

Our Community in the 20th Century

Putting Local History in a National Context

Tools		
<i>Kit software:</i> ABC-CLIO's American History Online; TimeLiner; World Book Encyclopedia	<i>Other:</i> Computers; the Internet; AppleWorks; EdView	<i>Optional:</i> A digital camcorder; iMovie; Inspiration; The Writing Trek

Project Duration

Four to six class sessions over several weeks

Introduction

By studying history, we gain insights into the present and begin to understand it as the product of a variety of interacting trends and forces working over time. Similarly, by seeing a local place in the context of a larger geographical and political area, we understand how that place fits into larger patterns. What exciting learning happens when we give students the chance both to study history and to see their community in a larger context?

Project Overview

In this project, groups of students research five different facets of twentieth-century American history and construct banner timelines to portray the developments in each area. Students then research the history of their community (or region or state) during the same time period, construct a single banner timeline documenting this local history, and then align all six timelines in a museum-type display in a public place.

Phase 1: Investigating change during the twentieth century

Ask students to form five groups, and give each group its assignment: to research a particular facet of twentieth-century American history (see the Facilitation Tips for Phase 1 for suggested categories) in preparation for building a TimeLiner timeline that chronicles this history. Before research begins, hold a class discussion in which groups clarify what should be included in their areas.

Each group collects its information (which may include images, text, URLs, and student-written notes) in TimeLiner. Available resources include the Internet (see the Resources section), American History Online, World Book Encyclopedia, and ready-made TimeLiner timelines.

Phase 2: Making sense of a century of events

Groups now shift to the task of building coherent timelines out of the information they have collected. Working in TimeLiner's Banner view, they select meaningful events for inclusion in the timeline, and add graphics and labels. Groups may need to do more research in order to decide which events are most important and to understand their significance.

Phase 3: Focusing on local history

Students form five new groups, each of which should include at least one member from each of the previous groups. Each group is assigned a 20-year segment of the twentieth century, and given the task of researching the history of the community during this period. This research is carried out by searching the Internet, libraries, and public archives and by going out into the community to interview local officials, historians, senior citizens, and other informants. Each group uses the information it collects to create a local history timeline representing its 20-year segment of the century.

Phase 4: Putting local history in context

Assign each of the current groups one of the timelines completed in Phase 2. Groups edit and modify these timelines to reflect new understandings and to get them ready for printing and display. Meanwhile, one volunteer from each group splits off to form a sixth group that merges the five local timelines into a single timeline and edits its content and format. All six timelines are then printed and displayed in one or more public locations.

Technical and Facilitation Tips

Facilitation Tips: Phase 1

- Suggested categories for group assignments are as follows:
 - Technology & Science (discoveries, innovations, methods of production, scientists, engineers, communication systems, transportation systems)
 - Culture (art, literature, popular culture, fashion, cultural institutions, authors, composers, cultural movements, architectural styles)
 - Population/Movement (immigration, population growth, statehood, urbanization, growth of suburbs, population shifts between regions)
 - Society & Politics (wars, ethnic and racial conflict, civil rights, women's rights, political parties, elections, laws, court decisions, government programs)
 - Economy (labor unions and strikes, economic growth, depressions and recessions, federal economic policies)
- During the discussion of the five categories, it may be helpful to build lists of the types of information that fit into each category.

- In the initial discussion that launches this project, you may want to include an explicit focus on some of the “big ideas” in twentieth-century American history (see the Background Information section). These big ideas can give students a context for understanding individual events in history.
- During this phase, groups are building databases more than they are constructing timelines (even though the information they are collecting can always be displayed in timeline form). These databases will necessarily contain more information than the timelines created from them in the next phase.
- Students should be given at least two class sessions to complete this phase.

Tech Tips: Phase 1

- The ready-made timelines in TimeLiner offer a wealth of information for this phase. Single events, groups of events, and whole timelines can be copied into a group’s timeline. The ready-made TimeLiner timelines listed here would be useful during this phase:
 - Many of the timelines in the American History section
 - Civil Rights (African-American History section)
 - Big Events in the US (Dinosaurs & Other Big Stuff section)
 - Percent of Labor Force, Women’s Rights (Women in History section)
 - Communications, Transportation Events (Science & Technology section)
 - State Populations 2000 (Hispanic Americans section)
- To copy an event from one timeline (including a ready-made timeline) to another of the same type, select the event and choose Copy from the Edit menu. Then go to the other timeline and choose Paste from the Edit menu. (The event will be put in the correct location as determined by its date.) To select two or more contiguous events for copying and pasting, select the event at one end of the range, then hold down the Shift key and select the event at the other end of the range.
- Any text that students locate in the course of their research can be pasted into the Notes field of any TimeLiner event. This text will not be displayed (nor will it print) on a banner timeline, but it can be viewed at any time and used as a reference for understanding the event, writing appropriate labels relating to the event, and describing the event accurately in the What box. To open the Notes field, select the event, then click Edit on the clock toolbar. Click the Notes tab.
- To find information on a specific topic in American History Online, follow these steps:
 - 1** Go to the American History Online site at www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com and log in. If you have not yet activated your subscription, you need to first go to www.abc-clio.com/apple.
 - 2** Click the Advanced Search button on the Home page.
 - 3** Type a topic in the Search Text box.
 - 4** Click to select Title for “Sort Results by.”
 - 5** In the topics section, select the boxes for all the time periods that include the twentieth century.
 - 6** Click the Go button. A list of resources is displayed.

- 7 Click the hyperlink for that resource.
- 8 To print an article, go to the bottom of the article, click the hyperlink labeled “Printable version,” and then print the page from your browser.
- 9 To copy an image, position the pointer on the image, hold down the mouse button, and then choose “Download Image to Disk” (or the equivalent) from the pop-up menu. The image is saved as a JPEG file, which can be added to a TimeLiner document.

Facilitation Tips: Phase 2

- The challenge in this phase is for students to move from a simple collection of events listed in chronological order to a timeline that clearly shows patterns of change and development and can help a viewer to really understand the history it depicts. The following questions may help students meet this challenge:
 - Science & Technology group: How did advances in transportation technology help fuel the growth of cities (in the early part of the century) and then suburbs (after 1950)?
 - Culture group: How did changes in fashion and style reflect the growth of mass communication, consumerism, and the middle class throughout the century?
 - Population/Movement group: What factors were behind the movement of people away from rural areas and into the cities?
 - Society & Politics group: How were the civil rights and feminist movements related to long-term changes in the economy?
 - Economy group: What events were most important in causing the federal government to increase its role in regulating the economy?
- To create more meaningful timelines, groups can create timeline labels in which they describe trends, explain changes over time, point out why certain events are significant, and relate events to some of the overall changes in American society that occurred during this period (see the discussion of “big ideas” in the Background Information section). For example, an event on the timeline may indicate the beginning of Roosevelt’s presidency or the beginning of the New Deal, while a label above this event can explain what the New Deal meant in terms of government involvement in the economy.
- It is important for groups to describe events in a way that shows their larger meaning. When a new event is created, there is enough space in the What box to include more than just a bare-bones description. For example, the beginning of the Works Progress Administration can be described as “Works Progress Administration established to put Americans back to work. Important feature of Roosevelt’s New Deal program.” (If an event’s flag becomes too large for the timeline, its font can be reduced in size.)
- Photographs added to the banner timelines can increase their impact and meaning, but groups should be careful to avoid cluttering their timelines with too many images.
- If time is limited, this phase can be accomplished in a single class session, but students will learn more and produce a better final display if given more time.

Tech Tips: Phase 2

- Each group should choose a different flag or font style for the events on its timeline; these different styles will be used in the local history timeline constructed in Phase 3. To change the flag style of an event, select the event, choose Choose Style from the Edit menu, and click the button for the appropriate style. To change the flag style of all events on a timeline (as long as they are of the same category), choose Select All Events from the Edit menu before choosing Choose Style. Since there are five categories/groups and only four flag styles, two groups will have to use the same flag style; but these groups can distinguish their event flags by choosing different font styles or colors. This is done in the same dialog box where flag styles are changed.
- Groups should work with two separate TimeLiner files during this phase: the extensive, database-oriented timeline created in Phase 1, and a new timeline that will be the product of this phase. This new timeline can be a copy of the first timeline (in which case events are removed) or it can be created from scratch, with selected events copied into it from the first timeline.
- The labels available in the Banner view of TimeLiner are important tools for making a timeline more meaningful. They can contain text of any length and be positioned anywhere.
- To resize a picture placed on a banner timeline, click the picture to select it, then grab one of the corner anchors and drag it in or out. This will preserve the proportions of the picture (whereas dragging the side anchors will change the proportions).
- To keep the timelines from becoming too crowded, you can expand them to change their scale (click the Expand button on the clock toolbar). All the timelines must eventually have exactly the same time scale, so it is helpful to coordinate groups' use of the expansion feature. In Banner view, vertical dashed lines show where page breaks will occur when the timelines are printed; counting pages is a good rough measure of a timeline's size.
- Another way of keeping a timeline from becoming too crowded is to reduce the font size of events. Select the appropriate event or events, choose Choose Event Font from the Edit menu, and change the font size. You can change the font size of all events on a timeline (as long as they all belong to the same category) by first choosing Select All Events from the Edit menu.

Facilitation Tips: Phase 3

- Libraries often have issues of the local newspaper going back many years, sometimes on microfilm. These old newspapers are an excellent historical resource, especially when the goal is to find out more about a known event.
- The local history timelines should use the same five categories that defined the groups in Phases 1 and 2, and each of these categories should correspond to a particular flag or font style. TimeLiner offers an easy way of coordinating categories and flag styles—see the Tech Tips for Phase 3. Make sure that all the groups are using the same flag/font style for each category.
- The local history timeline segments should be constructed in light of the research done in Phases 1 and 2. Throughout, students will be asking themselves, “How does this relate to what was going on in the country as a whole at this time? How does this connect with a larger national pattern?” As with the other timelines, labels can be used to make these kinds of connections.
- If your community is small or was established after 1900, you may want to extend the local focus to the county, the region, or even the state or province.

- The duration of this phase is open-ended, depending in part on the size of the student community and the quality, quantity, and accessibility of historical resources. Since the research part of this phase doesn't occupy class time, it may be possible to allow students several weeks to gather their information.

Tech Tips: Phase 3

- The easiest way to assign categories to events is to do so when each event is created. After clicking the New Event button on the clock toolbar and typing the information for When and What, click the Category tab. Then select an existing category from the pop-up menu, or choose New Category and supply the name of the new category.
- If every event in the local timeline segment is assigned one of the five categories during the construction of the timeline, it is possible to give each category a unique flag/font style in one single process. In Banner view, choose Categories from the Edit menu. Choose one of the categories from the list and then click the button labeled "Select all Events in [category name]" and click Done. Now, return to the Edit menu and choose Choose Style. Select the appropriate flag style (and change the font style and color if desired or necessary) and then click OK.

Facilitation Tips: Phase 4

- Good places to post the timelines include an important hallway in the school, a public library, a local community center, an historical museum, an elementary or middle school, a transit center, and a local business.
- To make it easier for viewers to see the timelines in terms of vertical slices, students can pin lengths of string across all the timelines to mark each decade.
- Using AppleWorks, students can create a title for the timeline display, along with explanatory text.
- It should be possible to complete this phase in a single class session.

Tech Tips: Phase 4

- To merge one or more separate timelines in TimeLiner:
 - 1 With one timeline open, click the Merge button on the clock toolbar.
 - 2 Select the file containing the timeline you want to merge with the current one. Click Open.
 - 3 Repeat steps 1 and 2 to merge additional timelines.
- Students should make sure that all the timelines will "line up" perfectly when they are printed. For this to occur, the timelines must all have the same beginning and ending dates, and they must all be expanded to the same degree.

Outcomes

After completing this project, students will be able to

- identify some of the most significant historical events in the United States during the twentieth century
- explain why the events were significant

- describe some effective methods of local historical research, and name specific locations of historical documents in the community
- outline the history of the local community during the twentieth century
- identify major changes in the local community during the twentieth century, and explain how these changes relate to changes, trends, and events on a national scale

In addition, students will have

- improved their teamwork skills
- gained an understanding of how their lives in the present have been shaped by history, both locally and nationally
- learned skills or acquired knowledge relating to each of the state and national standards referred to in the Project Standards section

Project Standards

From the Secondary Language Arts & Social Studies Web site, you can identify select state curriculum standards and national educational technology standards that correlate to this student project. To locate these standards, go to the kit Web site and click the Curriculum button. Locate and open this student project and click the “Project Standards” button.

Assessment Suggestions

For Phase 2, you (alone or together with students) can develop a checklist that will help students assess their timelines and determine if they are ready to move on to Phase 3. The checklist can include items such as the following:

- The events included on the timeline are all significant.
- All the important events related to the timeline’s subject are included.
- Each event can be understood as part of a trend or a pivotal moment, or can be related to other events.
- Labels have been used extensively and effectively.
- The timeline is visually interesting and clearly laid out.

The local timeline segments created in Phase 3 can be assessed by means of a teacher-created rubric. The rubric’s criteria can include items similar to those listed above (for assessment of Phase 2 timelines), as well as such items as the following: Events can be related to history on a national level; Events are appropriately divided into the five categories.

Preparation

- Review and print any of the Step-by-Step Cards that your students may find useful during this project. These may include “Searching World Book Encyclopedia 2001,” “Searching the Internet With EdView,” “TimeLiner Basics,” “Working With TimeLiner Timelines,” and “Modifying the Layout of a Banner Timeline in TimeLiner.”

- If your students are new to TimeLiner, ask them to complete the TimeLiner WalkThrough located in the teacher’s guide on the product’s CD to familiarize themselves with the program.

Resources

Internet

American Cultural History: The 20th Century

<http://www.nhmccd.edu/contracts/lrc/kc/decades.html>

American History Archive Project

<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/k12/history/aha.html>

ABC-CLIO’s American History Online

<http://www.americanhistory.abc-clio.com>

(Activate your subscription at www.abc-clio.com/apple/)

Britannica

<http://Britannica.com>

Desktop Movies in Education

<http://www.apple.com/education/dv/>

Documents for the Study of American History

http://www.ukans.edu/carrie/docs/amdocs_index.html

EdView

<http://edview.apple.com>

Google (search engine)

<http://www.google.com>

History Matters (for teachers)

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/>

Hitchhiker’s Guide to American History

<http://us.history.wisc.edu/hist102/guide/guide.html>

Internet History Source Book for United States in the Twentieth Century

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook48.html>

Internet Women’s History Source Book

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/women/womensbook.html>

The Library of Congress: American Memory

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/amhome.html>

Timeline of the Civil Rights Movement

<http://www.wmich.edu/politics/mlk/>

Top 100 20th-Century News Stories

<http://www.freedomforum.org/newseumnews/1999/2/24/topstories.asp>

United States History Index

<http://www.ukans.edu/history/VL/USA/>

Step-by-Step Cards

- Finding Clip Art and Photographs on the Web
- Modifying the Layout of a Banner Timeline in TimeLiner
- Searching the Internet With EdView
- Searching World Book Encyclopedia 2001
- TimeLiner Basics
- Working With TimeLiner Timelines

Additional Resources

- Using TimeLiner as a Database

Prerequisite Skills

To complete this project successfully, students should be able to do the following:

- use EdView or other Internet search engines to search for information on the Internet related to a particular topic (see the Step-by-Step Card “Searching the Internet With EdView”)
- locate information in World Book Encyclopedia (see the Step-by-Step Card “Searching World Book Encyclopedia 2001”)
- find relevant information and resources in American History Online
- retrieve information and multimedia from the Internet by printing, copying and pasting, and downloading files (see the Step-by-Step Card “Finding Clip Art and Photographs on the Web”)
- create new events in TimeLiner (see the Step-by-Step Card “TimeLiner Basics”)
- switch between different views in TimeLiner, merging timelines, and expanding timelines (see the Step-by-Step Cards “Working With TimeLiner Timelines” and “Modifying the Layout of a Banner Timeline in TimeLiner”)

Background Information

Here is some information you may find useful as you plan how to implement this project or introduce it to your students.

- Historians have identified a number of overall trends that characterize how U.S. society has changed during the last century or so. These may be thought of as the “big ideas” in twentieth-century American history. One possible list of big ideas is the following: (1) urbanization, (2) industrialization, (3) the beginning of mass culture, (4) growth of a large middle class, (5) a shift away from traditional forms of social organization, (6) partial breakdown of divisions based on race and sex, and (7) increasing involvement in the economy by the federal government. Some of these trends began well before 1900, but all had important roles during the twentieth century.
- Locations of information about local history may include the following: local historical societies, college or university libraries, public libraries, and the county recorder’s office. For some communities, the Internet will also be an excellent resource.

- In many communities, local authors have already written about local history. The public library is a good place to inquire about such books and authors.

Options and Extension Activities

Options

- The local history portion of this project could be focused on producing a TimeLiner slideshow instead of a printed banner timeline. The considerable space available on each slide could be used to relate each event to the national context researched in Phases 1 and 2. In addition, slides could contain videoclips and sounds (the videoclips could show local seniors talking about the history of the community, for example).
- Inquire at the local history museum or public library about how they might take a role in this project. Their participation may suggest ways of altering the project.

Extension Activities

- Students can record their interviews with local seniors and older family members with a digital camcorder and use iMovie to create desktop movies of the interviews. These movies can be shown to the whole class at the conclusion of this project. Or, if the timelines are shown as slideshows (see “Options” above), the movies can be included on certain slides. Refer students to the News Center in *The Writing Trek* to learn how to conduct a formal interview. For help using iMovie, visit the “Desktop Movies in Education” Web site.
- The interest in local history generated by this project may be channeled into a larger or ongoing oral history project, in which students interview local seniors with extensive knowledge of local history, record the interviews on audiotape (or by video camera), transcribe the interviews, and publish the resulting documents in print or on the Internet.
- Students can carry out a study and survey of local historical structures and create an historical map and tour guide that describes the history of each structure.
- During their research in American History Online, students may want to collect resources for later display as 20th-Century American History slideshows. Such slideshows could be created as individual, extra credit projects, or assembled by groups for class display at the conclusion of the project.
- After the timelines are posted, you can challenge students to make concept maps in Inspiration that show the important connections and historical patterns they’ve discovered in carrying out the project.

The Home-School Connection

- Family members, especially if they have lived in the local community most of their lives, can be invaluable resources for this project. Encourage students to interview them, both to seek information and to learn of their unique perspective. These family members may also be able to suggest other individuals in the community who know about local history. Consider inviting certain family members to come to class to speak.
- Family members can be invited to view the posted timeline display and to offer their comments.

This Project as a Model

This project highlights the power and flexibility of TimeLiner. It makes use of TimeLiner's ability to organize the information and media elements collected from digital history resources such as World Book Encyclopedia, American History Online, and other Internet sites and then to easily transform and edit this information and display it in the form of printable banner timelines. Nearly any project involving historical research can leverage TimeLiner in this way.

In a different sense, this project suggests a variety of fruitful ways of juxtaposing different timelines. For example, a timeline of U.S. history could be displayed under a timeline of world history, or a timeline of African-American history could be displayed under a timeline of U.S. history.