

MICHIGAN: An American Portrait

Classroom Discussion and Inquiry-
Driven Learning Guide



**The Duncan Entertainment Group
in association with Crouse Entertainment Group
presents:**



Michigan: An American Portrait features a deep dive into the history, culture and commerce of one of America's most diverse and beautiful states including the Native American and immigrant experience, shipping, mining, timber and auto industries, the development of the Soo Locks, Motown Records, and the construction of the Mackinac Bridge. Original music by acclaimed composer David Barrett.

Watch online at michiganlearning.org/MIportrait.

© 2023 Duncan Entertainment Group produced in association with Crouse Entertainment Group. Producers: Chip Duncan, Bob Huck, David Crouse. Lead Editor: Bob Huck. Cinematographers: Chip Duncan & Bob Huck. Writer/Director/Narrator: Chip Duncan. Composers: David Barrett & Brian Brill.



Michigan Learning Channel LABS is a digital community and resource hub for Michigan educators to Learn and Build Statewide alongside the Michigan Learning Channel team. Our LABS spaces include opportunities to network, share resources and tips, offer feedback and ideas, support new production and content development, and spread the word about MLC initiatives and materials.

Visit michiganlearning.org/LABS to learn more, view current projects, and download our exclusive media activity deck for use in your classroom.



We are excited to share this inquiry-driven project with our community of Michigan educators! *Michigan: An American Portrait* is an incredible documentary that showcase so much of Michigan's diverse and resilient history. We are hopeful to know that students across our state will have the opportunity to learn from this film, and we hope that teachers can use this guide to engage them in inquiry-driven and project-based learning that not only critically considers Michigan's past, but empowers students to think about how they might contribute to their state's growing legacy.

If you use this guide and any of the project ideas in your classroom, please be in touch! We want to support and showcase what you are doing and what your students create.

Michigan: An American Portrait

Essential Question: How is Michigan a portrait of America?

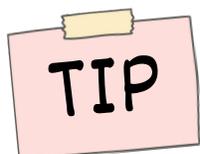
Pre-Viewing Activities

Large Group Dialogue

Ask students what they think the word "portrait" means. The goal is to discuss the ways that a portrait is an artistic representation, or a likeness. You might share that throughout history, artists have used the portrait to depict people in a variety of styles and methods. Portraits can be near-exact captures (as in a photographic portrait) or heavily stylized illustrations, representing the artist's or subject's interpretation of someone's likeness. As students share their understandings and associations, collect and display them using a digital or physical white board - these observations will drive the next activities.

Large Group Exploration

Look at some examples of portraits together. As a class, search using Google Arts & Culture or visit the website for a local art museum near your school. Ask students: What does a portrait tell us about someone? About when they lived and what their life was like? Record responses on the white board.



Use a **visual thinking strategy** to guide students through making observations and thinking critically about what they see. Find video tutorials at michiganlearning.org.



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Pre-Viewing Activities

Independent Free-Writing Prompt

Invite students to respond to the following prompts using their knowledge of Michigan and American history, or create your own driving questions that fit within your curriculum.

How would you summarize what it is to be American? Think through the lenses of arts & culture, economics, civics, social structures, geography, and history. Then, use your prior knowledge to think about how Michigan is a "portrait" of what you've identified. Is Michigan an exact example of what it is to be American? In what ways is Michigan different from other states? What examples can you think of to support your thinking?

Think-Pair-Share

After students have had time to reflect and free-write, ask them to share with a neighbor or in a small group. Invite groups to summarize their discussion for the class. Record observations using the chart on the next page (you can project a copy or give each student their own).

Inquiry Opportunity: As a mini-project, you may decide to research some of the students' thoughts to build context and prior knowledge before viewing the film. Research can be done independently, in small groups, or collaboratively as a class.

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How would you summarize what it is to be American? Use the categories in the chart to organize your thoughts.

Civics	Economics	Geography	History

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During Viewing Activities

Connect, Challenge, Extend

Share the visible thinking activity with students and give them a copy of the next page to take notes. This strategy encourages students to think critically about what they are viewing and invites them to reflect on how it extends their thinking. For more information about visible thinking strategies, visit www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/visible-thinking.



Use a **visual thinking strategy** to guide students through making observations and thinking critically about what they see. Find video tutorials at michiganlearning.org.



Note: We have not included a specific content-oriented note-taking organizer in this guide. If there are facts and information that you want students to retain as they watch the film, you may choose to give them additional note-taking resources.

Keep in mind that your students may not be experts in the practice of watching film and collecting information. It is always worth checking in with students to help them think about what effective viewing looks like for them. Some students may need to doodle or take notes in a non-traditional way, and some students may not be able to multitask at all and will need to only focus on the film. Some supportive and inclusive practices may include showing the film multiple times with clear goals and stopping often to allow students time to collect and record their thoughts.

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As you watch the film, record observations and examples that help you respond to the prompts below.

Connect What connections can you make to what you already know?	Challenge How do details or stories in the film challenge your thinking?	Extend How do details or stories in the film extend your thinking?

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Dig Deeper

Put students into small groups of 2-4 and have them re-watch segments of the film that connect to disciplinary concepts (use the suggestions below or identify your own that align with your curriculum). After watching the segments, have them take notes and identify specific details that support their analysis (the following pages contain graphic organizers that can be used for this activity).

Concept	Civics	Economics	Geography	History
Content	Civil rights, segregation and discrimination, Detroit riots, labor rights, individual economic impact of injustice	Henry Ford, Automotive industry, innovation and growth, economic rise and fall, global involvement and employment	Native American history and community structure prior to colonization; early exploration and settlement by colonists; natural resources, waterways, and trade	Arts institutions across Michigan, poetry, music, famous Michiganders, Motown and impact of music on racial integration, Civil Rights in Detroit
Time	Begin at 41:58	Begin at 19:19	Begin at 4:25	Begin at 38:00

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Watch your assigned film segment and fill in the graphic organizer to identify information that you learn along with inquiry questions that come up.

Assigned Concept (civics, geography, economics, history)	
Segment content (summarize the information)	
What are some causes and effects identified in the segment?	
What are some specific examples or stories you'd like to learn more about?	

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Post-Viewing Inquiry Activity

Historical Research

Invite students to identify something in the segment that they want to learn more about. They should craft an open-ended inquiry question that clearly identifies a historical topic and an analytic perspective, such as cause/effect, significance, or impact. Examples of inquiry questions may include:

- What was the impact of [specific event] on Michigan history?
- What geographical contexts caused [specific event] in Michigan history?
- What is the significance of [specific legislation] for Michigan history?

Students should focus on finding and reading primary and secondary source historical documents that align with learning standards in your content area and grade level. You may choose to assess their ability to read and understand the research that they gather, or you may choose to focus on what they are able to produce after they complete their research. Examples of projects that students could complete to answer their inquiry questions may include:

- A digital article
- A museum exhibit
- A podcast episode
- A new video segment for the documentary

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Post-Viewing Extension Activity

Problem Solving for the Future

Michigan: An American Portrait depicts the ways that Michigan has grown into a diverse, vibrant place over time - and identifies some of the current challenges facing the state.

Invite students to design a solution to an existing civic, economic, geography, or cultural problem or challenge. Their solution should imagine a future for Michigan that honors Michigan's rich history and diverse geographic and cultural identity, but also helps to usher in a future that considers current social, ethical, economic, and environmental questions.

Students may choose to craft a pitch that represents their solution; they may project themselves into the future and deliver an unveiling speech; they may develop a 3D model of their solution; they may develop a social media campaign to get others involved.

Visit michiganlearning.org/LABS and download our media activity deck for more project ideas and ways to submit student work that we will showcase on our broadcast and digital platforms!

RESOURCES

Tips for watching film or video:

- Watch the film or video all the way through with no discussion or interruptions and record initial responses.
- Watch the film or video more than once with a different focus each time.
- Offer students specific things to look for during a particular viewing.
- Be aware of the film's context (where and when it was produced, who played a role, what the intended purpose is).
- Balance time for individual reflection, pair and small group dialogue, and large group discussion after viewing.
- Watch "around" the film - watch other projects from the same director or organization and watch other projects that examine the content from a different perspective.

Tips for producing film or video:

- Don't be afraid to let students lead - many of them already create content and are just looking to be seen and celebrated.
- Don't get too hung up on content looking polished - learning still happened!
- Do your research to find great equipment, but recognize that smartphones, ordinary lamps, and natural backdrops can do a lot!
- Watch several different kinds of videos to get a sense for style and technique.
- Spend time planning so that you don't have to spend as much time recording or editing.
- Think about audience and what will be engaging and impactful.
- Lighting, sound, placement - learn the vocabulary of production and check all of your boxes before turning on the camera or the microphone.

Visit
michiganlearning.org/LABS
and click "Getting Started" for
more media and video creation
resources!

