

# Through Jefferson's Eyes: Indian Perception Before & After the Louisiana Purchase

**Title:** "Through Jefferson's Eyes"

**Descriptive Subtitle:** Indian Perception Before & After the Louisiana Purchase

**Grade level:** Appropriate for grades 7-9.

**Topic/subject:**

**Topics:**

Lewis & Clark and the Louisiana Purchase  
American Indians  
Jefferson's Personal Life and Family  
Slavery and Plantation Life  
Primary Documents & Jefferson Writings

**Subjects:**

History: U.S.  
Language Arts

**Tags:** Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, Louisiana Purchase, Indian, Native American, perception, interpretation, slavery, image, DBQ, primary source

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**Duration:** 1-2 class periods (60-120 min)

**Overview:** After students assess what they know, or think they know, about Thomas Jefferson, they will identify key moments in his life, briefly discuss those moments and his connection to the American Indians, especially around time of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Students will analyze excerpts of several documents to determine Jefferson's perception of the American Indian and write a DBQ essay over the topic. At the conclusion of the lesson, students will reassess their knowledge of Thomas Jefferson.

**Prior knowledge:** Students should understand the interactions between American Indians and European settlers in North America from the time of European arrival. Students should also have an understanding of the details surrounding the purchase and exploration of the Louisiana Purchase.

### **Standards: Common Core State Standards**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific detail to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence...

### **Objectives:**

*Students will be able to analyze primary source documents in order to determine the motivations of Thomas Jefferson's Indian policy.*

*Students will take a position on how Jefferson's perception of American Indians changed or remained the same over time.*

*Students will be able to effectively use source material to propose and defend a particular point of view.*

### **Steps:**

1. Start by having students fill out the left silhouette on the handout, "Who is the Real Jefferson?" with information they already know about the man. (5 mins.)
2. Ask students to share what they wrote and list those items on the white board or SMART/Promethean board. After writing, ask students to examine the board and determine which categories the statements could be placed into. For example, if students told you Jefferson had slaves, lived on a plantation, fathered children with Sally Hemmings, etc., you could create a "Slave-Holder" category to organize those into. (10 mins.)
3. Tell students that images, or how someone views another person or group, are important to the study of history because it is through those images that history is written or viewed. Take a minute to discuss the statements and categories on the board with the students and pose the question: how did each of these categories shape how Jefferson saw the world around him? (10 mins.)
4. Hand out the blank "Significant Events in the Life of Jefferson" timeline and have students fill it in with you, by searching Monticello's website (<http://www.monticello.org>), or, if time or other factors are an issue, hand out the version already completed. Review the time line and answer any questions about the information listed. (5-15 mins.)
5. Solicit responses to both of the following questions: 1. What was the relationship like between various American Indians and Europeans in the early colonies (1607-1750)? and 2. What did Jefferson learn about the American Indians from the Lewis and Clark expedition? More than likely, students will be able to answer the first question more completely than the second. (5 mins.)

6. Show students the picture of Jefferson's entrance hall and ask them to think about what they see for 1:00, talk about what they see with a neighbor for 1:00 per partner, and then share with the class. Let students know that this is Jefferson's so-called, "Indian Hall" containing objects sent back from the Lewis and Clark expedition alongside classical art and maps of the continents. This magnificent room is the first room visitors would see as they waited for an audience with Jefferson and a room that Jefferson loved to present. (5 mins.)
7. Hand out the DBQ, remind students of the procedures, and have them begin working. Students can write the essay as homework or, if you want to guide their work, the essay can be pushed to the next class period. (Time varies)
8. Conclude the lesson by having students fill out the right silhouette on the handout, "Who is the Real Jefferson?" with information they learned about the man. (5 mins.)

### Materials:

- "Who is the Real Jefferson" handout
- "Significant Events in the Life of Jefferson" blank and completed timelines
- Photographs of the "Indian Hall" inside Monticello
- "Through Jefferson's Eyes" DBQ\*

\*All primary sources are included in the DBQ. However, if you would like the full source for class use, they are readily available online. Utilized primary sources include:

- Letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Lieutenant of Berkeley County, April 19, 1780  
<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections/ebc966af-5e95-4d32-a92d-575430918791>
- Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Henry Knox, August 26, 1790  
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections/1a17f6a2-c42a-4246-bc50-945595314643>
- Excerpt from Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 1787  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/jeffvir.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/jeffvir.asp)
- Letter from Thomas Jefferson to David Humphreys, June 23, 1791  
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections/5c818b46-d08a-4eee-9a6c-553443410730>
- Letter from Thomas Jefferson to William H. Harrison, February 2, 1803  
<http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collections/ed1b417c-81cc-4c61-8dfc-952041352225>
- Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Hawkins, February 18, 1803  
<http://www.loc.gov/item/mtjib012159/>
- Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Marquis de Chastellux, June 7, 1785 excerpt from *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 8, pp. 184-186
- Letter from Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, June 11, 1812  
<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/178.html>

### Assessment(s):

Pre-assessment of student understanding includes the first half of the initial graphic organizer, "Who is the Real Jefferson" and questioning before handing out the DBQ. Post-assessment of student understanding includes the completion of the second half of the graphic organizer, "Who is the Real Jefferson" and the DBQ essay.

### Assessment Criteria (rubric, checklist, etc.):

The DBQ essay will be scored according to the rubric in the handouts.

**Accommodations:** list suggestions for adapting the materials, procedures, and assessments included in this lesson for students with varying learning styles and abilities

**Students with special needs** can be paired with stronger students during the document analysis portion of the DBQ if they have difficulty with reading comprehension. The documents within the DBQ can also be limited or read aloud and analyzed whole class. If you choose to limit the documents within the DBQ, I would recommend including documents 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8. The DBQ essay can be adapted for students who struggle with essay writing in any way that allows them to demonstrate document analysis, the proposal of a thesis, and a defense of that thesis. This can be done orally, through a poster, a Prezi, PowerPoint, or Keynote, online through Canva, etc.

**Advanced learners** can be challenged by adding the black experience into the documents. Instead of having students focus solely on Jefferson's view of American Indians, have them articulate Jefferson's view of Indians and Africans, and have them compare/contrast the cultures. If desired, you can have students go farther by proposing *how* Jefferson explained the differences or why they believe he made a distinction at all. Recommended primary sources to include regarding the black experience include:

- "The West Indies offer a more probable & practicable retreat for them, inhabited already by a people of their own race & colour; climates congenial with their natural constitution; insulated from the other descriptions of men; Nature seems to have formed these islands to become the receptacle of the blacks transplanted into this hemisphere..."

-Letter from Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, November 24, 1801

<http://tjrs.monticello.org/letter/1743>

- I rejoice also in your advocacy of the Indian rights, & concur in all your sentiments in their favor...I wish that was the only blot in our moral history, and that no other race had higher charges to bring against us. I am not apt to despair; yet I see not how we are to disengage ourselves from that deplorable entanglement, we have the wolf by the ears and feel the danger of either holding or letting him loose. I shall not live to see it but those who come after us will be wiser than we are, for light is spreading and man improving, to that advancement I look, and to the dispensations of an all-wise and all-powerful providence to devise the means of effecting what is right."

-Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Lydia Huntley Sigourney, July 18, 1824

<http://tjrs.monticello.org/letter/1606>

- "...as far as I can judge from the experiments which have been made, to give liberty to, or rather, to abandon persons whose habits have been formed in slavery is like abandoning children."

-Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Edward Bancroft, January 26, 1788

<http://tjrs.monticello.org/letter/119>

*Thomas Jefferson*  
MONTICELLO