

Overrated or Undervalued?

Title: Overrated or Undervalued

Descriptive Subtitle: Understanding the historical significance of the contributions of Thomas Jefferson during the American Revolution, the creation of the Union, his presidential term, and his retirement years. As well as an in depth view at the possible alternative outcomes for America.

Grade Level: Middle (6-8)

Author Information:

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School: David Thibodaux STEM Magnet Academy

City: Lafayette

State: Louisiana

Duration: 2-3 days, depending on class time and research availability.

Overview: Students will look at the accomplishments, major political contributions, missteps, historical events, and outcomes of the presidential terms, roll in the Revolution, personal life, and the creation of a new nation, as they affected the United States of America and determine if Jefferson was one of the country's Overrated or Unvalued Founders. Would America, as we know it, exist without the contributions of Jefferson, would the country be better or worse, could someone else have done the job or made the same decisions that shaped the nation? Determine if the choices made were in fact beneficial for the United States or would another choice have resulted in a better outcome. Does Thomas Jefferson earn his title as Founding Fathers and earn his rightful place in history. Students will look at the idea of what makes someone important, the broader scope and themes of the individual and the lasting legacy and impact. Students will also learn skills to connect their findings to their culture, society, and and can be interchangeable for different situations and topics.

Prior knowledge: This lesson will require prior knowledge of Thomas Jefferson's basic history, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the

Presidency of Thomas Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Lewis and Clark Expeditions. Students complete this assignment after they complete units on the American Revolution, Creating the Union, and the Early Republic.

Standards (Louisiana GLEs) and Objectives:

The students will determine the meaning of words and phrases from historical texts – **SOC.7.7.1.1.d**

The students will evaluate a broad variety of primary and secondary sources – **SOC.7.7.1.1.b**

The students will conduct historical research – **SOC.7.7.1.1.a**

Lesson:

Bellringer – 10 Minutes:

As students enter the classroom a flip chart will be displayed on the Promethean board. The flip chart will display a collection of images reflecting important ideas or contributions of Thomas Jefferson. Students will be given a bellringer handout to complete. Directions are included on the handout. When students have completed the handout the teacher will lead the students through the items, prompting the students for their thoughts on the images they are finding on the board. Some of the items will be completely foreign to the students but it is a great segway for the students to want to learn more about Thomas Jefferson and his legacy. The goal of the bellringer is not for the students to know every detail of every item they are seeing at the end of the bellringer activity.

Whole Class – 20 Minutes:

- The teacher will use the bellringer to segway into a short discussion about the impact of the founding fathers and introduce the timeline for the 1st semester of the school year (this includes the American Revolution, Creating a New Union, and the New Republic).
- The teacher will then present the students with the Essential Question for the project.
 - **Essential Question:**
 - Analyze the significance of Thomas Jefferson as a Founding Father and the role he played creating the United States of America; determine the impact he had on the country. Is Mr. Jefferson deserving of the accolades he received/continues to receive

or would America still exist without his influence, contributions, and/or ideas. What are the lasting effects of Mr. Jefferson's legacy and how do they affect your lives today. Are there ways to apply the lessons or contributions of Mr. Jefferson in society today (explain)?

- The teacher will then present the students with their group project assignment in which the students will be given a major issue or topic and as a group determine the historical impact, or lack of, of their topic through research, prior knowledge of history, and the evaluation of primary and secondary sources. The project will culminate with a short speech by the group defending their position on their topic or issue.

Group Assignment:

- Students will break into small groups, as determined by the teacher's individual preference, and will be given a research topic.
- Students will choose roles for the members and all persons in the group will have a "job" and a responsibility for the assignment. Possible roles are Leader, Recorder, Time-Keeper, Scribe, etc.
- Students will prepare a short speech to present to the class where they will use textual evidence to support their claims.
 - The student handout has specific directions for the group members to follow.
- Teacher will monitor the students as group collaboration and research is taking place.
- Student group members will assess each other using a group rubric to keep learning on task and productive.
- Students will present their findings to the class, as a group, and will answer questions that other students may have about their research.

Closing/Exit Ticket:

Closing – Bringing it All Together – The teacher will display the final question on the board and ask the students to quickly answer the question either on paper or as a classroom discussion. While the overall outcome of the lesson is to further understand the significance and the importance of Thomas Jefferson, the big picture idea is to help the students relate the ideas back to their own lives and answer the important question of why it is important to study not only Thomas Jefferson, but other political figures as well.

Exit Ticket – Slap the Door – Students will be handed a post-it note to complete their final lesson task. Student names will be written on the back of their post-it note and will be quickly posted on the door, or wall next to the door, as they leave the classroom to maintain anonymity for the students. The students will use the front side of the post-it notes to write a question that they have about the lesson, an idea to make the lesson better or classroom friendly, an Atta-Boy, or a Major Bummer and "Slap the Door" with their input on their way out of the classroom. This will be used to help the teacher gauge where the

students are, their overall understanding of the lesson, and possible areas of improvement for the teacher.

Assessment (not all of these are required assessments but are ideas that can be used and or adapted for formal, informal, check for understanding, etc. as needed for the status of the class throughout the task set):

Students Presentations

Group Collaboration

Student Scored Group Rubric

Teacher Questioning

Peer to Peer Questioning

Exit Ticket

Resources/Materials:

Flip Chart – Active Classroom – Promethean Board

Computer Internet – Library of Congress Archives

<https://founders.archives.gov/>

<https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/research-tools>

Post-It Notes

Excerpts of the Jefferson Bible

Excerpts from the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom

Copies of Declaration of Independence

Copies of US Constitution

Textbook

Modifications and Accommodations:

Tiered and Modified copies of Primary Sources – done by teacher before presentation of lesson

Tiered Groups if needed to accommodate all levels of learners

Preferential Seating

Teacher Signal to Redirect as Needed

Group 1:

Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom

Using the following information create a short presentation explaining your thoughts on the impact of Thomas Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. Use the DBQ as a guideline to aid in your research. You are allowed to use the internet, the textbook, the attached information, or any educational resource to aid your group in finding information.

Step 1: Assign Roles for All Group Members

Step 2. Determine the end product that your group will present to the class

Step 3. Answer the guiding questions to help your group understand the topic your group was assigned.

Step 4: Research your topic

Step 5: As a group, determine the impact your group topic has on American history. Does your group believe that the topic you were assigned was significant on today's society or not.

Step 6: Create a presentation for the class to share your findings.

Presentations – Your Presentation should contain enough information to cover a 5-10 minute presentation and answer the essential question provided. See attached rubric for specific information on the group presentation.

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Group 2:

Declaration of Independence

Using the following information create a short presentation explaining your thoughts on the impact of Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence.. Use the DBQ as a guideline to aid in your research. You are allowed to use the internet, the textbook, the attached information, or any educational resource to aid your group in finding information.

Step 1: Assign Roles for All Group Members

Step 2. Determine the end product that your group will present to the class

Step 3. Answer the guiding questions to help your group understand the topic your group was assigned.

Step 4: Research your topic

Step 5: As a group, determine the impact your group topic has on American history. Does your group believe that the topic you were assigned was significant on today's society or not.

Step 6: Create a presentation for the class to share your findings.

Presentations – Your Presentation should contain enough information to cover a 5-10 minute presentation and answer the essential question provided. See attached rubric for specific information on

the group presentation.

Group 3:

The Louisiana Purchase

Using the following information create a short presentation explaining your thoughts on the impact of Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana Purchase. Use the DBQ as a guideline to aid in your research. You are allowed to use the internet, the textbook, the attached information, or any educational resource to aid your group in finding information.

Step 1: Assign Roles for All Group Members

Step 2. Determine the end product that your group will present to the class

Step 3. Answer the guiding questions to help your group understand the topic your group was assigned.

Step 4: Research your topic

Step 5: As a group, determine the impact your group topic has on American history. Does your group believe that the topic you were assigned was significant on today's society or not.

Step 6: Create a presentation for the class to share your findings.

Presentations – Your Presentation should contain enough information to cover a 5-10 minute presentation and answer the essential question provided. See attached rubric for specific information on the group presentation.

Group 4:

The Lewis and Clark Expeditions

Using the following information create a short presentation explaining your thoughts on the impact of Thomas Jefferson and the Lewis and Clark Expeditions.. Use the DBQ as a guideline to aid in your research. You are allowed to use the internet, the textbook, the attached information, or any educational resource to aid your group in finding information.

Step 1: Assign Roles for All Group Members

Step 2. Determine the end product that your group will present to the class

Step 3. Answer the guiding questions to help your group understand the topic your group was assigned.

Step 4: Research your topic

Step 5: As a group, determine the impact your group topic has on American history. Does your group believe that the topic you were assigned was significant on today's society or not.

Step 6: Create a presentation for the class to share your findings.

Presentations – Your Presentation should contain enough information to cover a 5-10 minute

presentation and answer the essential question provided. See attached rubric for specific information on the group presentation.

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Group 5:

The University of Virginia

Using the following information create a short presentation explaining your thoughts on the impact of Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia. Use the DBQ as a guideline to aid in your research. You are allowed to use the internet, the textbook, the attached information, or any educational resource to aid your group in finding information.

Step 1: Assign Roles for All Group Members

Step 2. Determine the end product that your group will present to the class

Step 3. Answer the guiding questions to help your group understand the topic your group was assigned.

Step 4: Research your topic

Step 5: As a group, determine the impact your group topic has on American history. Does your group believe that the topic you were assigned was significant on today's society or not.

Step 6: Create a presentation for the class to share your findings.

Presentations – Your Presentation should contain enough information to cover a 5-10 minute presentation and answer the essential question provided. See attached rubric for specific information on the group presentation.

Group 6: (Optional Group – Extension)

Thomas Jefferson's Ideas on Slavery and Race

Using the following information create a short presentation explaining your thoughts on the impact of Thomas Jefferson's Ideas on Slavery and Race. Use the DBQ as a guideline to aid in your research. You are allowed to use the internet, the textbook, the attached information, or any educational resource to aid your group in finding information.

Step 1: Assign Roles for All Group Members

Step 2. Determine the end product that your group will present to the class

Step 3. Answer the guiding questions to help your group understand the topic your group was assigned.

Step 4: Research your topic

Step 5: As a group, determine the impact your group topic has on American history. Does your group believe that the topic you were assigned was significant on today's society or not.

Step 6: Create a presentation for the class to share your findings.

Presentations – Your Presentation should contain enough information to cover a 5-10 minute presentation and answer the essential question provided. See attached rubric for specific information on the group presentation.

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Group 1: Guiding and Document Based Questions

Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, 1786 II.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish,

enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

When and where was the document written?

What right does Thomas Jefferson wish to safeguard? How?

How does this apply to Americans today?

Was there any other document that existed like this in America at this time?

Group 1:

Thomas Jefferson and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom

<http://www.vahistorical.org/collections-and-reso>

[urces/virginia-history-explorer/thomas-jefferson?legacy=true](#)

More information Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) was prevented by illness from attending the Virginia Convention of 1774 that met to discuss what to do in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party and the closing of the port of Boston by the British. But Jefferson sent a paper to the convention, later published as *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*. The force of its arguments and its literary quality led the Convention to elect Jefferson to serve in the Continental Congress.

He was too anti-British to be made use of until a total break with Great Britain had become inevitable. Then he was entrusted with drafting the [Declaration of Independence](#). This assignment, and what he made of it, ensured Jefferson's place as an apostle of liberty. In the Declaration, and in his other writings, Jefferson was perhaps the best spokesman we have had for the American ideals of liberty, equality, faith in education, and in the wisdom of the common man. But what Jefferson wanted to be remembered for, besides writing the [Declaration of Independence](#), was writing the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and founding the University of Virginia

The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom is a statement about both freedom of conscience and the principle of separation of church and state. Written by Thomas Jefferson and passed by the Virginia General Assembly on January 16, 1786, it is the forerunner of the first amendment protections for religious freedom. Divided into three paragraphs, the statute is rooted in Jefferson's philosophy. It could be passed in Virginia because Dissenting sects there (particularly Baptists, Presbyterians, and Methodists) had petitioned strongly during the preceding decade for religious liberty, including the separation of church and state.

Jefferson had argued in the Declaration of Independence that "the laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle [man]...." The first paragraph of the religious statute proclaims one of those entitlements, freedom

of thought. To Jefferson, “Nature’s God,” who is undeniably visible in the workings of the universe, gives man the freedom to choose his religious beliefs. This is the divinity whom deists of the time accepted—a God who created the world and is the final judge of man, but who does not intervene in the affairs of man. This God who gives man the freedom to believe or not to believe is also the God of the Christian sects.

1. Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free; that all attempts to influence it by temporal punishment or burthens, or by civil incapacitations, tend only to beget habits of hypocrisy and meanness, and are a departure from the plan of the Holy author of our religion, who being Lord both of body and mind, yet chose not to propagate it by coercions on either, as was his Almighty power to do . . .

The second paragraph is the act itself, which states that no person can be compelled to attend any church or support it with his taxes. It says that an individual is free to worship as he pleases with no discrimination.

1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

The third paragraph reflects Jefferson’s belief in the people’s right, through their elected assemblies, to change any law. Here, Jefferson states that this statute is not irrevocable because no law is (not even the Constitution). Future assemblies that choose to repeal or circumscribe the act do so at their own peril, because this is “an infringement of natural right.” Thus, Jefferson articulates his philosophy of both natural right and the sovereignty of the people.

III. And though we well know that this assembly elected by the people for the ordinary purposes of legislation only, have no power to restrain the act of succeeding assemblies, constituted with powers equal to our own, and that therefore to declare this act to be irrevocable would be of no effect in law; yet we are free to declare, and do declare, that the rights hereby asserted are of the natural rights of mankind, and that if any act shall be hereafter passed to repeal the present, or to narrow its operation, such as would be an infringement of natural right.