

Hypocrite or Hero

General

Grade Level

Middle School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Cooperative Learning

Duration

120 Minutes

Objectives

Overview

Thomas Jefferson was the author of The Declaration of Independence, our great American document that announced this new free nation to the world. Throughout his lifetime he also consistently opposed slavery in his writings. However, at the same time that he was writing the Declaration of Independence, he was also slave owner. During his life he owned 607 slaves and by the end of his life he had only freed 5. Was Jefferson a hypocrite? Was he merely a flawed idealistic? Was he a great man? In light of these contradictory views, does he deserve to be celebrated by history?

Prior Knowledge

Students will have already studied the Declaration of Independence in a prior unit and will understand its contents and significance. They have already learned that Thomas Jefferson was the primary author of this document. We will revisit this document again when we examine Thomas Jefferson and his contradictory views on slavery.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Students will study quotes that reflect Jefferson's stance in support of and opposed to slavery and evaluate them in light of the claims that he makes in the Declaration of Independence, that "All men are created equal" and that they have the inalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." They will use these quotes to support and defend their position of whether he should be celebrated or condemned in history.

Essential Questions

What does Jefferson's writings reveal about his attitudes about slavery?

How do Jefferson's writings about slavery support or contradict the ideals espoused in the Declaration of Independence?

Does Jefferson deserve to be celebrated or condemned in history?

Procedures

1. 10 minutes

Warm-up

1. Project/write the following excerpt from the Declaration of Independence on the board

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.

2. Together in class, recall, discuss:

- a. What truths are self-evident?

- b. What rights are all men given?

- c. Whom do you think would be included by the word "men" in 1776? In the early 1800s? Now?

3. Groups will share and discuss answers with the entire class

2. *15 minutes*

Activity#1

1. In groups of 4-5, students will read “Jefferson and Slavery” from Monticello.org

<http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/thomas-jefferson-and-slavery>

2. Students will discuss information in cooperative groups, then share and discuss with the entire class.

3. *45 Minutes*

Activity #2

Slavery Quote Jigsaw

1. Pass out Jefferson and Slavery Quote Sheet and Slavery Quotes Worksheet—one per student.
2. Explain and model quote sheet for students—complete Quote A together.

For each quote students will:

a. Read and discuss

b. Fill in the chart:

- Write down Quote Letter
- Explain what does this quote say about slaver?
- Explain what does this quote say about Jefferson and his attitudes/point of view?
- What does this quote say about the Declaration of Independence? (Write a + if this quote supports the ideals in the Declaration or a – if this quote contradicts these ideals)

3. Students will return to groups, divide up the quotes 2-3 per person, study them and fill in their worksheet (They do not have to complete quotes in order.)

4. Students will return to groups, divide up the quotes 2-3 per person, study them and fill in their worksheet (They do not have to complete quotes in order.)

5. After each student completes their quotes, they will share and discuss their answers with the rest of the group. Everyone will fill in the rest of their sheets with the information shared.

6. Group discusses whether they believe Jefferson should be celebrated or condemned by history in light of their findings.

4. 10 Minutes

Activity #3

Each group will share their conclusions and participate in a whole class discussion about whether Jefferson is a hypocrite or hero, whether he should be celebrated or condemned.

5. 40 Minutes

Activity #4

1. See Sea of Liberty "Present-Day Parlor Portrait Pix" for background on Jefferson's parlor portraits.
2. Students will individually, in pairs or as a whole group use the evidence they gained from the slavery quotes, background readings, group discussions, etc. to evaluate whether Jefferson should be celebrated or condemned by history and whether his portrait would be worthy of being hung on the parlor wall of Monticello alongside Jefferson's "Trinity," the three whom he considered to be the greatest men of the world.
3. Students/groups will write one paragraph explaining whether Jefferson's portrait should or should not be displayed on the parlor wall. They should cite 3 pieces of evidence from the information they learned today.

Related Assets

Handouts and Downloads

- [Selected Jefferson quotes on Slavery](#)
- [Slavery Quotes Worksheet](#)

Materials

Materials Needed

Jefferson Slavery Quotes Handout

Jefferson Slavery Quotes Chart Worksheet

Homework

Assessment

1. Students will individually, in pairs or as a whole group use the evidence they gained from the slavery quotes, background readings, group discussions, etc. to evaluate whether Jefferson should be celebrated or condemned by history and whether his portrait would be worthy of being

hung on the parlor wall of Monticello alongside Jefferson's "Trinity," the three whom he considered to be the greatest men of the world.

2. Students/groups will write one paragraph explaining whether Jefferson's portrait should or should not be displayed on the parlor wall. They should cite 3 pieces of evidence from the information they learned today.

Accommodations

Accommodations – Students with Special Needs

Pair special needs student with a strong, patient, understanding student who can help him/her in this activity. Student may either complete assignment with this partner or write a paragraph with only 1 piece of evidence cited.

Accommodations – Advanced Learners

Advanced students may do additional research by studying more quotes about Jefferson and slavery on The Sea of Liberty and Monticello.org websites. They will write a 5 paragraph essay to defend their position, citing 3-5 pieces of evidence. Advanced students may also complete The Sea of Liberty "Present-Day Parlor Portrait Pix) activity.

