

All Men Are Created Equal

General

Grade Level

Middle School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Other

Duration

10-12 hours

Interdisciplinary Connections

This lesson is designed for gifted upper middle school students in a pull-out enrichment class but it could be delivered to a heterogeneous class and integrated between Civics and Language Arts classes.

Objectives

Overview

Lesson Plan Summary

Students will explore the truths of Thomas Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* was a revolutionary document and a catalyst to change as part of an in-depth, interdisciplinary project which runs parallel curriculum to Civics and Language Arts curriculum and uses the Parallel Curriculum Model, Ascending Intellectual Demand (AID) strategies, and layers of differentiation. The theme of this concept-based unit

is Equality. Students will consider the phrase “all men are created equal” as used by Thomas Jefferson in *The Declaration of Independence* as a means to understanding key concepts, developing deeper meaning and shaping new knowledge.

Lesson Plan Overview

The unit has been developed according to the principles of the Parallel Curriculum Model and incorporates aspects of all four parallels. Students will learn the essential information as the **Core Curriculum** in both Civics and Language Arts is presented and further extended through the **Curriculum of Connections** in the unit. Students will perform the **Curriculum of Practice** as they follow the steps and questions that historians use to gather evidence and follow the principles of the discipline as an expert or practitioner in the field would. Finally, using the **Curriculum of Identity**, students will examine themselves and how their beliefs and values serve to shape their own worldview.

This unit serves to enhance student learning by matching students’ learning styles and needs with various aspects of the curriculum, student interest, readiness, and modes of learning. Based upon an analysis of pre-assessment and formative data, the teacher will scaffold instruction according to learner needs in both history and language arts and placement along the continuum from novice to expert. Students will be allowed to demonstrate their preferred mode of learning in their choice of research project and in the end-of-unit presentation. Since AID is a continuum and a student’s placement along the continuum may vary according to content area, for instance a student may be a novice in their study of the topic but may be an expert in their oral presentation skills, several of the projects will be assessed according to separate content areas.

Prior Knowledge

Not necessary but some knowledge of Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence would be helpful.

State Standards

These lessons are based on the Virginia Standards of Learning for Grade 8 Civic and Economics and Language Arts and the Standards of the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, and the National Council for History Education. The standards used in each lesson are listed in each lesson pdf.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

The objectives, skills and essential knowledge is listed at the beginning of each pdf lesson.

Additional Learning Outcomes

Products in this unit will reflect student learning. While some will be part of the learning activity, they will also serve as an assessment tool. Some products will be teacher specified and some will reflect student choice. Products will include:

- Discussions
- Journal entries and exit tickets
- Thinking Map and paragraph summary
- Revised draft of the *Declaration of Independence*
- Research guide and choice of research presentation
- *This I Believe* statement and presentation

Essential Questions

1. What does it mean to think like a historian?
2. What kind of skills does a historian need?
3. How do my skills match with those of a practicing professional in this field?
4. What questions do we ask of the past? How? What? When? Where? Why? Who?
5. What Matters? Why does it matter?
6. How do we evaluate the evidence?
7. How does the past help us make sense of the present?
8. How did people in the past view their world?
9. How do I view my world?
10. How does my worldview affect my belief system?
11. How did past decisions or actions affect future choices?
12. What has changed? What has remained the same?
13. What were the causes of past events? What were the effects?
14. How is history related to other sub-disciplines of the Humanities?

Procedures

1. This unit, "All Men are Created Equal", contains six lessons and uses a gifted education model of instruction. Each lesson is saved as a pdf. file and includes lesson plans, handouts, assessments, and teacher reflections. The lessons may be taught as a stand-alone lesson or as a unit.

Lesson 1: What is Equality-Building a Background

Lesson 2: Thinking Like a Historian

Lesson 3: Great Thinkers-How Enlightening!

Lesson 4: Compare and Contrast

Lesson 5-Drafting the Declaration

Related Assets

Handouts and Downloads

- [1776 Slideshow](#)
- [What is Equality? Building the Background](#)
- [Thinking Like a Historian](#)
- [Great Thinkers – How Enlightening!](#)
- [Compare and Contrast](#)
- [Drafting the Declaration](#)
- [I Believe Statement](#)

Assessment

Homework

Suggested homework assignments are included in the pdf lessons.

Assessment

Formative and Summative assessments are included in the pdf lessons.