



1940 Census Lesson Plan — American Family Life

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STANDARDS:

National Standards of History

- Standard 1B - Demonstrate understanding of how American life changed during the 1930s.

Find a family in the 1940 census.

Choose an ancestor's family, a celebrity's family or a family living in your community in 1940.

Transcribe the information.

Use a template of the 1940 census to extract the information about the family.

Analyze the information about the family.

- Where were they living? Include street address, city and state, as well as type of residence (owned or rented, value).
- Who was living in the household?
 - Why might they have been living together?
 - Based on their ages, about what year was each person born? What was going on in the United States when they were born?
- Did they move over their lives? Between their birth and 1940? Between 1935 and 1940?
- What occupations were represented in the household?
 - What do their jobs tell you about their lives in 1940?
 - How much does their 1939 income equal today?

Compare the family to their community.

How did their rent or home value compare to their neighbors? Were the types of household members typical in their neighborhood? How did the family member's occupations and work status relate to their neighbors? Was this a community of immigrants or people who had always lived in one state?

Tie the family the time in which they were living.

City directories could aid the student in finding out what happened to the family over the next 10 years.

- Great Depression: In 1940, how was the family affected by the depression? What problems might they have faced as the depression worsened?
- World War II: What household members may have been served in the military? What skills might the family have used to help the war efforts? How would WWII affect this family?

Present findings.

Write a report, give an oral presentation, pretend to be someone in the household or find another creative way to show what they learned about one family in the 1940 census.