

Is Thomas Jefferson Relevant Today?

Lesson Plan #1:

Title: Is Thomas Jefferson Relevant Today?: Part One

Grade: Middle (6-8)

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Duration: 150- 180 minutes

Overview:

This lesson involved the students being exposed to Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. This will be the first time that the majority of my students will be examining this meaningful yet complex primary resource.

The overall experience begins with a pre-assessment to gauge what the students know and more importantly do not know. They are to be encouraged to put forth their best effort and together as a class, we will go over the document. This will be accomplished by reading it aloud in class as well as watching a video in which actors dramatically read the text aloud which reflects Jefferson's original intent.

Once the students are exposed to the document, we will discuss the overall main ideas and they will be

asked to identify a specific passage that is the most meaningful to them. This will personalize the experience and allow them to move into the next step of the lesson which is to apply it to their own daily lives.

The lesson will fit within my Declaration of Independence curriculum unit which comes directly after my American Revolution unit and before my unit of the US Constitutional Convention leading into the examination of US Civics.

Once the students have a grasp of this challenging content involving Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, I will next ask them to select a current event and or issue that is meaningful to them and relevant to who they are as a person. In this example, I have given them the options of Black Lives Matter vs. Blue Lives Matter or the debate over Transgender bathrooms in US public Schools. These are just some of the many that can be used with this lesson.

The next step of the lesson is the most challenging as students will be asked to apply their knowledge of the Declaration of Independence to one of these current events or issues which in the long run should show them that Thomas Jefferson along with his thoughts and words are still relevant today.

The last part of the lesson involves creating a Visual that brings all of this together and provides the students with an engaging activity that will allow them to be creative and apply what they are learning directly to their own personal lives. The Gallery Walk with the Visuals can be optional for the lesson but it does prevent more opportunity to express themselves and apply Jefferson to their own daily lives.

Prior Knowledge:

At the outset of this lesson, one should assume that the students have had very little exposure to Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. However, they should bring with them an interest in current events and or issues that motivate them to become more involved in the political process.

Objectives:

Students will be able to read, comprehend and make meaning from Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

Students will be able to apply their content knowledge of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence to their own daily lives.

Students will see Thomas Jefferson as a relevant figure in modern times as well as appreciate his contributions to the United States.

Students will be able to successfully identify all parts of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

Students will be able to research both sides of a complex and controversial issue.

Students will be able to identify the important main ideas from Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.

Steps: Please follow all of the directions on the student hand out in order to see all of the various steps and chronology of how to teach the lesson.

Assessments: All assessments can also be found on the student handout for this lesson. In addition, Rubrics with point values can also be found on the student handout for this lesson.

Accommodations: This lesson plan is meant to be used with best practices for differentiated instruction. However, please feel free to modify it based on the needs of students on an Individual Education Plan, 504, or English Language Learners Plan.

Lesson Plan #2:

Title: Is Thomas Jefferson Relevant Today?: Part Two

Grade: Middle (6-8)

Duration: 150-180 minutes

Overview:

This lesson fits within my US Constitution curriculum unit of First Amendment rights particularly freedom of religion. Students will first be exposed to some of Thomas Jefferson's writings on religious freedom within the United States. They will be asked to compile their thoughts on this topic based in a series of primary and secondary resources as well as videos.

Once students have been exposed to this challenging topic, they will be asked to apply what they have learned to their own daily lives. This will be completed through the creation of a series of tweets written from the perspective of Thomas Jefferson on modern and current events.

This activity will conclude with the students being asked to craft a professional letter to a public official in regards to whether Thomas Jefferson should be required to study within the curriculum or if he should be left out completely.

Prior Knowledge:

It is an assumption that the students have not learned a great deal about the history of freedom of religion based on it not being covered in depth during elementary school. The only thing that the

students can bring to this lesson is their knowledge or current events and major issues that concern them living within the United States.

Objectives:

Students will be able to analyze and comprehend complex primary and secondary resources.

Students will be able to trace the development of religious freedom throughout the history of the United States.

Students will be able to see the relevancy of Thomas Jefferson and his writings on events that take place in modern times.

Students will be able to create a meaningful and professional letter to a public official in regards to an issue that is important to them.

Students will be able to role play that they are a historical figure from the past and be asked to attempt a form of modern communication specifically involving technology.

Students will be able to look at both sides of a specific issue in a responsible manner.

Steps: Please follow all of the directions on the student hand out in order to see all of the various steps and chronology of how to teach the lesson.

Assessments: All assessments can also be found on the student handout for this lesson. In addition, Rubrics with point values can also be found on the student handout for this lesson.

Accommodations: This lesson plan is meant to be used with best practices for differentiated instruction. However, please feel free to modify it based on the needs of students on an Individual Education Plan, 504, or English Language Learners Plan.