



American Mottos | Lesson Plan

How do American mottos express the nation's values and identity, and how have they changed over time?

Students will learn about the history and significance of American mottos, exploring their origins, meanings, and the values they reflect within the U.S. identity.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize the historical context and significance of key American mottos.
- Analyze how American mottos express national values and identity.
- Explore the impact of mottos on American culture and their role in unifying diverse backgrounds and beliefs.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Motto:** A short phrase or slogan that summarizes the beliefs or ideals of a country.
- **"In God We Trust":** The official motto of the United States, emphasizing the country's reliance on divine guidance.
- **"E Pluribus Unum":** A Latin phrase meaning "Out of many, one," reflecting the integration of multiple states into a single nation.
- **Great Seal of the United States:** A symbol that includes the mottos "Novus Ordo Seclorum" and "Annuit Coeptis," which represent new beginnings and divine favor.

Educational Standards: CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6, CCRA.W.2

Academic Subject Areas: Political Science, Civics, America

What You'll Need

- Video: *Street Smarts: American Mottos* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: American Mottos* (Click [Here](#))
- Index cards or sticky notes
- American currency and pictures of where American mottos appear

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Split the students into small groups and hand each group a set of mixed-up index cards or sticky notes.
2. On one set of cards, you have the mottos ("In God We Trust," "E Pluribus Unum," "Novus Ordo Seclorum," "Annuit Coeptis"), and on another set, their meanings. Students must



Scan to watch episode:

match the mottos to their correct meanings. Briefly explain each motto on the back of the meaning cards for self-checking.

3. After matching, each group discusses what they think each motto represents about American values and identity. Encourage them to consider why these mottos were chosen and what they signify about the nation's history and principles.
4. Invite each group to share one interesting motto and discuss their thoughts with the class. Prompt discussion with questions like, "Why do you think 'E Pluribus Unum' is significant for the United States?" or "How does 'In God We Trust' reflect on American society?"
5. Show images of these mottos on currency and other prominent places. Briefly discuss how these symbols and their mottos express national identity and values.
6. Give each student a copy of the "Street Smarts: American Mottos Worksheet" and display it on a screen.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, answering the blanks on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned about American mottos.
2. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.