

Jefferson's Legacy

General

Grade Level

High School

Author Info

Kevin Briscoe

Type of Lesson

Challenge

Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

Duration

60-90 minutes

Challenge Question

How did Thomas Jefferson help to shape the ideals and growth of the young American republic from 1776 until the time of his death in 1826? Examine the primary sources provided on the web site and select four that, in your opinion, provide the best evidence of Jefferson's influence on the new nation. One of the four sources should be a visual depiction of Jefferson himself. For the other three sources, consider his views and influence on politics, slavery, religious freedom, education, and national expansion, among other topics. Once you have identified at least four sources, you and your partner will create a digital poster that presents your sources and summarizes Jefferson's impact on shaping American society.

Rationale

Students will be able to identify how Jefferson influenced the development of American society in the early years of the American republic. The lesson fits well with our study of the "Young Republic" era from

1789 to 1841, during which American national identity and institutions grew and sectional conflicts took hold. The activity will follow a lesson on the rise of the first political parties and paves the way for a subsequent lesson on the competing forces of nationalism and sectionalism. The activity also provides students with an opportunity to review material from the previous unit “Birth of the Republic” which examines the American Revolution and creation of the Constitution. The digital posters will help students understand the development of America’s ideals during this critical period.

Notes to Teacher

The lesson is designed to fit within a 90-minute block but can be easily expanded.

Steps

1. Select four primary sources that, in your opinion, provide an overview of Jefferson’s legacy. One source should be a visual depiction of Jefferson himself. Each of the three other sources should deal with a different topic area (politics, slavery, religious freedom, education, and national expansion are examples). Save sources in your collection by clicking on the folder icon.
(approximately 30-40 minutes)
2. Design a digital poster that includes your four selected sources, a brief caption for each, and a general summary of Jefferson’s legacy in 40-60 words that links with the sources you selected.
(approximately 30-40 minutes)