

## Lesson 11: Capstone Project: What Does “Being an American” Mean to Me?

### Being an American Capstone Project Parameters and Directions

#### Guiding Questions

What does “Being an American” mean to me? What principles and virtues are common to all Americans?

Across this curriculum, you have looked at the various facets that make the United States government and its people unique.

Your final assignment will be to develop a project of your choosing that shows clear connections to the Founding Principles and Civic Virtues covered in this curriculum.

In order to create this project, you will complete the following steps:

1. Reflect on what you learned and what was meaningful to you.
2. Decide on a topic that connects to *Being an American* that you’d like to learn more about.
3. Research your topic.
4. Create a product that will educate others. This could take the form of a PowerPoint, Prezi, poster, video, brochure, or something creative. Do you like music? Consider sharing what you learned in a song. Do you like creative writing? Consider creating a poem or short story. Are you artistic? Create a painting or an annotated drawing.
5. Share what you have learned with the class in a presentation. In addition to your presentation, you will submit a written description of how your project demonstrates what you have learned across the *Being an American* curriculum and how it connects to a Founding Principle or Civic Virtue.

This project is due on: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one: I will work **alone** **with group members** on this project.

My group members are: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. Reflect on what you learned and what was meaningful to you.

Look at your answers to the “**Virtue and/or Principle I connected to or want to explore more**” column in **Appendix B: Being an American Unit Graphic Organizer** to help you think about what was most interesting to you in the curriculum. Then, write down your answers to these questions:

- Which person did you find most interesting? \_\_\_\_\_
- Which principle and/or virtue was most significant to you? \_\_\_\_\_
- What time period was most interesting to you? \_\_\_\_\_
- To come up with a topic to explore more, rank the topics you’ve listed from least to most interesting.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Then, fill in the blank below.

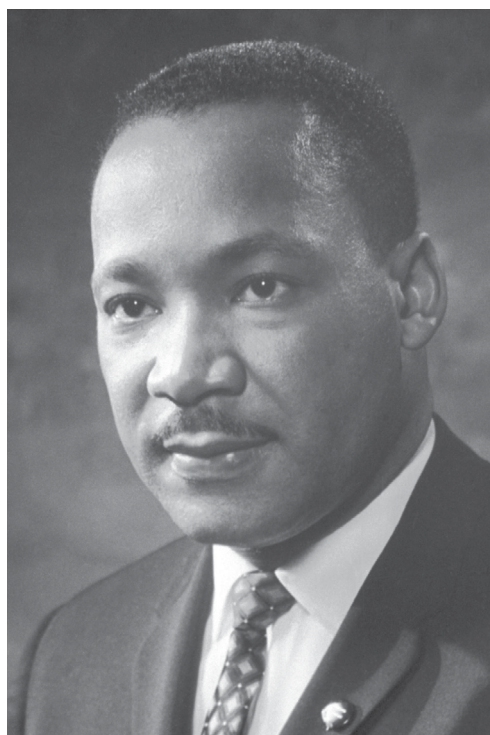
I am interested in learning about: \_\_\_\_\_ because: \_\_\_\_\_.

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## 2. Decide on a topic that connects to *Being an American* that you’d like to learn more about.

If you are most interested in learning about a **person**, why is this person interesting to you? Learn more about this person and what they did in their lifetime that makes them memorable and noteworthy. What lessons does this individual provide Americans about how to live their lives today?

**Example project title:** Being an American: The Life of Martin Luther King Jr.



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**Connection to *Being an American* F principles and virtues:** Martin Luther King Jr. worked for equality in the civil rights movement. His life and work are an example of the heroic practice of the Civic Virtues of courage and justice.

**Sample product:** Create a poster timeline of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life with images and explanations of important events that demonstrate courage and justice.

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If you are most interested in learning about a **time period**, why do you think this time period is so important to study as an American?

**Option:** Learn about another period in U.S. history that you think should be studied by all Americans. Why is this time period so important for Americans to understand?

**Example project title:** Being an American: The Civil War



**Connection to *Being an American* principles and virtues:** Enslaved people were freed because of the principles of liberty and equality. The men and women involved in the war and the struggle for freedom had to practice the Civic Virtues of perseverance and courage.

**Sample product:** Create a poster comparing the Civil War to the Founding Era, highlighting how each required perseverance and courage.

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If you are most interested in learning about the **Founding documents**, why are American Founding documents (the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights) so unique in the world?

**Option:** Compare the American system of government with the government of another country. What is life like for people living in this country compared with your life in the United States?

**Example project title:** Being an American: The Importance of the Declaration of Independence



John Trumbull, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

**Connection to *Being an American* principles and virtues:** The Declaration of Independence is the foundational document for the United States. It sets forth important principles that guide the country to this day, such as liberty and equality.

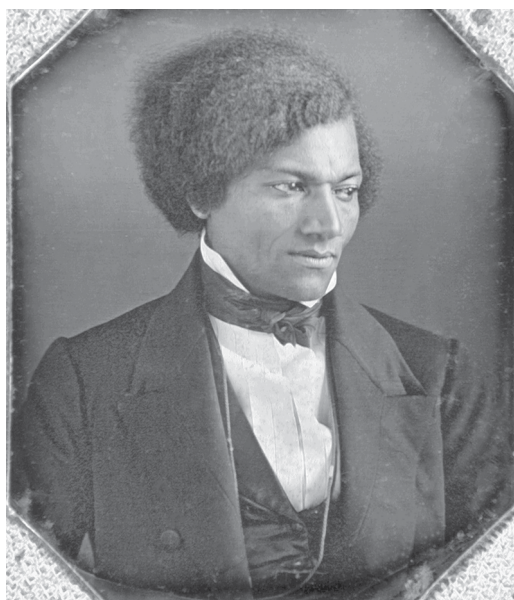
**Sample product:** Write and perform a skit about the signing of the Declaration of Independence that clearly demonstrates how liberty and equality are a foundational part of the document.

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If you are most interested in learning about a **Founding Principle or Civic Virtue**, why is this principle or virtue so important?

**Option:** Research a person whose life serves as a model example of a principle or virtue.

**Example project title:** Being an American: The Life of Frederick Douglass



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**Connection to *Being an American* principles and virtues:** Frederick Douglass embodied personal courage in his life and work. He opened many people's eyes to the horrors of slavery. He persevered in his work for equal rights for Black Americans and women until his death.

**Sample product:** Create a children's book about the life of Frederick Douglass.

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If you are most interested in learning about **Supreme Court** cases, what are some important cases the Supreme Court has considered, both past and present?

**Option:** Learn about a Supreme Court case that examines an important issue, such as freedom of speech, privacy, rights of the accused, or religious liberty.

**Example project title:** Being an American: Freedom of Speech

**Connection to *Being an American* principles and virtues:** The right to freedom of speech is part of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights. It is a foundational right that all Americans enjoy.

**Sample product:** Create a PowerPoint or Prezi about a Supreme Court case such as *Mahanoy v. B.L.* that examines the right to free speech. What did the Court decide, and why is this important to you today?

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**Brainstorm possible ideas for your project in the space below:**

My topic will be: \_\_\_\_\_

My product will be: \_\_\_\_\_

I will have the following days in class to work on this project: \_\_\_\_\_

Student signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher signature: \_\_\_\_\_