



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2010 Volume I: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Consumer Culture

Government Policy through the Lens of Suburban Development

Guide for Curriculum Unit 10.01.01
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This unit seeks to teach both the history of the post-war American suburb and the process by which the federal government makes policy decisions. The students will explore the historical forces that led to suburban growth. While the policy-making process is often shrouded in secrecy, the policies that spurred the creation of modern suburbs are surprisingly well documented. Additionally, the consequences of these policies are obvious to most Americans every day. Thus the history of modern suburbs allows teaching of the policy-making process in real terms, while assessing its real consequences. This unit will help students to understand the consumer dimensions to these policies, thereby allowing them to explore the cultural ramifications of policy decisions as well.

Approaching the policy-making process in this way allows students the opportunity to understand and evaluate the decisions that led to their towns, their schools and their lifestyles. The students will come away with a clearer understanding of their government and their own history. As a result, the students can build on their critical thinking skills and content knowledge, allowing them to understand and evaluate the world in which they live.

(Recommended for U.S. History, Civics, and Government, grades 11 and 12)

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