

# Jefferson and the Enlightenment

## General

### Grade Level

High School

### Author Info

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### Type of Lesson

Cooperative Learning

### Duration

3 Class Periods

## Interdisciplinary Connections

This lesson can also apply to certain English/Literacy components. Through the concept attainment model, students will be analyzing terms to create their own definition of the enlightenment. They will then be using this term, applying it to historical documents to complete a more thorough analysis. Beyond the academic setting, using jigsaws affords students the opportunity to work cooperative, and makes them accountable for the information they are to report.

## Objectives

### Overview

This lesson plan is targeted at high school students of United States history. The focus of this lesson is Jefferson's contributions and accomplishments, within the larger scope of the Enlightenment. Students will have a chance to analyze the three accomplishments and contributions Jefferson places on his gravestone—the author of the Declaration of Independence, the author of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and the father of the University of Virginia—and use their definition of enlightenment

to see how these works can represent enlightenment thinking.

## **Prior Knowledge**

Ideally, students would have been exposed to some key facts about Jefferson's life, and will also be aware of the creation of the Declaration of Independence. Possibly in previous history classes students would have been exposed to facets of the Enlightenment, whether through the Scientific Revolution, or Renaissance. If they need some refreshers, a timeline of Jefferson's life, such as this one: <http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/timeline-jeffersons-life> (Thomas Jefferson Foundation), may help.

## **State Standards**

### **USI.1 The student will demonstrate skills for historical and geographical analysis and responsible citizenship, including the ability to**

- a) identify and interpret primary and secondary source documents to increase understanding of events and life in United States history to 1865;
- e) evaluate and discuss issues orally and in writing;
- h) interpret patriotic slogans and excerpts from notable speeches and documents;
- j). identify the costs and benefits of specific choices made, including the consequences, both intended and unintended, of the decisions and how people and nations responded to positive and negative incentives.

## **Objectives/Learning Outcomes**

### **Objectives (KUD format)**

#### **Students will understand that:**

- i) Enlightenment ideals can be applied to many different spheres.

#### **Students will know:**

- i) The definition of enlightenment;
- ii) that Jefferson's accomplishments he wants to be remembered for are the Declaration of

Independence, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and the University of Virginia;

iii) How Jefferson represents the enlightenment.

### **Students will be able to:**

- i) analyze primary documents;
- ii) facilitate discussion and debate.

## **Additional Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this lesson plan, students will understand what the Enlightenment was. With their understanding, they will be able to make connections between Jefferson's contributions and the larger scope of the Enlightenment. They will be able to see how Jefferson represented enlightenment ideals, and hopefully be able to make those connections with other school subjects, as well as other parts of their lives.

## **Essential Questions**

Why did Jefferson choose these three contributions to put on his gravestone? How do these contributions represent the enlightenment?

## **Procedures**

### *1. 5 Minutes*

**1. Presentation of Objectives (5 minutes):** The instructor will open class by presenting my objectives in a more “student friendly” language. They may say something to the effect of, “Today we will discuss Jefferson in regards to the Enlightenment. We will learn how the Enlightenment can be applied in many different areas, and through this study we will create a working definition of enlightenment, find out what three accomplishments Jefferson wants to be remembered for, and how he represents enlightenment thinking. We will take our definition of enlightenment and apply it to primary documents, and facilitate a discussion about these works, respectfully debating our opinions about what we discover.”

### *2. 5 Minutes*

**2.Explanation/Introduction to Concept Attainment Model Process (5 minutes):**The instructor will explain the process involved in the concept attainment model, telling the students that they will be trying to construct a definition through the use of clues. They will be told that (1) they will be

given a list of examples and non examples that relate to the word, and they must compare and contrast the words to find common characteristics, and (2) that the common characteristics will be the basis of their definition.

3. *15 Minutes*

**3.Examples and Nonexamples of Enlightenment (15 minutes):**This section of the lesson is closely related to formative assessment. The teacher will create a chart on the board consisting of three columns labeled “Examples,” “Non Examples,” and “Hypotheses.” While creating the chart, the teacher will explain that he/she will write an example pair on the board, and then ask the class to think about a concept that is representative of the examples. He or she will write that in the hypotheses column. The teacher will continue to add example pairs and student hypotheses. As this process continues, the teacher will make sure to ask if any preceding hypotheses may be erased—it may be important to guide the students by directly asking if each hypothesis applies if they are struggling to make the connection. The process of putting example pairs, hypotheses, and eliminating hypotheses continues until all example pairs have been used and the students have indicated through their work that their hypotheses are aligned to the chosen concept. If students are not going in the right direction after all example pairs have been used, it may be necessary to create other examples or guide them to words that are similar to the concept.

4. *20 Minutes*

**4.Creating the Definition of Enlightenment (20 minutes):**Using the hypotheses generated by students, explain that the examples of the word are things that contain similar characteristics to the concept. Explain that the hypotheses also include characteristics relating to the concept itself and together with the examples, a definition may be made. Instruct students that they will use these characteristics to create a complete, succinct definition of the concept. Have the students break into small groups of three or four to discuss the most important characteristics and have each group create a definition. Next, have one representative member write their definition on the board. The class will discuss the attributes included in each definition. The teacher will guide students through the definition by pointing out if certain elements were not present in the hypotheses on the board and help eliminate some choices. The students will collectively decide on a definition. If the concept is not correctly identified, the teacher will construct a concept hierarchy for the concept and help explain why their definitions did not work and encourage a discussion of what examples may have been better used.

5. *10 Minutes*

**5.Test Examples (10 minutes):**To ensure that students understand the categorization process, students will be given additional example pairs and try to group them without much aid from the teacher. If students are struggling, they will review their definition with the teacher and also review the examples and non-examples that made them reach that conclusion.

6. *15 – 20 Minutes*

**6.Presentation of Additional Information (15 minutes):**Using a multimedia presentation tool (prezi, powerpoint, etc), the instructor will give students a basic timeline of Thomas Jefferson's life, paying extra attention to his three accomplishments he wishes to have engraved on his grave stone.

7. *5 Minutes*

**7.Jigsaw Explanation:**The instructor will explain to students that they will be split up into three groups, each representing a different document. They will meet with this group to discuss the document and determine a way to share this information. They will then be put in a subsequent group to discuss their findings and teach their classmates, and will complete another assignment.

8. *20-30 Minutes*

**8.Collaboration with Base Group:**Students will be split up into three groups. Each group will examine a primary document, either the Declaration of independence, the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, or A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge. Each student will read their document, independently, and highlight the words that seem to represent enlightenment ideals represented in the class's definition of the enlightenment. They will then discuss in their group which phrases highlight these ideas the best. The group will decide how to present this information to their classmates.

9. *30 Minutes*

**9.Presentation of Information to Groups:**Later in the class period, or in another class, students will split up into groups of three, having a representative member from the Declaration of Independence group, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom group, and A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge group. Each member will present his or her document's enlightened view.

10. *25 Minutes*

**10.Discussion of Findings:**Each group will be expected to discuss what they found, and to create a statement that they feel best represents Jefferson's thinking about the Enlightenment, to eventually be used in a persuasive essay. Each group will present their statement to the class, and will receive feedback and counter arguments about their statement.

## 11. 5 Minutes

**11.Conclusions/Assign Homework (5 minutes):**The teacher will conclude class by explaining the importance of term definition and how the Enlightenment covers an array of ideas. For homework, students will write an essay, using the statement they created in class, after revision. This statement will be the basis of their persuasive essay with the prompt: Why did Jefferson choose these three accomplishments to put on his gravestone?

12. **12.Unit Assessment:**Using the ideas of the Enlightenment, as well as other historical themes presented in their history course, students will think about things they would like to change about the world they live in.Each student will write three accomplishments they hope to achieve in their life, or that they would like to be remembered for, imagined or real. Each student will then write a historical document about this change or accomplishment and how he or she would go about the process. This can be in the form of an informal letter detailing their ideas to a friend, a bill, a declaration, propaganda video, newspaper article, or in another format approved by the instructor.

**Adaptation for younger grades:**In younger grades, students can design their gravestone, or a medal of distinction, write their accomplishments on them, and write a description of why they would choose those things, explaining the importance to them.

## Materials

### Materials Needed

#### Image of Jefferson's Grave:

Monticello's Digital Classroom:

<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/gallery/imagepdf/224/Jeffersons-Obelisk-Gravemarker/>

#### Timeline of Jefferson's Life:

Monticello's Digital Classroom:

[http://classroom.monticello.org/images/handouts/jefferson\\_timeline.pdf](http://classroom.monticello.org/images/handouts/jefferson_timeline.pdf)

### Background Information about Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence

Monticello's Digital Classroom

<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/resources/profile/6/Middle/Jefferson-and-the-Declaration-of-Independence/>

## **Background Information about Jefferson and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom**

Monticello's Digital Classroom

<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/resources/profile/262/Virginia-Statute-for-Religious-Freedom/>

### **Purpose/Background of Declaration of Independence**

- o Purpose: To announce the United States as a separate nation and to give reasons for this separation.
- o Background: In July of 1776 the American Colonies had been at war with Great Britain for over a year. Until July 1776, they were fighting for the rights previously denied to them by Great Britain. After the Colonies realized they were never going to receive these rights from the mother country, the only way to obtain them was to start fighting for independence

### **Copies of the Declaration of Independence:**

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/print\\_friendly.html?page=declaration\\_transcript\\_content.html&title=NARA%20%7C%20The%20Declaration%20of%20Independence%3A%20A%20Transcription](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/print_friendly.html?page=declaration_transcript_content.html&title=NARA%20%7C%20The%20Declaration%20of%20Independence%3A%20A%20Transcription)

### **Purpose/Background of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom**

- o Purpose: To remove any and all Governmental influence over the realm of personal religion
- o Background: Once it was decided that America was to be independent from Great Britain it stood to reason that a new system of laws would be needed to govern the new country. Jefferson co-authored a total of 126 bills for the state of Virginia alone. They ranged from this bill establishing religion freedom, to bills that eliminated unfair legal practices and even one that provided for the gradual emancipation of slavery. Not all of the proposed bills were passed, and it took until 1786, while he was in France, for the statute to be passed.

### **Copies of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom**

University of Virginia Library

<http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/vaact.html>

## **Purpose of the Bill for the General Diffusion of Knowledge**

o Purpose: To provide three free years of education for every male and female citizen. Within this system of education an additional scholarship program should be established to provide for the further education of those who excel in those three years, regardless of circumstance.

## **Copies of the Bill for the General Diffusion of Knowledge**

Monticello

<http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/bill-more-general-diffusion-knowledge>

**Quotes Page for Special Accommodation:** The above documents can become laborious to go through for some students because they are quite dense. The quotes below are ones that I found represented enlightenment thinking, and also were integral to the understanding of those documents

### **o Declaration of Independence**

1. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

2. We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent states . . . “

3. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states.

4. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness

### **o Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom**

1. “Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishments or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy author”



2. “...rulers, civil as well as ecclesiastical, who being themselves but fallible and uninspired men, have assumed dominion over the faith of others, setting up their own opinions and modes of thinking as the only true and infallible . . .”

3. “...forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor, whose morals he would make his ...”

4. “...no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief...”

#### **o A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge**

1. “...people will be happiest whose laws are best, and are best administered, and that laws will be wisely formed, and honestly administered, in proportion as those who form and administer them are wise and honest ...”

2. “...children whom nature hath fitly formed and disposed to become useful instruments for the public, it is better that such should be sought for and educated and the common expense of all ...”

3. “...certain forms of government are better calculated than others to protect individuals in the free exercise of their natural rights...”

4. “...experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny ...”

## **Accommodations**

### **Accommodations – Students with Special Needs**

For students who may find those documents too much to take on in one piece, I suggest using the quotes page. This page takes quotes that represent the enlightenment from the Declaration of Independence, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, and the Bill for the General Diffusion of Knowledge, and students can use these chunks to make analysis.