

The American Trinity | Lesson Plan

What are the essential values that make America unique?

Introduce young children to the meaning and importance of the three values inscribed on every U.S. coin: *Liberty*, *In God We Trust*, and *E Pluribus Unum*. By understanding the significance of these values, students will gain insight into America's identity and the principles it was founded upon.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify the three components of the American Trinity.
- Describe the three components of the American Trinity.
- Explain why the American Trinity is essential to America's identity.
- Describe why the American Trinity is unique in the world.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Trinity:** A group of three, often with a Judeo-Christian connotation.
- **American Trinity:** Three values that make the United States a unique, exceptional country. The first is a belief in liberty, that everyone has the right to live in freedom. The second is a belief in God, who made and gave everyone their rights. The third is the belief that America is one united country made up of people from different faiths and backgrounds. The three values are represented by the mottos *Liberty*, *In God We Trust*, and *E Pluribus Unum*.
- **Liberty:** Having the freedom to live your life, believe what you want, and pursue happiness.
- **In God We Trust:** The official motto of the United States. It is printed on all U.S. currency today and is a reminder that belief in God was the foundation of America's commitment to individual liberty and has played an important role throughout America's history.
- **E Pluribus Unum:** A motto often used in the United States, translated from Latin, means "Out of many, one."
- **Statue of Liberty:** A 151-foot-tall copper statue in New York Harbor of a woman standing upright, dressed in a robe, holding a stone tablet in her left hand, and lifting a flaming torch in her right. The statue represents America's love of liberty.
- **Motto:** A brief statement used to express a principle, goal, or ideal.
- **Oath:** A solemn, formal promise to fulfill a pledge.
- **Citizen:** A resident of a particular location, with rights and responsibilities therein.
- **Melting pot:** A society in which immigrants of different cultures form a single culture.

Educational Standards: CCRA.R.7, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.4

Academic Topics: America, American Values, Liberty



What You'll Need

- Video: *Otto's Tales: The American Trinity* (Watch [Here](#))
- Book (Optional): *Otto's Tales: The American Trinity* (Purchase [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Otto's Tales: The American Trinity* (Click [Here](#))
- Three larger poster boards
- Art supplies (markers, glitter, crayons, etc.)
- Selection of American coins, e.g., dimes, nickels, pennies, etc.

Lesson Plan (45 mins.)

Warm-Up: (10 mins.)

1. Coin Rubbing Activity: Distribute paper and crayons to students. Lay out a selection of American coins on a central table. Guide students to make rubbings of the coins to highlight the inscriptions.
2. Facilitate a discussion where students share their observations from the rubbings. Highlight the words Liberty, In God We Trust, and E Pluribus Unum. Ask students to share their understanding of the terms, such as:
 - What do these words mean?
 - Why might these words be important enough to be on every coin?

Watch and Discuss: (15 mins.)

1. Play the video *Otto's Tales: The American Trinity* for the students.
2. Pause at the end of each mini adventure during the video to review the main idea presented.
3. Ask a few students to summarize what Otto & Dennis learned during their mini adventure.
4. Discuss the following questions:
 - What is liberty, and why is it important?
 - Why do you think the Founders emphasized trust in God?
 - What does "E Pluribus Unum" mean, and how does it apply to America?

Wrap-Up: (15 mins.)

1. Hand out the *Otto's Tales: The American Trinity* Worksheet to each student.
2. Instruct students to represent each value in the circles provided. They can draw, write, or use symbols to express their understanding.
3. After completing the worksheets, students pair up to share and discuss their representations with a partner.
4. Draw the lesson to a close by encouraging students to reflect on how the American Trinity relates to their own lives:
 - Can you think of a time when you got to choose your own snack or activity? How does that relate to the concept of liberty?
 - Why do you think it's important for people to trust in something bigger than themselves, like faith in God or each other?

- How can we show unity and respect for each other despite our differences?

Optional Extension Activity:

Check for Understanding Activity:

- Separate the classroom into three areas (e.g., whiteboard, cubbies, door) and assign a component of the American Trinity to each section.
- Describe a concept or synonym related to one of the values and direct students to move to the correct area.
- Examples: “This word means freedom” (Liberty), “This is like a melting pot” (E Pluribus Unum), “This motto is about trusting in something bigger” (In God We Trust).

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

Watch the video *Otto's Tales: The American Trinity*. Ask students to summarize the values of the American Trinity: *Liberty*, *In God We Trust*, and *E Pluribus Unum*. Have them complete the “Otto's Tales: The American Trinity Worksheet,” which can be used as a formative assessment.