

Personal Morals vs. Political Moves

General

Grade Level

High School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Document Analysis

Duration

1 week (5 class periods)

Interdisciplinary Connections

This unit offers great interdisciplinary opportunities between History and English / Language Arts classes at the middle school level. Teachers of both subjects could collaborate to effectively teach reading & writing across the curriculum.

Objectives

Overview

To most Americans, Thomas Jefferson is most well known for writing the Declaration of Independence. In the Declaration, Jefferson's most famous phrase is: *"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."* Although this phrase is admired by Americans and nations around the world, it also becomes the source of much controversy – because

Jefferson himself owned 600 slaves throughout his lifetime.

Middle school students must learn to think critically about the complexities of Thomas Jefferson's life and decisions. The best way to accomplish this is to use Jefferson's own words, in his own writings. By utilizing primary sources such as letters, correspondence, & autobiographical sketches, the students will gain a deeper understanding of why the slavery dilemma was not so simple to fix.

Prior Knowledge

Before beginning this unit, students should have a firm base knowledge of the following topics:

- Declaration of Independence: meaning of the document & understanding of the ideals set forth in it
- Thomas Jefferson: his role in writing the Declaration of Independence, and the fact that he lived on a plantation and owned slaves
- Slavery in America, 1775 – 1825: why slavery existed in the U.S., how it impacted U.S. government, society, geographic regions, and the people held as slaves

State Standards

Common Core Standards

English Language Arts Standards » History/Social Studies » Grades 6-8

Key Ideas and Details

- RH.6-8.1.Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH.6-8.2.Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft and Structure

- RH.6-8.4.Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- RH.6-8.5.Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
- RH.6-8.6.Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- RH.6-8.8.Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- RH.6-8.10. By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

- For students to be able to effectively read, analyze, and interpret primary sources
- For students to create a clear, definitive argument based on what they learn from the primary

sources

- For students to write an essay in which they prove their arguments with specific evidence cited from the primary sources.

Procedures

1. Day #1: 40 minutes in class, 10 minutes of homework

- **Anticipatory Set (10 minutes):** Pose these questions to the students: What is a hypocrite? What does it mean to be a hypocrite? Who is someone that you think is a hypocrite? What do hypocrites do? (5 minutes of independent student writing as they brainstorm responses to the questions. After the students have had 5 minutes to write down their responses, ask the students to share their views for 5 minutes of discussion)
- **Introduction of Task (10 minutes):** Pass out Document Based Essay Packets & discuss with the students the Directions, Historical Background, and Your Task sections of the assessment on the first page of the packet. Depending on various student levels of knowledge, you may need to answer any questions that the students may have before you move to the next activity.
- **Group Analysis of Document #1 (20 minutes):**
- Have a student read Document #1 out loud & everyone in class follows along
- After the document has been read, the teacher should guide the students through the process of responding to the analysis questions. My advice is to go through this process as a group and model strategies to effectively answer the questions (go back into the document, highlight specific words & phrases, put the phrases of the document into the students own words), line by line and word by word if necessary. Model for the group of students how to conduct a very close reading & analysis of the primary source text.
- **Homework:** Students should read Document #2 and answer the two analysis questions for Document #2. Students should bring them to class tomorrow completed & should be prepared to share their responses and/or ask any questions that they may have.

2. Day #2: 40 minutes in class, 10 minutes of homework

- **Anticipatory Set (10 minutes):** Check to see that all students have completed the analysis questions for Document #2. Briefly discuss the responses & thoughts that the students had regarding Document #2. Answer any questions/points of confusion students may have had about Document #2.
- **Independent Analysis of Documents #3, #4, & #5 (30 minutes):** Students should work independently to read & answer the analysis questions for Documents #3, #4, & #5. Teacher should circulate around the room checking to see if students have any questions, and that the students are using the strategies that were modeled for them the day before when the group analyzed Document #1 and reinforce those strategies if necessary.
- **Homework:** Students should read Document #6 and answer the three analysis questions for Document #6. Students should bring them to class tomorrow completed & be prepared to share their responses and/or ask any questions that they may have on any of the documents (specifically Documents #3, #4, #5, & #6).

3. Day #3: 40 minutes in class, 10 minutes of homework

- **Anticipatory Set (10 minutes):** Check to see that all students have completed the analysis questions for Document #6. Briefly discuss the responses & thoughts that the students had regarding Document #6 or any of the documents. Ask students to share their responses to

some of the analysis questions to create an open dialogue about differences & similarities that may exist among students in the class based on their interpretation and analysis of the documents.

- **Independent Analysis of Documents #7, #8, & #9 (30 minutes):** Students should work independently to read & answer the analysis questions for Documents #7, #8, & #9. Teacher should circulate around the room checking to see if students have any questions, and that the students are using the strategies that were modeled for them.
- **Homework:** Students should read Document #10 and answer the three analysis questions for Document #10. Students should bring them to class tomorrow completed & be prepared to share their responses and/or ask any questions that they may have on any of the documents.

4. Day #4: 40 minutes in class, 15-20 minutes of homework

- **Anticipatory Set (10 minutes):** Check to see that all students have completed the analysis questions for all 10 of the documents. Briefly discuss the responses & thoughts that the students had regarding Document #6 or any of the documents. Ask students to share their responses to some of the analysis questions to create an open dialogue about differences & similarities that may exist among students in the class.
- **Document Based Essay Setup & Checklist (15 minutes):** Guide the students to page 2 of the Document Based Essay Packet. Thoroughly and clearly discuss each section of the Setup and Checklist. Show the students examples of effective introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs (**Scroll down to “Additional Materials” for sample introductory, body, and conclusion paragraphs**)
- **Choosing 6 Documents (10 minutes):** Students must choose 6 documents that they are going to use to write the essay. Instruct the students to look at the last analysis question for each document. Have the students tally up the number of “Yes, Jefferson sounds like a hypocrite in this document and “No, Jefferson does not sound like a hypocrite in this document.” If the students have more “Yes’s” than “No’s,” then the students should choose 6 of the “Yes” documents, and vice versa. **THE STUDENTS SHOULD CHOOSE THEIR 6 DOCUMENTS WISELY. THESE WILL BE THE BASIS FOR THE ARGUMENT THEY WILL CREATE.**
- **Creating a Clear Argument (5 minutes):** Students should spend the remainder of the class period to create their clear argument that states what they intend to argue about whether or not Jefferson was a hypocrite. **THE ARGUMENT THE STUDENTS MAKE SHOULD BE BASED DIRECTLY ON THE 6 DOCUMENTS THEY CHOSE TO USE. IF THE DOCUMENTS SAID “No, Jefferson is not a hypocrite,”** then that is the basis for the argument and vice versa. The teacher should circulate around the room and check in with each student on his/her individual progress. If the students are having difficulty coming up with a way to phrase their argument, guide them to Page 2 in the Document Based Question Packet. A sample argument is there for them to use as a guide. Encourage the students to be as specific as possible with their argument and to ask questions if they are not sure how to proceed.
- **Homework:** Students should finish the Introduction Paragraph by focusing on the three major components of an effective introduction: Attention Grabber, Background information about the time period, and your clear definitive argument. Students should bring the completed Introduction Paragraph to class tomorrow.

5. Day #5: 40 minutes in class, 30 minutes of homework

- **Group Check & Share (10 minutes):** Have students volunteer to read & share their introductory paragraphs with the class. Check to see that each student has completed the

introduction & answer any questions that the students may have regarding any component of the introduction paragraph.

- **Body Paragraph & Conclusion Writing (30 minutes):** Students have the remainder of the class to work on constructing their 3 body paragraphs and conclusion paragraph. Refer the students to the Setup & Checklist on Page 2 of the Document Based Essay Packet. Encourage students to ask any questions and receive help & feedback during class, so that when they go home for the weekend, they fully understand everything that they must have completed for Monday.
- **Homework:** Students should finish the essay for homework over the weekend. Completed essay is due at the beginning of class on Monday.

Related Assets

Handouts and Downloads

- [Was Thomas Jefferson a Hypocrite? Document Based Essay Packet](#)
- [U.S. History Document Based Essay Rubric](#)

Materials

Materials Needed

Sample Introductory Paragraph (from a Civil War Document Based Essay):

“Let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds...” (Attention Grabber) *These are the words spoken by Abraham Lincoln at his Second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865. The Civil war was still raging on in the South, and Lincoln had a plan to bring the country back together after the war. Unfortunately, the President was fatally shot just days after the war ended, and his plan was never executed. This meant that the nation would never fully recover from the Civil War, and the country still feel its effects today (Background Information about the time period).* **The Civil War changed the United States by changing the political views of the country, introducing new technology and tactics into the way wars were fought, and changing the lives of African Americans. (Clear Argument)**

Sample Body Paragraph (from a Civil War Document Based Essay):

The lives of African-Americans living in the South were changed by the Civil War. **(Clear Main Point)** Afterwards, their lives changed dramatically for the better. In **Document 3**, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were passed **(Cited Proof)**. They gave blacks the right to Freedom, the right to Citizenship, and the right to not be judged by their race. This changed the United States by abolishing Slavery and overruling the Dred Scott Decision that stated that blacks were property **(Analysis relating to argument)**. The lives of blacks were changed in a negative way when post-Civil War group, the Ku Klux Klan was founded. **Document 5** states that this group threatened and even killed blacks and whites that supported black rights. This changed the lives of Americans living in the South because they no longer felt safe in their own homes.

Sample Conclusion Paragraph (from a Civil War Document Based Essay):

Lincoln never wanted the United States to still feel the negative effects of the Civil War, but the war didn't just change the country for the worse. There are still many positive effects that have come as a result of it. For example, slavery has been abolished and the Union was saved. The country today is a very different country today than it was in 1865 – in a much better way for the people living in the United States. (Re-stating the points from the body paragraphs). Therefore, the United States was changed politically, technologically, and socially because of the Civil War (Rewording of the Argument)

Assessment

Click the link below to download the “Document Based Essay Packet”

<http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/resources/download/399/Document-Based-Essay-Packet/>

Accommodations

Accommodations – Students with Special Needs

For student that need reduced and/or simplified modications in this unit, teachers can make the following accomodations:

- Reduce the number of documents that the students must use in their document based essay. Students should at least try to use 3 documents (half of the required amount).
- If students use 3 documents, they can attempt to write one body paragraph about each document. This allows the students to have a more concrete understanding of how each document can be used to support their argument.
- I would recommend that documents #3, #4, and #6 be used for students with special education needs. These three documents represent a well rounded perspective on the issue, but are straight forward enough for struggling students to understand what Jefferson is saying in each of these documents.

Accommodations – Advanced Learners

For students that need enrichment and/or more of a challenge in this unit, teachers can make the following accomodations:

- Increase the number of documents that the students must use in their document based essay. This will require students to effectively integrate more documents & information in their essay to support their argument, which is a skill that wil be necessary to practice for success in AP history courses in high school.
- This Document Based essay fits the Pre-AP model of teaching students skills that are necessary to be successful in AP classes in high school.

Thomas Jefferson
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