

Meet Thomas Jefferson, Candidate for President

Project Planning Doc

Title: Meet Thomas Jefferson, Candidate for President

Website Intro: Although Thomas Jefferson has widely been considered a visionary by historical scholars throughout the years, his electability as president of the United States may not be assured in our modern times. This lesson will allow students to determine the characteristics valuable to an effective leader, and through the use of primary and secondary sources, students will ultimately determine Jefferson's position on several contemporary issues and decide which modern party affiliation Jefferson would align with based on his views. Students may then decide whether Jefferson would be a successful presidential candidate in today's political climate.

Tags: Jefferson, presidency, politics, elections, civics, government

Project Format: Lesson plan

Prior Knowledge: Before beginning the lesson, it would be helpful for students to have some background knowledge about the time period of the founding of the US (1776) to the early republic (early 1800s), as well as knowledge of key figures such as Thomas Jefferson. If students are struggling with prior knowledge, it may be helpful to have a quick review session of comparing and contrasting then and now in terms of daily life, society, etc. to give students a context for the lesson. I have attached a T-Chart graphic organizer for this purpose.

Materials:

Prior Knowledge Graphic Organizer Activity

Pre-Activity T-Chart

Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

Primary Source Analysis Worksheet

Quotes on Taxation

Primary Source Packet Taxation

Quotes on Immigration

Primary Source Packet- Immigration

Quotes/sources on race

Primary Source Packet Race

Quotes/sources on right to bear arms

Primary Source Packet on Right to Bear Arms

Quotes on religious liberty/religious beliefs

Primary Source Packet on Religion

End of Lesson Reflection Worksheet

Lesson Reflection

Grade level: middle (7-8) and high (9-12)

Duration: 90-120 minutes

Objectives:

Students will identify and understand how political ideologies can evolve for individuals as well as for nations over time.

Students will be able to use critical thinking skills to interpret primary sources and determine a speaker/writer's position.

Students will work collaboratively within small groups to discuss their opinions and evaluate multiple perspectives.

Students will know which qualities, characteristics and positions successful presidential candidates typically exhibit in order to potentially be elected.

Steps:

1. Begin the class period with the following warm-up question: "What qualities would make a good presidential candidate?" Give students approximately 5 minutes to jot down their ideas and then ask for various students to share their responses. As they do so, note at least 5-7 of the qualities on the board so that other students may make note of the class's responses. (5 minutes). Some suggested responses may include education, wealth, experience in politics, no scandals, etc.

2. Next, ask students if Thomas Jefferson possessed at least some of these qualities and how they know. Give them a moment to write down their response and then ask for volunteers to share their answers. Most will likely agree that much of what we know about Jefferson comes from our history books, which tell us that he was wealthy, well-educated and very experienced in political affairs, serving as a member of the Continental Congress and Washington's cabinet. Some may also be aware that Jefferson was a minister to France and governor of Virginia as well. (approximately 10 minutes)
3. Next, ask students to jot down what they consider to be some of the major issues in society today. Ask them to list 3-5 topics and be prepared to share with the class in order to generate a list. Make note of students' responses on the board. (5-7 minutes) Suggested responses may include, but are not limited to race relations, gun control, immigration, taxes, religion, etc.
4. Inform students that they will be placed in small groups (I would suggest no more than 3-4 per group) and that within the groups, they will determine Jefferson's positions on several of these topics by using both primary and secondary sources. Handouts of primary sources for each topic are included.
5. Place students in small groups of 3-4 and give each group the handout for the primary sources related to the issue they are exploring. (The handout they are given will determine the issue they will be exploring.) Each member of the group should read all sources and then the group should reach a consensus about what the sources reveal in regards to Jefferson's position on the particular issue using the worksheet provided. Each group should receive 1 copy of the primary source analysis worksheet for each source in the packet. You may wish to assign the task of recording secretary to one of the members of the group. (5 minutes)
6. Allow students 30-40 minutes to thoroughly examine and discuss all of the sources included in the packets. Walk around as students are working to assess understanding and aid with any questions in the analysis process and make sure that the recording secretary in each group is completing the analysis worksheets with help from the other group members.
7. At the close of time, make sure that each group has completed the primary source document analysis worksheets for each document. At this point, instruct the groups that they must examine what they wrote in the analysis to determine what Jefferson's position on the issue was. Students should then decide which modern political party Jefferson would most closely align with and why they believe this. This may be written at the bottom of one of the primary source analysis documents or on another sheet of paper.
8. Using whole class discussion method, ask each group to share their findings for Jefferson's stance on each particular issue and make note of each group's responses on the board, including modern political party affiliation. (10-15 minutes)
9. Once all groups have shared and all group findings are noted on the board, ask students if their choice of modern political party for Jefferson has changed now that they can see his position on all issues listed. (5 minutes)
10. Close the lesson by asking students if their findings surprised them and if so, why? I would suggest calling on a few different students for diversity of opinion. (5-10 minutes)

Assessment:

Students may be formatively assessed throughout the lesson by evaluating how they participate, both individually and within the small groups, and how well they understand the process of evaluating the sources and forming their opinions based on evidence. For a summative assessment, you may wish to have students write a formal essay in which they decide, based on the evidence, how successful Thomas Jefferson would be as a modern-day presidential candidate.

Accommodations:

Some students may have difficulty with the language of the primary sources, so you may wish to have students use a glossary or their devices to look up any unfamiliar words or references. I would suggest using this lesson only after students have had prior exposure to Thomas Jefferson and have already had experience with using primary sources.

The logo for Thomas Jefferson Monticello, featuring the name "Thomas Jefferson" in a cursive script and "MONTICELLO" in a serif font below it.

Thomas Jefferson
MONTICELLO