

# Purposeful Education, According to Thomas Jefferson

**Title:** Purposeful Education, According to Thomas Jefferson

**Essential Question:** What are the benefits of pursuing higher education?

**Sub Questions:**

How does college education help students develop academically, socially and personally?

How does college education help the society and local community?

**Grade level:** middle (6-8), high (9-12)

**Topic/subject:**

**Author Information:**

**Name:** Emily Jacobs

**Email:** emilyjacobs26@gmail.com

**School:** Dundee-Crown High School

**City:** Carpentersville

**State:** Illinois

**Lesson type:** Group and individual

**Duration:** 30-60 min, 60-90 min

**Challenge Question or Lesson plan overview:**

**Lesson Overview:** This is a document analysis lesson where students will use Jefferson's ideas to learn about the benefits of pursuing higher education. In a college preparatory course (AVID), this lesson will precede a 9<sup>th</sup> grade college research project. It could also be used in any class to open a discussion about Jefferson's values or the importance of education.

**Focus Question:** What are the benefits of pursuing higher education?

**Sub Questions:**

How does college education help students' develop academically, socially and personally?

How does college education help the society and local community?

**Prior knowledge:**

Students will need to have some prior knowledge about Thomas Jefferson, specifically his role as President and founder of University of Virginia. This base context will help students give credibility to these sources, which showcase Jefferson's ideas. If students have not been exposed to Jefferson's background, an introductory lesson about his contributions should precede this.

**State or national standards:**

1. Common Core State Standards – Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies Grade 9-10
  1. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 9 – Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources
2. AVID (Advancement via Individual Determination) WICOR standards– This lesson includes components of writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization and reading.

**Objectives/Rationale:**

**Content Objective:**

- To realize the benefits of higher education for individuals and society

**Skill objective:**

- To practice marking the text and using Cornell Notes as an academic organizational tool
- To collaborate with others to analyze and present information

**Classroom Context**

This is a reading-based lesson on the benefits of education through studying the ideals of Thomas Jefferson. It can be applied to many contexts including Social Studies and English courses, college preparatory curriculum or exploratory classes. If implemented fully with all of the steps listed below, students will be engaging with the texts and collaborating with peers in multiple ways. If done in this way, the lesson will likely need 1 or 2 45-minute class periods. If needed, it can be shortened. In the AVID 9<sup>th</sup> grade class, this will be used to precede a college research project. In the project, students identify which factors will most affect their personal college search. This is a helpful introductory activity to that project; this will familiarize students with higher education outcomes beyond academic goals.

**Outcomes:**

- Students will be able to express their own personal motivations for pursuing higher education and what they hope to attain from it.
- Students will be able to identify how higher education will help them grow individually

## Lesson Plan Steps:

### Hook:

- Opening Quick Write: In the *Declaration of Independence*, Jefferson writes that people are entitled to “certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...” What do you think Jefferson means in the phrase “pursuit of Happiness”? What does it mean to you?
- Opening Discussion: Guide students to see that the phrase can be interpreted in many ways by taking volunteers to share ideas. Facilitate a discussion in which students can see that Jefferson left this open to interpretation on purpose, so that people can explore its meaning in different ways. Based on responses, ask how many students wrote something about improving their lives, bettering themselves, getting an education, personal happiness, etc. Conclude by using these responses to generalize that Jefferson may have intended for this to mean the importance of education and freedom to improve one's self.

### Development:

- Marking the Text of Document 1:
  - Ask students to number each paragraph of Document 1.
  - Engage the class in a read aloud of Document 1 (Jefferson's Plan for an Academical Village).
  - Model the process of marking the text, by thinking aloud. Pause at key points to discuss, mark the text and allow students to compare markings with peers.
- Think-Pair-Share Cornell Notes Document 1:
  - Individually, students should try to add information to their Cornell Notes for each focus question, using their text annotations as a starting point.
  - With a partner, students should review their Cornell Notes to help each other revise and add detail.
  - Finally, the class can share and students can record CN ideas from others.
- Video Example of Document 1:
  - Show students the MOOC video (details listed below on how to access) about the Lawn and Pavilions at University of Virginia.
  - Students should add to their Cornell Notes as they make observations during the video
- Marking the Text and Cornell Notes of Document 2 and 3:
  - Individually, students should read and mark the text for Document 2 and 3 (A Bill for the General Diffusion of Knowledge and quote), following the model of when the class read Document 1.
  - With a partner, students should compare and revise text annotations then use those notes to add to Cornell Notes for both guiding questions and from both documents.

### Closing:

- Individual Summary
  - With a partner, students should review Cornell Notes, marking the sections that they feel most closely align with the Essential Question. Explain out loud to their partner why this section is relevant.
  - Individually, students write their Cornell Notes summary, which answers the Essential Question of the lesson.
- Collaborative Summary
  - In groups of 4, students will use their individual summaries to contribute to writing a group

collaborative summary. This will synthesize the best ideas from each person into a full summary. Each group will present this product to the class.

- Personal Learning Log (Reflection/Leap)
  - Conclude by re-affirming that many students want to attend college because they are excited about a specific major, their parents encourage them or they know it's the key to a better life. These documents enlighten us to other benefits of pursuing higher education, including the development of community, self and personal growth (make other connections to students' collaborative summaries, when possible).
  - Building on the ideas of Jefferson, students can complete a Learning Log (reflection) about any or all of the following questions (this will be a leap into a college research project for Freshman students):
    - What aspects of college are you looking forward to the most?
    - In what ways do you hope college will impact you?
    - Do you agree with Jefferson's thoughts on the purpose and design of education?

### **Materials:**

- Documents formatted below. Full text sources can be accessed using these links:
  - <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-plan-academical-village>
  - <https://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/bill-more-general-diffusion-knowledge>
  - [http://tjrs.monticello.org/archive/search/quotes?keys=happiness&sort\\_bef\\_combine=field\\_tjrs\\_date\\_value+ASC&field\\_tjrs\\_categorization\\_tid%5B%5D=2174&field\\_tjrs\\_date\\_value\\_1%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=&field\\_tjrs\\_date\\_value2\\_1%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=](http://tjrs.monticello.org/archive/search/quotes?keys=happiness&sort_bef_combine=field_tjrs_date_value+ASC&field_tjrs_categorization_tid%5B%5D=2174&field_tjrs_date_value_1%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=&field_tjrs_date_value2_1%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=)
- Instructions to access the MOOC video
  - To access the video example, use the Monticello website to utilize the Massive Open Online Course titled the Age of Jefferson.

1. <http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/age-jefferson-massive-open-online-course>
2. Click on Coursera
3. Click to show items for #5 Jefferson and Education, Tour of Lawns/Pavilion

- Sample visual of Cornell Notes copied below, template attached
- If needed, teacher can include a space for students to write collaborative summary and Learning Log reflections.

### **Assessment criteria:**

- Teacher may decide how to assess students' work. Some ideas would be to use a standard school reading or writing rubric to evaluate annotations, Cornell Notes and/or summaries. Teacher may also use students' responses as an informal assessment to gain knowledge about individual students' values.

### **Accommodations:**

- English Language Learners' modifications:
  - Teacher may edit the text to make the content more comprehensible
  - Provide a word bank of vocabulary that appears in the text and pre-teach those words
  - Show the video prior to the academical village reading as a visual reference
  - Translate key phrases to students' native languages
  - The MOOC videos can be accessed with subtitles from the link below
    - Video with accompanying Spanish-language transcript:  
<https://es.coursera.org/learn/ageofjefferson/lecture/4Is6s/tour-of-the-lawn-and-pavillio>

## Document 1: Jefferson's Plan for an Academical Village

Excerpts from Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia

Thomas Jefferson's activities in support of a state university for Virginia were most visible during his retirement years, when he engaged in what he called "the Hobby of my old age." His vision of the university, however, actually evolved over a period of decades. In January of 1800, writing to Dr. Joseph Priestley, a British scientist (discoverer of oxygen) and Unitarian theologian who emigrated to the United States, Jefferson described his goal for an institution of higher learning: "We wish to establish in the upper & healthier country, & more centrally for the state an University on a plan so broad & liberal & *modern*, as to be worth patronizing with the public support, and be a temptation to the youth of other states to come, and drink of the cup of knowledge & fraternize with us."

The plans for a university became even more specific when, in 1805, he wrote to Littleton Waller Tazewell, a member of the Virginia House of Delegates and an enthusiastic supporter of Jefferson's idea for a state university. He wrote: "Large houses are always ugly, inconvenient, exposed to the accident of fire, and bad in cases of infection. A plain small house for the school & lodging of each professor is best. These connected by covered ways out of which the rooms of the students should open would be best...In fact, an University should not be an house but a village." Soon after completing his second term as president, Jefferson expressed further his idea of a university as village. Writing to Hugh L. White in 1810 he advised that a university should be designed so that "the whole arranged around an open square of grass & trees would make it, what it should be in fact, an academical village." An "academical village" was not only more convenient, safer, healthier, and less noisy (and thus more conducive to study), but, because a village can grow...Moreover, as Jefferson later wrote to Governor Wilson C. Nicholas in 1816, the small buildings of a village provide the opportunity to exhibit "models in architecture of the purest forms of antiquity, furnishing to the student examples of the precepts he will be taught in that art."

Jefferson's plan for an academical village was more fully described in the Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia...the report stated "they [commissioners] are of opinion that it should consist of distinct houses or pavilions, arranged at proper distances on each side of a lawn of a proper breadth, and of indefinite extent, in one direction, at least; in each of which should be a lecturing room, with two to four apartments, for the accommodation of a professor and his family; that these pavilions should be united by a range of dormitories, sufficient each for the accommodation of two students only, this provision being deemed advantageous to morals, to order, and to uninterrupted study; and that a passage of some kind, under cover from the weather, should give a communication along the whole range." The finished structures represent the historic center point of the present-day University of Virginia and continue to speak to people on many different levels.

Zechmeister, G. (June 2011). In *Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/jeffersons-plan-academical-village>

### **Visual Example of Document 1:**

To access the video example, use the Monticello website to utilize the Massive Open Online Course titled the Age of Jefferson.

1. <http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/age-jefferson-massive-open-online-course>
2. Click on Coursera
3. Click to show items for #5 Jefferson and Education
4. Watch the 11 minute video titled "Tour of the Lawn and Pavilions"

Video with accompanying Spanish-language transcript:

<https://es.coursera.org/learn/ageofjefferson/lecture/4Is6s/tour-of-the-lawn-and-pavillions>

### **Document 2: A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge**

Excerpts from Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia

As part of his work in revising the laws of Virginia during the late 1770s and early 1780s, [Thomas Jefferson](#) put forth a bill that has become one of his most enduring works on the subject of education: Bill 79, "A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge." Its oft-quoted preamble reads as follows:

Whereas it appeareth that however certain forms of government are better calculated than others to protect individuals in the free exercise of their natural rights...yet experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny; and it is believed that the most effectual means of preventing this would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts...

Berkes, A. (April 2009). In *Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia Online*. Retrieved from <https://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/bill-more-general-diffusion-knowledge>

### **Document 3: Jefferson Quote on Education**

Accessed from Jefferson Quotes and Family Letters database, education section, on Monticello.org

"I look to the diffusion of light and education as the resource most to be relied on for ameliorating the condition, promoting the virtue and advancing the happiness of man."

Extract from Thomas Jefferson to Cornelius C. Blatchly, 21 Oct. 1822

[http://tjrs.monticello.org/archive/search/quotes?keys=happiness&sort\\_bef\\_combine=field\\_tjrs\\_date\\_value+ASC&field\\_tjrs\\_categorization\\_tid%5B%5D=2174&field\\_tjrs\\_date\\_value\\_1%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=&field\\_tjrs\\_date\\_value2\\_1%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=](http://tjrs.monticello.org/archive/search/quotes?keys=happiness&sort_bef_combine=field_tjrs_date_value+ASC&field_tjrs_categorization_tid%5B%5D=2174&field_tjrs_date_value_1%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=&field_tjrs_date_value2_1%5Bvalue%5D%5Bdate%5D=)

