

What came before



Looking back on history is a great way to learn how to improve the future. America is built on The Declaration of Independence which is a solid foundation for establishing how we should look forward. As we progress, we can use the values and principles of the past in addition to the mistakes they may have occurred and create a better future.

Lesson 2: The Best of Intentions

When looking back over our historical roots, we need to consider both the good and the bad. This is how we learn. We can look at how some groups of people were mistreated. We can see how we can be a better human race. We can see the consequences of past choices. We can evaluate successes and find ways to make them even better in the future. History is a great model for us on how to prepare for the future.

Lesson 3: The Devil's in the Details

All historical events are significantly impacted by emotions and attitudes at that time. The same is true today. People's perceptions, biases, opinions, reactions, emotions, and attitudes influence the entire culture. These details shape the entire environment of America.

Lesson 4: Pivot Points

Pivot Points occur in everyone's lives. It is a time when we are faced with a critical decision and we are required to use a great deal of courage or effort to move in a new direction. This year I am attending a new high school for my senior year. I am very nervous about this since I really don't know anyone at the new high school and I feel like I will be completely lost. But I also feel like it is the best option for me and that I need to try my best to be successful in doing this.

Lesson 5: Illusion vs. Reality

I think Hollywood has distorted people's reality. We see in movies and on TV that every story has a happy ending. We learn from video games that if something is in our way we can just fire and bomb it. This is not how reality works. Sometimes we have bad days. Maybe even bad years. There isn't always a perfect solution. Not everyone can win every time. We just have to learn to not give up and to keep trying. Even if today is bad, we can try for a better day tomorrow.

Lesson 6: Integrity of the Mind

Part of life is learning how to trust yourself and the decisions that you make. As we start life we are told how to do most new things by our parents or a teacher. But they are not always there to give us step by step instructions. So at some point we need to start trusting our instincts and intuition to determine how to best solve problems and complete tasks. Our mind is constantly learning and growing. Through experience, we can trust the decisions we make as we become more mature.

Lesson 7: Modern American Transcendentalism

I actually watched the movie *So I Married An Axe Murderer* with my dad. He loves this movie and thinks it is very funny. I thought it was pretty weird but I laughed in it as well. The poetry was really strange to me. It didn't seem to have a point. And the coffee bar where they did the poetry reading was very strange as well. I liked part of the movie. But I don't really see how that style of poem writing is very influential on the literary world.

Lesson 8: The Origins of Fear in Literature

Half my family really likes scary stuff. Me, my dad, and my sister love scary movies. My mom and two brothers absolutely hate scary movies. It's funny to watch scary movies with all of us and see how scared half my family gets. I think it's really funny actually.

Lesson 9: Fear of the Unknown

I asked my parents if they remember September 11, 2001 and what they were doing. They both knew exactly where they were and what they were doing. They then talked about other significant historical events in their lives, like when President Reagan was shot and when the Space Shuttle crashed. I think these are defining moments for the country and people truly unite in times of tragedy. I'm not sure what events during my lifetime are like this. Maybe when Trump surprisingly won.

Lesson 10: The Great American Novel

I have an uncle that always says he's going to retire and write the next great American novel. I never really knew what he meant by this. I think he is just bored with his life. It does seem like all the great, award-winning novels were written a long time ago. I wonder if someone I know or go to school with will end up being the author of the next great American novel.

Lesson 11: Examples of Courage

At church someone said that the trials and challenges we face today as teenagers are more difficult than the challenges the pioneers faced when crossing the plains. This really made me think because I always thought I would totally hate to be a pioneer with no home and wondering where we would get food each day. But then I thought about the challenges I face each

day with school, friends, temptations to do bad things, etc. I think it is very challenging to be a teenager right now.

Lesson 12: No Run-of-the-Mill Man

I remember reading *To Kill A Mocking Bird* and how Atticus Finch never wavered on how he stood for what he believed in. I've had friends like this. They are not tempted to do bad things. They always do what is right. I think these kinds of people are very admirable. I hope I can be more like that in my lifetime.

Lesson 13: Most People Are Nice

I think my generation is much better about seeing the good in all people and being less judgemental about others. My grandparents generation and even my parents generation seem to have many more biases and prejudices against different races, sexual orientation, opposing political beliefs, etc. I think my generation is much more accepting of differences in people. I think this is a very positive thing and I hope that it makes the world a better place as my generation gets older.

English - 2nd Semester

Lesson 1: Small Towns - Big Dreams

I have never lived in a small town. But my grandparents came from small towns. I have visited where they grew up and I don't think I could survive. My grandpa was born in a log cabin in Elmo, Utah. He didn't even have running water. I like all of the luxuries of growing up near a Walmart and McDonalds. I feel like it makes it easier to focus on "bigdreams" if I don't have to worry about where I'm going to get water to survive. Living in a civilized community allows me to dream bigger.

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Lesson 2: The Harlem Renaissance and Beyond

Black writers have had a great influence on literature and arts. I think it is very valuable to learn from their challenges and struggles. I am happy that even though they have had a lot of adversity, they are now becoming very successful. Some of the greatest musicians, athletes, politicians and business leaders are blacks. They have overcome many obstacles.

Lesson 3: Wars and Wars and Wars

Great lessons can be learned from wars. Wars have led to us being able to enjoy most of our freedoms. Wars have created more equality. Some wars stem from selfishness. Some wars are fought to overthrow evil dictators. Some wars have good and bad people on both sides. People fight wars because they are passionate about their belief so much so that they are willing to risk their lives.

Lesson 4: Personal Challenges and Choices

I have had many challenges in my life. When I was four years old I nearly died from Kawasaki's Disease. I lived at Primary Children's Hospital for several weeks until they were able to diagnose my illness. I have had family challenges like my parents getting divorced. I think these things have made me stronger but they were very difficult at the time.

Lesson 5: Who Are We... And Who Should We Be?

These are some of life's biggest questions. I often wonder what my purpose in life is supposed to be. I think all I can do today is try to be the best person I can with values that can shape the person I want to be. Things like honesty and loyalty are attributes that can benefit me today and for the rest of my life. No matter what I become, these values will make me a better person.

Lesson 6: And Where Are We Going?

Life is a journey and there are many times that I may veer off course. I think each time I get off course, my goal is to try and learn from the experience.

Where did I go wrong? What could I have done better? This will help me to navigate better in the future. I can grow from each experience and learn how to be a better person.