

TEACHER'S OUTLINE

LESSON 4: "America's Superstar"/GRADES 7th - 8th

Key Concept: America's Multimedia Superstar

"He was everywhere," doing radio, writing columns, and giving lectures across the country. As an American superstar, Will Rogers was reaching out to his audience in just about every form of news and entertainment. As one of the country's first social commentators using multimedia, Rogers also entertained through humor, choosing to play roles that reflected his own demeanor and personality. Rogers proved very popular to all walks of American life, from the most powerful to the most in need. He dominated all social media and entertainment fields of his time as the top male film star, top radio commentator and the number one newspaper columnist.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify the progression of Will Rogers' career path from the turn of the 20th Century to the mid-1920s.
2. Examine the multimedia avenues that Will Rogers pursued that led to his becoming an American Superstar.
3. Discuss in depth the possible reasons that prevented Will Rogers from entering the political arena.
4. Compare and contrast Will Rogers to contemporary superstar political commentators such as Jon Stewart, Lewis Black, Stephen Colbert, Bill Maher, etc.
5. Recognize the similarities in Will Rogers' humorous style of political ribbing with contemporary satirists in print, television, film, internet, etc.
6. Develop skills in writing and presenting political commentary to an audience.

Video Clip:

Before completing the Learning/Media Activity or Student Handouts for this lesson, students should watch these short video clips for Lesson 4. These clips can be viewed online by visiting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FnzmNCehxs> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWbQbbIBEqk>

Learning/Media Activity: "The Art of Political Comedy"

Using the supplied material in this lesson plan, students will research a specific modern-day political comedian. There are two different comedians to choose from and you may choose to allow students to work in groups. Students will be asked to research this modern-day comedian and then answer a series of questions comparing this individual to Will Rogers. If doing this activity as a classroom exercise, you may choose to provide students with additional print material not included in the lesson plan. Or, if using this activity as a homework assignment, students may be instructed to conduct their own research on their assigned comedian. In addition to their research, students should be graded on their participation level and demonstrated knowledge of the material.

Student Handouts:

Students will be challenged to demonstrate their comprehension of material covered in Lesson 4. Additionally, students will be given the opportunity to further explore and discuss various topics covered in the lesson material.



Oklahoma
Historical
Society

THE ART OF POLITICAL COMEDY

NAME: _____

CLASS: _____

DATE: _____

WORKING TOGETHER IN GROUPS, RESEARCH THE MODERN-DAY PERFORMER LISTED BELOW. THEN, USING YOUR COMBINED KNOWLEDGE, COMPARE THE MODERN-DAY PERFORMER TO WILL ROGERS BY ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS LISTED BELOW. EACH MEMBER OF YOUR GROUP MUST TURN IN THEIR OWN PAPER.

1. What techniques do both Will Rogers & Stephen Colbert use to make their "point"?

2. In what ways are the two performers different? Be specific and give examples:

3. List four similar political topics that both performers have addressed:

4. Do you feel that either one of these performers have a more effective method of delivery than the other? Why?

5. Do you believe the use of political comedy is still an effective method for calling attention to key political issues today?



STEPHEN COLBERT

STUDENT HANDOUT

LESSON 4: "AMERICA'S SUPERSTAR" 7TH-8TH GRADE

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

CLASS: _____

CONTENT REVIEW

1. In the 1920s Will Rogers had his first appearance on a live _____ show and recorded his first _____.
2. In the 1920s Will Rogers was paid \$1,000 per _____.
3. Who was quoted as saying, "A big man should be able to take a joke at his own expense"?
4. List three media types during Will Rogers' time that he dominated as a superstar.
5. Will Rogers was the first honorary mayor of what city?
6. According to the film, why was Will Rogers able to lambast billionaires and still be their friends?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Will Rogers was so popular, he could charge \$1,000 per speech in the 1920s. Do you think \$1,000 in the 1920s was a lot of money for that time? How does it compare with today's earnings?
2. Why was Will Rogers able to transition so easily from each of the media categories available during his time?

STUDENT HANDOUT

LESSON 4: "AMERICA'S SUPERSTAR"

7TH-8TH GRADE

ANSWER KEY

CONTENT REVIEW

1. In the 1920s Will Rogers had his first appearance on a live radio show and recorded his first album.

2. In the 1920s Will Rogers was paid \$1,000 per speech.

3. Who was quoted as saying, "A big man should be able to take a joke at his own expense"?
Will Rogers

4. List three media types during Will Rogers' time that he dominated as a superstar.
Newsprint, Film, Radio

5. Will Rogers was the first Honorary Mayor of what city?
Beverly Hills

6. According to the film, why was Will Rogers able to lambast billionaires and still be their friends?
He used "gentle ribbing" and "good natured" teasing to poke fun at them rather than mean-spirited words.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Will Rogers was so popular, he could charge \$1,000 per speech in the 1920s. Do you think \$1,000 in the 1920s was a lot of money for that time? How does it compare with today's earnings?

TEACHER'S DISCRETION

2. Why was Will Rogers able to transition so easily from each of the media categories available during his time?

TEACHER'S DISCRETION