



Common Core Reading Informational Standards

Focus: The Spirit of the Age (Research Assignment Day 2)

Overview

This research-based assignment focuses on the term zeitgeist and uses it as a jumping-off point to explore how seminal documents of U.S. history reflect and influence the spirit of the times. Groupwork and presentations are stressed here.

Standards

- 9-10.RI.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- 9-10.RI.2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- 9-10.RI.3. Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.
- 9-10.RI.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
- 9-10.RI.5. Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).
- 9-10.RI.6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- 9-10.RI.7. Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program

www.rpd.net

**515 West Cheyenne, Suite C
North Las Vegas, NV 89030**

**(702) 799-3828
FAX (702) 799-3821**



- 9-10.RI.8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.
- 9-10.RI.9. Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.

Objectives

- To create a rhetorical map of each seminal text.
- To practice strategies for teaching the seminal works.

Materials

Copies of the following seminal works:

- [*The Declaration of Independence*](#)
- [*“Speech to the Second Virginia Convention”*](#) by Patrick Henry
- [*“Second Inaugural Address”*](#) by Abraham Lincoln
- [*“State of the Union Address”*](#) by Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- [*“I Am an American Day Address”*](#) by Learned Hand
- [*“Remarks to the Senate in Support of a Declaration of Conscience”*](#) by Margaret Chase Smith
- [*“Hope, Despair and Memory”*](#) by Elie Wiesel
- [*“Address to Students at Moscow State University”*](#) by Ronald Reagan
- Computers
- Projector
- Folder that all students can access for saving documents

Activity 1: Introduction to Zeitgeist

Lecture

Review with students the basic principles of rhetoric and argument covered in previous lessons, making sure to address the following ideas:

Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program

www.rpdp.net

**515 West Cheyenne, Suite C
North Las Vegas, NV 89030**

**(702) 799-3828
FAX (702) 799-3821**



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Claim• Counterclaim• Warrants• Thesis• Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pathos• Ethos• Logos• Fallacy
---	--

Definition: Zeitgeist

Ask students if any know the definition of “zeitgeist.” This is an uncommon term for many freshmen and sophomores, but you never know!

Zeitgeist (from the German words *time* and *spirit*). Zeitgeist is the “spirit of the times,” the overall cultural, literary, political, ideological, scientific, and moral climate or essence of a nation during a particular era or time.

Video

Watch and discuss Jung video: [Jung on the Psyche](#).

Individual Writing/ Journal Writing

Students should be encouraged to write about the following topics in a response journal or informal writing responses to be turned in.

- What is your specific connection to this age in which we live? How do you fit within this age’s zeitgeist? Do you see yourself as part of this culture or apart from it, or close to some elements but not others? Give examples and explanations. (Note: Give the students several minutes to ponder and respond to this question in their journals before proceeding to the next question.)
- Think of your favorite writer or writers, whether fictional or nonfictional. How much connection does your favorite writer have to his or her era? How much did her or his writing affect the era in which s/he wrote? How much does this writer’s work reflect or mirror issues present in the era in which s/he wrote?
- Support your writing with specific examples from an actual book or writer. CAPITAL LETTERS (used for specific names, titles, authors, et cetera) are your friends!



Small-Group and Whole-Group Discussion

Give students a couple of minutes to share with one another and then bring it into a full class discussion. (Hopefully what will be found is that the writers they admire are connected to their eras.)

NOTE: For homework, separate students into groups and have them read and annotate one document from among the following choices.

Important Texts

- [*The Declaration of Independence*](#)
- ["Speech to the Second Virginia Convention"](#) by Patrick Henry
- ["Second Inaugural Address"](#) by Abraham Lincoln
- ["State of the Union Address"](#) by Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- ["I Am an American Day Address"](#) by Learned Hand
- ["Remarks to the Senate in Support of a Declaration of Conscience"](#) by Margaret Chase Smith
- ["Hope, Despair and Memory"](#) by Elie Wiesel
- ["Address to Students at Moscow State University"](#) by Ronald Reagan

Students can be assigned a document or may choose their own, depending on the needs and nature of the class.

Activity 2: Authors in Their Times

Lecture

Explain that just as their favorite authors both reflect and influence their era, so do the writers of those crucial works that are part of the core of American literature.

Small Groups

In small groups, students should compare notes about the document they all read and annotated. They should be given time within class, possibly over several periods, to accomplish the following tasks:

Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program

www.rpdp.net

**515 West Cheyenne, Suite C
North Las Vegas, NV 89030**

**(702) 799-3828
FAX (702) 799-3821**



Group Project – The Zeitgeist of a Seminal Document

- Create a brief timeline for your document. Include the following on your timeline:
 - The year the document was written
 - The events that led to this document’s creation
 - The effect the document had on our nation
- Create a brief biography of the author
 - Include Internet links and resources for further study
- Create a brief written analysis of the document which contains the following:
 - The intended audience
 - The desired effect or purpose
 - The actual effect or purpose
 - A list of any logical fallacies the author may have used
 - Note: There may not be any fallacies present – the authors here tend to avoid the “tricks” involved in fallacy. However, be on the lookout anyway.
 - Discussion questions to look further into the piece
 - Note: A good question-starter is the word “Why,” as in “Why does Lincoln say we cannot consecrate the ground of the battle of Gettysburg?”
 - Connections to any other literary works or historical events
 - For example, did your author make an allusion to a famous text? To a religious work like the Bible? To a historical event?

Small Groups

Groups work on the document. One helpful way of coordinating information between and among students would be to use [Google docs](https://docs.google.com) for this and other projects. Google Docs fosters creative collaboration with groups and is an invaluable resource to ensure that all students can contribute to a group project.

Note: Obviously, if you are not familiar with Google Docs, it is helpful to “play” with it before implementing this lesson to see how your students can use it as a collaborative tool.



Some groups may finish earlier than others. So they are not idle, ask them to search their author's contemporaries and look for parallel documents. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "[Declaration of Sentiments](#)" gets into a fascinating "conversation" with the Declaration of Independence.

Activity 3

Group Presentation

Groups can present their documents to the remainder of the class. Be certain each group has enough copies of their document for the entire class. Give each group approximately fifteen minutes to present.

Closing

Instruct the students that any groups that did not have sufficient time to present can present on the following day. Focus on the importance of stressing the most important or effective section of the document. Above all, explain clearly how the document fits into the zeitgeist of the era – and that means BOTH how the document came out of the era's concerns and problems AND how the document itself affected the era afterwards.



Resources

Specific to this lesson:

- Zeitgeist [Wikipedia](#) (As much as I loathe using the reference, the definition is correct.)
- The Jung Page - [Zeitgeist in terms of Jung](#)
- [Jung on the Psyche](#) - Youtube video
- [The Jung Center of Houston](#)
- [Carl Jung](#) - a brief biography and summary of Jungian theories by Dr. C. George Boeree
- [Literary Archetypes](#) - a list
- [The Declaration of Independence](#)
- ["Speech to the Second Virginia Convention"](#) by Patrick Henry
- ["Second Inaugural Address"](#) by Abraham Lincoln
- ["State of the Union Address"](#) by Franklin Delano Roosevelt
- ["I Am an American Day Address"](#) by Learned Hand
- ["Remarks to the Senate in Support of a Declaration of Conscience"](#) by Margaret Chase Smith
- ["Hope, Despair and Memory"](#) by Elie Wiesel
- ["Address to Students at Moscow State University"](#) by Ronald Reagan

Google Docs

- [Demo](#)
- [Getting started](#)

General for these seminal texts:

American History Sites

- [National Endowment for the Humanities](#)
- [Teaching American History](#)
- [Lessons on Abraham Lincoln's first election](#)
- [Our Documents](#) - a resource for American Documents
- [American Rhetoric](#) - a resource for American speeches
- [The Charters of Freedom](#) - original documents
- [JSTOR Judge Hand](#) information
- [Brief biography of Learned Hand](#)



- [Senate Art & History Home](#)
- Classic Senate Speeches: [Margaret Chase Smith's](#)
- [Senate Biography Margaret Chase Smith](#)
- [Official Site of the Nobel Prize](#)
- [Video of Elie Wiesel](#) giving his Nobel speech
- [Ronald Reagan Library](#)
- [Video of Reagan](#) delivering his "Address to Students at Moscow State University" (Youtube so you might need to download at home)