

Quill, Parchment, and Post

General

Grade Level

Elementary School

Author Info

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Pick Elementary School

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Type of Lesson

Cooperative Learning

Duration

1-5 class periods

Interdisciplinary Connections

Language Arts

Objectives

Overview

Students will interpret primary sources written by, to, and about Thomas Jefferson to develop an understanding of his personality within the family setting. Students will practice making appropriate inferences based on the content of the letters. Students will practice evaluation skills by choosing the character trait or traits they feel Thomas Jefferson exemplifies through his personal letters.

Prior Knowledge

Students should be able to identify character traits based on inferencing skills from prior literature lessons.

Students should have an understanding of Thomas Jefferson's role during the American Revolution.

State Standards

Virginia S.O.L

USI.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the factors that shaped colonial America by describing colonial life in America from the perspectives of large landowners, farmers, artisans, women, free African Americans, indentured servants, and enslaved African Americans;

USI.6 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the causes and results of the American Revolution by describing key events and the roles of key individuals in the American Revolution, with emphasis on George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry;

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1](#) Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3](#) Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.5](#) Compare and contrast the overall structure (e.g., chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution) of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.6](#)

Analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.9](#)

Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Students will read multiple personal letters from the collection of Thomas Jefferson to infer character traits.

Students will choose character traits that describe Thomas Jefferson.

Students will justify their choices when writing by using text evidence from the letter to support their reasoning.

Technology Connections/outcomes

Technology Connection: Using the National Archives Founders Online website, students will explore the Thomas Jefferson collection of letters.

Additional Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate the ability to recognize appropriate character traits based on the text

evidence as evidenced through group and class discussion, and their written responses.

Essential Questions

What evidence can be used to describe someone's character traits?

How do character traits influence one's relationships or actions?

How do Thomas Jefferson's character traits change over time?

Procedures

1. 5-10 minutes

Print appropriate number of copies of the *Character Traits Worksheet* found in Handouts and Downloads. Organize students into groups of 3-4. Pass out the *Character Traits Worksheet*. Review the list of words with the students. Explore the idea of positive, negative, or neutral traits. Ensure they understand the definition of each word on the list.

2. 20-30 minutes

Print appropriate number of copies or secure enough iPads/laptops to display the letters from the *Thomas Jefferson as a Young Man* collection which can be found in Handouts and Downloads. Give each student a printed copy or iPad displaying a letter from the *Thomas Jefferson as a Young Man* collection. Ensure that all the letters in that collection are represented by the groups. For example- Group A, which contains four students, should all have a copy of *From Thomas Jefferson to John Page- December 25, 1762* while Group B will have a different letter to read. In particular, the letter *From Thomas Jefferson to John Page-December 25, 1762* has 3 distinct sections that different groups should focus upon- one group should focus on paragraph one (this would work best with your more capable readers), another group focus on paragraph 2, and another group focus on paragraph 3. This will provide opportunities for multiple perspective examination using the same primary source document. Allow students time to read the letter or excerpt of the letter. Students may need guidance with vocabulary and sentence structure. Encourage close reading strategies to help them comprehend what the letters or excerpts are saying.

3. 20 minutes

Create a chart to hang in the classroom labeled *Thomas Jefferson as a Young Man*. Once students have read the letters, instruct the groups to use their *Character Traits Worksheet* to determine which character traits Thomas Jefferson is exemplifying in the letter assigned to their group. Encourage group discussion to arrive at a consensus of at least five traits but no more than ten. Instruct students to complete the *Thomas Jefferson as a Young Man* section on the *Thomas Jefferson Character Traits* with their group information. As each group finishes their discussions and completing their worksheet, invite them to record their group's character trait choices on the class chart labeled *Thomas Jefferson- A Young Man*

4. 15 minutes

Bring the whole class together. Review the class chart that was created. Discuss similarities and differences found on the chart. Allow students to share insights they learned from reading these letters. Allow groups to summarize the contents of their letters for the class.

5. 5 minutes

As their exit slip, have students record their top character trait choice to describe Thomas Jefferson using a quote from their letter to support their choice. This will be recorded on the

Thomas Jefferson Character Trait Worksheet in the *Thomas Jefferson as a Young Man* section, and turned in as class is dismissed. These worksheets will be used again to complete the remaining sections.

6. *Varied*

The previous steps will be repeated over the next 3 days with the remaining collections of letters- *Thomas Jefferson as a Husband*, *Thomas Jefferson as a Father*, and *Thomas Jefferson as a Grandfather*. Class charts will be created for each collection. At the end of the week, guide students to review all four charts and reflect on how Thomas Jefferson did or did not demonstrate a change in his character over time.

Related Assets

Handouts and Downloads

- [Quill, Parchment, and Post](#)

Materials

Materials Needed

If unable to use class technology to view the letters, print hard copies of each letter in each collection.

Thomas Jefferson as Young Man

From Thomas Jefferson to John Page- December 25, 1762

From Thomas Jefferson to William Fleming- October 1763

From Thomas Jefferson to John Page-January 23, 1764Thomas Jefferson as a Husband

From Thomas Jefferson to Elizabeth Wayles Eppes- October 3, 1782

From Thomas Jefferson to Chastellux- November 26, 1782

Lines Copied from *Tristram Shandy* by Martha and Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson as a Father

From Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson (1st daughter)- November 28, 1783

From Thomas Jefferson to Martha Jefferson (1st daughter)- December 22, 1783

From Thomas Jefferson to Marth Jefferson (1st daughter)- December 23, 1790

From Thomas Jefferson to Mary Jefferson (2nd daughter)- September 20, 1785

From Thomas Jefferson to Mary Jefferson (2nd daughter)- February 7, 1799Thomas Jefferson as a Grandfather

From Thomas Jefferson to Ellen Wayles Randolph (1st granddaughter) November 27, 1801

From Thomas Jefferson to Cornelia Jefferson Randolph- April 3, 1808

From Thomas Jefferson to Cornelia Jefferson Randolph- January 23, 1809

From Thomas Jefferson to Francis Eppes- September 9, 1814

From Virginia Jefferson Randolph to Thomas Jefferson- February 17, 1809

Technology Needs

If available, iPads or laptops to view letters online from the National Archives Founders Online website.

Assessment

Instruct students to write a paragraph describing how Thomas Jefferson did or did not change over time. Encourage students to use the class charts listing character traits as well as the copies of the letters to construct their paragraph and to use text evidence to support their ideas.

Accommodations

Accommodations – Students with Special Needs

Students who need accommodations can use their *Thomas Jefferson Character Traits Worksheet* to copy their daily recording in paragraph format.

Accommodations – Advanced Learners

Students who need advanced accommodations can be shown how to search the National Archives Founders Online website to explore more letters written by, to, and about Thomas Jefferson.

An additional advanced accommodation would be to allow students to record readings of the letters and develop a podcast to further explore Thomas Jefferson's character.

