evidence

Using the evidence you have chosen to support your thesis statement, complete the analysis sentence.

1. (Evidence): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Analysis): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. (Evidence): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Analysis): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. (Evidence): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Analysis): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Developing Thesis Statements (Teacher Key)

Steps to developing a thesis from evidence:

1. Rewrite the question in your own words.
2. Write a rough draft thesis statement.
3. Select evidence from your Compare and Contrast Reading Guide to support your thesis statement.
4. Categorize and analyze your evidence; form an argument based on what you can prove.
5. State your thesis clearly and concisely.

**Question:** To what extent did the Conservative Movement under the Reagan administration achieve its goals?

### **Argument (Thesis Statement):**

The conservative movement sought to increase economic freedom, shrink the size of the federal government, and reduce spending. The Reagan administration succeeded in promoting economic growth, yet failed to reduce government's size and created a large budget deficit.

\* We foresee that some students may have differing opinions as to the extent of the success of the conservatives; therefore, students can be encouraged to create their own thesis statements that address their own opinions. Two possible thesis statements were written below.

*EX: The Conservative Movement succeeded in achieving its goals under the Reagan administration in the 1980's.*

*EX: The Conservative Movement under the Reagan administration failed to achieve its goals in the 1980's.*

### **Choose Evidence:**

1. *Reagan lowered income taxes by 25% which theoretically encouraged spending in order to bring the country out of a recession. It increased the Gross National Product (GNP) by 10%, but only benefited the highest-income earners.*
2. *Reagan severely cut the budgets for several social programs like Welfare, Medicaid, and job training, but he left Social Security, Veterans Pensions, and Medicare in tact.*
3. *Reagan increased military defense spending by launching the Strategic Defense Initiative, a multi-trillion dollar project. This new defense spending pushed the U.S. into huge national deficit.*

## Analyzing Evidence

Using the evidence you have chosen to support your thesis statement, complete the analysis sentence.

1. (Evidence): *Reagan lowered income taxes by 25%, which theoretically encouraged spending in order to bring the country out of a recession. It increased the Gross National Product (GNP) by 10%, but only benefited the highest-income earners.*

(Analysis): *Poor people did not benefit from the tax cuts because in reality the tax cuts did not result in a major increase in spending that would trickle down to the lower levels of the economy.*

2. (Evidence): *Reagan severely cut the budgets for several social programs like Welfare, Medicaid, and job training, but he left Social Security, Veterans Pensions, and Medicare in tact.*

(Analysis): *Under the Reagan administration, programs benefiting the poor were the first to be cut.*

3. (Evidence): *Reagan increased military defense spending, launching the Strategic Defense Initiative, a multi-trillion dollar project. This new defense spending placed the U.S. in a huge national deficit.*

(Analysis): *While Reagan ignored domestic fiscal problems, especially concerning the lower classes, he launched the nation into a tremendous debt in the name of military defense during peace time.*

From *An American Renaissance: A Strategy for the 1980's*, Jack Kemp, 1978, Harper and Row. (Chapter 1: "A Republican Revolution")

*Jack Kemp was born in 1935. He began his political career in 1971, serving nine terms as a Representative of Western New York. He served as the Secretary of Housing under George H.W. Bush. In 1996 Kemp was Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole's running mate for Vice President. Prior to his political career, Jack Kemp was a quarterback in the NFL for thirteen years. On the verge of the election of 1980, Kemp's book, An American Renaissance, would be an influential statement of Republican goals for the upcoming decade.*

Opportunity, the chance to make it and to improve your life, that's what the American dream was and is all about. What poisons that dream is when government stands in the way, throwing up roadblocks that are really unnecessary. More and more people sense along the way that they're not going to fulfill their potential, not because of a deficiency in their ambition or ability, but because of a deficiency in the political structure. Their honest ambitions are frustrated. They believe, often rightly, that somehow the flaws of government have held them back or cut them down.

What really gripes is that we also know it is not a case of an individual sacrifice for the good of all. That we could understand and appreciate when it is necessary. But more and more there is a feeling that the system is so fouled up that neither the individual good nor the collective good is being served. Instead of government serving to create a climate of opportunity, acting as the impartial referee dispensing justice, we now sense that government has become a competition. Our government is the other team — and it's winning!....

If one political party concentrates on increasing public spending and the other party concentrates on decreasing public spending, who is left to concentrate on economic growth, on the expansion of opportunities that come only from such growth? Who is left to prevent the American Dream from becoming a distant memory in an increasingly segmented, selfish, Europeanized politics — the kind of which Jefferson was so fearful? This is why a Republican revolution is so important, and why it can only come as the GOP increasingly focuses its intellectual resources and political skills on generating a climate for economic growth. Republicans must commit themselves boldly and relentlessly to real economic expansion, to the growth of opportunity, and with that a return of hope....

Is this only a pollyanish dream? Not at all. It is a vision built not on a wish but on hardheaded logic. If we only stop what we have been doing to destroy ourselves by destroying incentives, we can once again thrive. *We are the most free and most educated, creative, talented, energetic, and healthy people on earth — and we are now operating at less than half our potential, perhaps less than a third of our potential!* There's no telling what we can accomplish is only the government would get out of the way and let us load the wagon. The American Dream is not a sniveling, envious hope that everyone be leveled with everyone else. It is the freedom and encouragement to climb as high up the ladder of opportunity as possible, and obtain a just reward based upon our efforts and abilities.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**A.P.P.A.R.T.S.**

**AUTHOR:** Who created the source?  
What do you know about the author?  
What is the author's point of view?

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**PLACE AND TIME:** Where and when was the source produced? How might this affect the meaning of the source?

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**PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:** Beyond any information about the author and the context of its creation, what do you know that would help you further understand the primary source? For example, are there any markings or vocabulary that you recognize and will help you read the source?

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**AUDIENCE:** For whom was the source created and how might this affect the reliability of the source?

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**REASON:** Why was this produced at the time it was produced?

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**THE MAIN IDEA:** What point is the source trying to convey?

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**SIGNIFICANCE:** Why is the source important? Ask yourself, "so what?" in relation to the source.

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**A.P.P.A.R.T.S. (Teacher Key)**

**AUTHOR:** Who created the source?  
What do you know about the author?  
What is the author's point of view?

*(A) Jack Kemp, Conservative Republican, House of Representative member from NY, former QB of the Buffalo Bills*

**PLACE AND TIME:** Where and when was the source produced? How might this affect the meaning of the source?

*(P&T) Written in 1978, during the Carter Administration. Many Americans felt anxiety regarding the economic recession, high inflation, oil crisis. With the Presidential Election of 1980 in the upcoming year Republicans aimed to increase political control.*

**PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:** Beyond any information about the author and the context of its creation, what do you know that would help you further understand the primary source? For example, are there any markings or vocabulary that you recognize and will help you read the source?

*(PK) The use of vocabulary such as "American Dream" and "individual sacrifice for the good of all" relates to yearlong focus of citizenship and the role of the federal government.*

**AUDIENCE:** For whom was the source created and how might this affect the reliability of the source?

*(A) Kemp is writing to the nation as a whole. It can be seen as a political guide for Republicans, on how to gain control of American politics. It is in his, and his party's best interest to limit the positive influence of the Democratic Party.*

**REASON:** Why was this produced at the time it was produced?

*(R) This was written as a guide for Republican economic policy. Kemp was hoping to influence the outcome of the 1980 election.*

**THE MAIN IDEA:** What point is the source trying to convey?

*(MI) Kemp argues that due to Democratic Party leadership, the U.S. government and its economic policies are suffocating American economic growth by "throwing up road blocks"*

**SIGNIFICANCE:** Why is the source important? Ask yourself, "so what?" in relation to the source.

*(S) Kemp lays out his plans for how the Republican Party can increase its political power and recapture the trust and support of the American public.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**Writing Prompt**

**Directions:** After reading the excerpt from *An American Renaissance* and completing the “A.P.P.A.R.T.S” primary source analysis, answer the following writing prompt in a clear and organized paragraph. Use the sentence starters to frame your argument.

**Prompt:** How does Jack Kemp’s argument in this excerpt support the goals of the Conservative Movement?

According to Jack Kemp the goals of the Conservative Movement are \_\_\_\_\_

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In order to achieve these goals, Kemp suggests the Republican Party has to \_\_\_\_\_

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