

Refining a Driving Question

Sample Project: "American Archetypes"

High School U.S. History Standards:

11.3.1: Describe the contributions of various religious groups to American civic principles and social reform movements (e.g., civil and human rights, individual responsibility and the work ethic, antimonarchy and self-rule, worker protection, family-centered communities).

11.8.8: Discuss forms of popular culture, with emphasis on their origins and geographic diffusion.

8.7.2: Trace the origins and development of slavery.

8.8.2: Describe the purpose, challenges, and economic incentives associated with westward expansion, including the concept of Manifest Destiny (e.g., Lewis and Clark expedition, accounts of removal of Indians, the Cherokees' "Trail of Tears," settlement of the Great Plains) and the territorial acquisitions that spanned numerous decades.

Project Overview:

Students are put into marketing teams for major food corporations and asked to review their corporation's choice of an archetypal character to sell their product (Puritan Oil, Calumet Baking Soda, Marlboro cigarettes, Aunt Jemima syrup, etc.). Students research the historical features of their group's archetype and then determine if that archetype is appropriate for the values of modern America and attractive to consumers. Students present their findings to a panel of community members, including some with marketing expertise.

Major Student Work:

- Oral presentation (group)
- Written recommendation (group)
- Research report (group)
- Customer survey (group)
- Mini-project research paper (individual)
- Cover letter (individual)

Driving Question Options:

1. *How do the dominant character archetypes (the Cowboy, the Native American, the slave, the Puritan, etc.) in U.S. history still embody our values?*

2. *Why do companies use the dominant character archetypes (the Cowboy, the Native American, the slave, the Puritan, etc.) in U.S. history to sell their products?*

Your Task: Refine, improve, rewrite or create an original Driving Question that is appropriate for the standards under study and the work required of the students.