A Dream Deferred

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Introduction
This case study examines the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, introduced as an executive action by President Barack Obama in 2012. Students will learn about DREAMers, the group of young immigrants DACA was implemented to protect, and the long-fought battle to preserve those protections. Using the unit’s Essential Questions as a framework, the case study’s main activity has students analyze arguments on both sides of this ongoing 21st-century immigration debate.

Note to Educators
At the time this lesson was written, DACA was being actively debated in all three branches of government. The status of 800,000 DREAMers was in flux.

Essential Questions

• How do restrictions on immigration shape our ideas about citizenship and belonging?
• How does immigration policy favor the entry of particular groups and restrict others?
• How has the debate over immigration evolved and persisted through American history?

Key Terms and Concepts

• deferred action
• deportation
• executive order
• illegal alien
• undocumented

Standards

CCSS English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
• CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors’ differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the author’s claims, reasoning, and evidence.

NCSS C3 Framework

• D4.4.9-12 Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.

Materials

Computer and internet access for students

Texts

• “Harlem” by Langston Hughes
• Your cheat sheet for executive order, memorandums, and proclamations
Objective
Students will synthesize and analyze differing points of view relating to the DACA debate through reading primary and secondary sources and writing an essay that relates to the case study's Essential Questions.

Agenda/Class Outline
- Warm Up
- Close Reading
- Primary and Secondary Source Stations
- Discussion
- Essay

Procedure

Warm Up
1. Have students read the poem "Harlem" (Dream Deferred) by Langston Hughes and respond to this prompt: What are some of your dreams? What could prevent your dreams from coming true? What are three things that cause people's dreams to be deferred? Allow students to share and discuss their responses.

Close Reading
1. Define executive action: a rule or order issued by the president to an executive branch of the government and having the force of law.
2. Give examples from past administrations. Discuss how the power of executive action is different from legislation, but that both can be used to form public policy. It's important for students to understand that executive actions, including executive orders, are not permanent and can be undone by future presidents.
3. Ask students if they've heard of the DREAM Act or DACA. What do they know? What questions do they have? Jot their responses in a list on the board.
4. Depending on their responses, provide students with the following background: The terms DACA and "dreamers" are often used interchangeably. DREAMers got their name from the DREAM Act, a bill first proposed in 2001 and then again in 2009, 2010, and 2011. The bill,
which never passed, would allow the children of undocumented immigrants to remain in the United States as temporary residents, and after meeting a series of requirements, as permanent residents who could ultimately earn U.S. citizenship. However, after Congress failed to pass the DREAM Act three times, President Obama used his power of executive action to protect this group of immigrants by allowing DREAMers to remain in the country temporarily. That executive action is known as DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

5. Help students learn more about the policy details of DACA, the chronology of its evolution, and the political context that surrounds it. Begin by distributing copies of this infographic for students to reference. Then, show and discuss this short “DACA, Explained” video. Next, project and talk through this interactive timeline. Last, assign students to read and take notes on this “DACA Time Bomb” article about the fate of 800,000 DREAMers after President Trump rescinded DACA in September of 2017.

Primary and Secondary Source Stations

1. Once students have a working understanding of DACA as policy, spend time learning about the very real and personal impact it has on its recipients, the DREAMers. Use these multimedia narratives to provide students with more than a single story about DREAMers.
   a. “What Dreamers Gained from DACA, and Stand to Lose”
   b. Living Undocumented
   c. “Interview with Dalia Nava”
   d. “10 Dreamers You Should Know”
   e. “Students across the country stage walk-outs protesting DACA decision”

Discussion

1. Ask students to reflect on what they've learned so far. Have them identify any claims or arguments they heard about immigration policy.
2. Focus on the DACA/DREAM Act debate by providing students with readings that illustrate a range of ideological positions on the issue of undocumented immigrants.
   a. “Right and Left on Trump’s DACA Decision”
   b. “The Conservative Case Against the DREAM Act”
   c. “The Case for Keeping DACA”
   d. “10 Reasons We Need The DREAM Act”
3. Have students take notes as they read, tracking the arguments for and against the DREAM Act, DACA, and providing protections for undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children. The goal is to identify three “pro” and three “con” arguments about DACA. Encourage students to fact check claims, when possible.

Essay

1. Assign students to synthesize their reading and analyze the debate in an essay that addresses one of these three questions (adapted from the unit’s Essential Questions):
   a. How does the debate over DACA reflect ideas about belonging and citizenship?
   b. Are claims made in the debate over the DREAMers that favor the protection of some groups over others?
   c. How do the positions held reflect or contradict American values and liberal traditions?