



Hip Hop Lesson Plan

Subject: History

Theme: 1980s America: this lesson will cover the social impact of President Reagan's domestic policies for African Americans.

Learning objectives:

- Understand 'Reaganomics'
- Understand the term 'rugged individualism' and its' limitations
- Analyse the impact of Reaganomics at a human level
- Increase confidence in reading ability
- Use literary analysis of primary source to cite evidence of the impact of Reaganomics

Lesson overview:

In 1981, Ronald Reagan became President of the United States and remained in office until 1989. Reagan's presidency is often characterized by his domestic policies, particularly his economic policies.

The goals of Reaganomics were:

- 1) To reinstitute Herbert Hoover's idea of 'rugged individualism', the belief that all individuals can succeed on their own and government help should be minimal.
- 2) Reduce Government spending – through cuts to social programs like urban mass transit, food stamps, welfare benefits, Medicaid, school lunches and student loans.

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- 3) Cut taxes – explain the concept of supply-side economics and the ‘trickle down’ theory.
 - 4) Deregulate government – cut federal entitlement programs, removed price controls for oil, trains, telephones. Deregulated the savings and loans industry.
 - 5) Reduce inflation – Reagan did successfully reduce inflation from 13.5% to 3.2%, BUT unemployment levels peaked in 1982 exceeding 10%, rendering more Americans jobless than at any time since the Great Depression. African American unemployment was at 43.6% during the Reagan years.

Discussion questions:

Do you think that rugged individualism is possible for all social groups in America?

What were the limitations of ‘rugged individualism’? Who would this help/who would this leave out?

Who do you think reduced government spending affected and who wasn’t affected?

Who did supply side economics benefit?

Do you think music produced in the 1980s is a valuable primary source? Why/Why not?

Activity:

We will now look at the two primary sources of the African American experience.

Students will silently read source 1 and afterward each student will read two lines each around the circle. After reading, students will partake in text rendering, to “delay initial response to texts and provoke thoughtful response.”¹ Follow same order with the second source.

¹ Mark Lamont Hill, *Beats, Rhymes, And Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy And The Politics Of Identity*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009), p.26

Now split into groups of three and analyse set text before reporting back what the texts say about the social effect of Reaganomics. Provide leading questions on the board like:

What does the primary source say are the social implications of Reaganomics?

Does this source suggest limitations of rugged individualism? What is the tone of the source? What do the dates of publication imply?

Final task: students will write a source analysis for each text, discussing the African American experience of Reaganomics. Ask students to compare, do both texts have the same outlook, is one more powerful than the other? Why? How do the sources show the effect of reduced public spending? Is there a call to action? What is interesting about using music as a platform for voicing issues?

Primary source 1:

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, *The Message*, (New York: Sugar Hill Records, 1982), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4o8TeqKhgY>> [accessed 31 October 2017]

It's like a jungle sometimes

It makes me wonder how I keep from going under

It's like a jungle sometimes

It makes me wonder how I keep from going under

Broken glass everywhere

People pissing on the stairs, you know they just don't care

I can't take the smell, can't take the noise

Got no money to move out, I guess I got no choice
Rats in the front room, roaches in the back
Junkies in the alley with a baseball bat
I tried to get away but I couldn't get far
'Cause a man with a tow truck repossessed my car

[Hook]

Don't push me, 'cause I'm close to the edge
I'm trying not to lose my head
It's like a jungle sometimes
It makes me wonder how I keep from going under

The bill collectors, they ring my phone
And scare my wife when I'm not home
Got a bum education, double-digit inflation
Can't take the train to the job, there's a strike at the station

Primary source 2:

Eric B. and Rakim, *Teach The Children* (New York: MCA Records, 1992),

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4IIFGuj4Bw>> [accessed 31 October 2017]

No more time to pass time cause these are the last rhymes
Cause we're living in the last times
They wanna go to war, more wars to come
But most of us fight more wars than one

Discrimination in the racial nation

But they wanna fight for more oil and gold

Unemployment, I got laid off

The streets is the last resorts to get paid off

For more, more mint, no dough for rent

I gotta shed blood to make a red cent

Maybe I should ask the president

Somebody get me the president

But he don't want to hear it, it's out of the question

Cause in my section it's worse than recession

So I go to a rich neighborhood and play Robin Hood

Take from the bad and give to the good

First I go to Bensonhurst, steal a Benz, snatch a purse

Pick up my friends, that's when it gets worse

Cause I need government and they need government

A lot of mint spent, now I gotta pay rent

Bibliography:

B., Erik, and Rakim, *Teach The Children* (New York: MCA Records, 1992),

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4IIFGuj4Bw>> [accessed 31 October 2017]

Flash, Grandmaster, and The Furious Five, *The Message*, (New York: Sugar Hill Records,

1982), <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4o8TeqKhgY>> [accessed 31 October

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Hill, Mark Lamont, *Beats, Rhymes, And Classroom Life: Hip-Hop Pedagogy And The Politics Of Identity*, (New York: Teachers College Press, 2009.)