CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

This lesson fits in perfectly with units that address curriculum standards in English/ language arts, media studies, visual art, social studies, civics, economics, thinking and reasoning, history, and business.

SAMPLE STANDARDS ALIGNMENTS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4 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).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.MATH.CONTENT.HSS.ID.C.9 Distinguish between correlation and causation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C Propose conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
LESSON PREPARATION

- Prepare a monitor with Internet access to screen the short film, “Recession” at www.wetheeconomy.com/films (TRT 6:49)
- Prepare copies of Student Handouts for distribution

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Recession, economic bubble, Federal Reserve, economy, optimism

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn about the economic phenomenon known as a recession.
- Students will learn the importance and impact of human nature on the economy.
- Students will work individually, in pairs, and in small groups to develop a creative response.
- Students will analyze the different media through which information can be communicated.

REQUIREMENTS

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard and markers, chalkboard and chalk, or chart paper and markers
- Monitor/ projector, and computer with Internet access
- Student Handout: Economic Cycles

TIME:

- 1 class period

TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS

Vocabulary building, large group discussion, small group work, problem solving, critical and analytical thinking, comparing and contrasting information sources, communicating ideas, weighing pros and cons, research skills, listening skills, categorizing and organizing ideas
PROCEDURES

1. Write the following terms on the whiteboard, chalkboard, or on chart paper in the front of the room: FEAR and CONFIDENCE.

2. Ask students what they think of when they think of FEAR. Brainstorm associations, connotations, and definitions from the class. Chart their responses on the board or chart paper as a word web. Repeat the same process for the term CONFIDENCE.

3. When the board or chart paper is full, ask the students to think about how these two things—fear and confidence—affect human behavior. Use some or all of the following questions to guide the discussion:
   - What makes people afraid? How do people act when they are afraid?
   - What makes people confident and secure? How do people act when they are confident and secure?
   - How do you feel when you’re around someone who is afraid? What about someone who exudes security and confidence?
   - Imagine that you are in a relationship, and you’re afraid that your boyfriend/girlfriend is cheating on you. Describe how you might act or what you might do. How might this behavior negatively affect the people around you? How might it negatively affect your relationship?
   - Alternatively, imagine that you’re in a relationship, and you feel confident and secure that your boyfriend/girlfriend loves you. How might you behave in this scenario? What impact would this behavior have on your relationship?

4. Ask the class if they know what the word “recession” means. Elicit responses from the group. Then, provide the following dictionary definition of the word: “a recession is a significant decline in economic activity spread across the entire economy, lasting more than a few months.”

5. Describe what an economic slow-down looks like: unemployment goes up, retail sales go down, average household income goes down, prices go up, bankruptcy rates go up, banks are less likely to provide loans, housing market begins to slow, property values go down. Ask the class what emotional response people might have to these kinds of economic events. Encourage them to relate this back to the earlier discussion. How would this emotional response (fear, anxiety, dread, worry, concern) affect people’s behavior, and, in turn, affect their environment?

6. Ask students to imagine that not just one person experienced this emotional response, but millions of people did, simultaneously. How might this affect the country at large? How might it affect the country’s economy?

7. Tell the class that they will now watch a short film on the topic of recession, particularly focusing on the relationship between this economic event and human nature.

9. Conduct a whole group discussion about the film, using some or all of the following questions as a guide:

- What causes a recession? What makes recessions unpredictable?
- How does the film relate extreme weather events, such as drought, to the economy?
- What is the “fear fairy”? What is the “confidence fairy”?
- According to the film, how do recessions spread?
- Explain the relationship between a drought, fear, and unemployment in a recession, according to the film.
- Why won’t banks loan money as freely in a recession as in good economic times?
- How can the government help to ease a recession?
- What do governmental programs such as public works, tax cuts, and the lowering of interest rates affect the national economy?
- What did you notice about how the story was told in the film? Why do you think the filmmaker chose to use dancers to tell the story of recession?
- How does the use of pantomime mirror the content of the piece – the idea that recessions are about human nature, and that “at the bottom of all recessions both fear and confidence are … battling each other for control over the hearts and minds of men”?
- How does it make you feel to learn that recessions – nationwide, extended economic downturns – are a function of emotion? Explain.
- What art forms do you think best lend themselves to the depiction of different human emotions? Explain.
- What did you notice about the music in this film? What did the music communicate?

10. Distribute Student Handout: Economic Cycles to the class, and allow 10 minutes for students to complete it individually or in pairs. Or, alternatively, recreate the circle graphs that are on the handout on the whiteboard, chalkboard, or chart paper, and complete the activity as a large group.
PROCEDURES CONTINUED

11. Count the class off in 5’s. For homework, assign the following: Present the information from today’s handout – the cycles of recession and economic recovery – in the form of a piece of art. Just as Lee Hirsch (the director of Recession) chose to use modern dance to tell his story, now you can be creative, imaginative, and think outside the box – to tell the story of economic recession and recovery through your assigned form of art. Remember to not just tell the story, but also be sure to impart the information necessary to understand the story and its implications. Think of the film as you design your own interpretive artistic response.

If you are a….

…1 – then your assignment is to tell the story through visual art – drawing, painting, sculpture, etc.

…2 – then your assignment is to tell the story through poetry.

…3 – then your assignment is to tell the story through music.

…4 – then your assignment is to tell the story through theater - skit, performance, drama, etc.

…5 – then your assignment is to tell the story through fictional narrative - story, parable, myth, etc.

Note: Students can work individually or in groups to complete this assignment. Students may watch the film again at home by going to www.wetheeconomy/films/, and can incorporate data or information from other sources including films, books, articles, etc.
DIRECTIONS: Plot the variables listed below on each of the circles to illustrate how they all work together to create a cycle of economic recession or a cycle of economic recovery. Feel free to add your own variables to the graph.

- Banks loan/invest liberally
- Banks refuse to loan/invest
- Fear
- Confidence
- Median income goes up
- Median income goes down
- People spend money/buy things
- People save money and do not spend
- Industries produce more
- Industries produce less
- Unemployment goes up
- Unemployment goes down