

The Evolving Legacy of Thomas Jefferson and Monticello

Project Planning Doc

Title: *The Evolving Legacy of Thomas Jefferson and Monticello*

Website Intro: In this activity, students will analyze and interpret the evolving perception of Thomas Jefferson and life at Monticello. Students will analyze primary and secondary source material. Students will then have the opportunity to form their own conclusions on life at Monticello and what Jefferson's words and ideas mean to them and future generations. Reflecting on and sharing these opinions with their classmates allows for an interesting debate on difficult history.

Project Format: Traditional lesson plan

Materials:

- Primary Source Analysis Graphic Organizer (1 per student)
- Jigsaw Graphic Organizer (1 per student)
- Primary source materials (1 source pack per group)
 - National Geographic Magazine-1929.
 - Narrative Account of Peter Fossett
 - Narrative account of Israel Jefferson
 - Last Will and Testament of Thomas Jefferson
 - Letter from Thomas Jefferson to Edward Coles
- RAFT Response Guidelines (below)

Grade level: middle (6-8)

Duration: 30-90 min

Objectives:

Students will know:

- The narrative of Thomas Jefferson and life at Monticello has changed over time.
- Monticello was home to over 600 slaves during the time that Thomas Jefferson built, owned or lived on the property.
- These enslaved families worked to provide both profitable industries for Jefferson and a lavish daily lifestyle for him and his family.
- A dichotomy existed at Monticello that affects how Jefferson and his ideologies are viewed.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze the various perspectives over time of Monticello as the idyllic home of Thomas Jefferson.
- Describe the various aspects of Monticello as both the personal home of Thomas Jefferson and as a functioning plantation and home to numerous enslaved families.
- Compare and contrast, using primary sources, the lives of Jefferson, his extended family, and his numerous guests with those of enslaved families.
- Analyze Thomas Jefferson and Monticello's impact on future generations by synthesizing primary and secondary sources.

Background/Prior Knowledge:

As Thomas Jefferson appears numerous times throughout the story of early American history, it is important to place this activity within context. It is recommended, although not required, that this be taught after or alongside an examination of the Declaration of Independence. Although most of the source material dates from Thomas Jefferson's time at Monticello much later than when he drafted the Declaration, it can still be taught parallel to it. Students will undoubtedly be asking the difficult questions of history and this activity can serve as a companion to your discussions on the Declaration, his presidency, or his personal life versus his public life. Regardless, students will need to have already received at least a cursory knowledge of Jefferson's personal life and background.

Steps:

1. Engage: Students will be given a series of articles and visuals from a 1929 issue of National Geographic magazine on Monticello. As a class, display these images and excerpts (in color if possible) and ask the following questions:
 1. How is Monticello depicted in this source?
 2. How is Thomas Jefferson depicted in this source?
 3. What other individuals or groups are represented in these images?
 4. Is it the same narrative that you have heard?
 5. What is different? What is the same?
2. Explain: The story of Thomas Jefferson, including his home at Monticello, has evolved considerably over time. Jefferson's star has risen and fallen throughout various periods of American history. Almost universally known as the author of the Declaration of Independence, his personal life clashed with many of the public ideals he is often associated with. To analyze and interpret the story of Monticello is to analyze the story of early America as it developed two diverging experiences that would shape the identity of the United States.

In this activity, we will explore the story of Monticello from two distinct perspectives; Thomas Jefferson and his large extended family and the lives of the numerous enslaved families who lived and worked there.

3. Explore: Distribute the document analysis graphic organizer to each student and place students in groups of 3-4. In these groups, students will use the "jigsaw" method to analyze and interpret primary source material. Distribute a source materials folder containing all of the primary source documents to each group. These folders should contain 1-2 documents per student. As these sources are complex, the jigsaw method allows for students to become an expert on one document and share their findings with the group as opposed to analyzing several documents. Give a brief overview of each document to the class and have students decide within their groups

which document each student would like to become an expert in. Using the individual document analysis graphic organizer, students will read, analyze and interpret their document. Give students between 10 and 15 minutes to individually record and analyze data.

4. Share: Distribute the “Jigsaw Graphic Organizer” to each student. Now that each student has become an expert on one document, they will individually share their findings with the group. As each person in the group shares out, the rest of the group is recording that expert’s opinion in the appropriate section of the organizer. Give each student approximately 3-5 minutes to share their findings. At the completion, each member of the group should have a completed graphic organizer that has an analysis of all of the primary source material.

As a class, debrief with the following questions:

- Which document was the most interesting to you?
 - Which document changed your perspective the most?
 - What questions do these sources create for you?
5. Apply: Students will use their findings from the jigsaw activity to craft their own narrative of life at Monticello. Students will take on the role of guides at the start of a Monticello tour. They will write a 1-2 minute “script” that they will present to visitors (the other members of their class). As guides they must be careful to explain a complex and difficult narrative, being sensitive to the various backgrounds of the visitors. Inform students that, in the crowd, are “unique” visitors that include descendants of both enslaved families and descendants of Thomas Jefferson’s family with his wife Martha Jefferson. Using the RAFT response model and scoring rubric, students should be given ample time to craft their writing. They should include at least two direct quotes from the source material to lend gravity and detail to their narrative. After writing their scripts, they will present them to the class. Before presentations begin, distribute a “unique visitor badge” to each student. After the presenter is finished, students are encouraged to ask appropriate questions based on the background that they might be coming from.

Assessment:

Students will write a RAFT response based on the analysis of the primary and secondary sources analyzed in class.

Assessment Criteria:

- RAFT Response (Role, Audience, Format, Topic)
- Role= Guide at Monticello welcoming guests as they begin their tour.
- Audience= A variety of guests from all ages who have diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- Format= A speech of approximately 1-2 minutes as visitors are waiting for their tour of the main house to begin.
- Topic= Summarize the life, legacy and experiences of Thomas Jefferson, his large extended family and the enslaved families who lived and worked here.

Accommodations:

Primary source analysis can be especially challenging, even for high lexile readers. These documents should be analyzed collaboratively using the jigsaw or small group method.

Expansion:

Consider having students expand their original script into a longer podcast. Students could dig deeper into a specific aspect of Thomas Jefferson or the lives of the people at Monticello.

Consider a virtual field trip through Monticello as a way to prepare and possibly de-brief with actual guides. This is an opportunity to discuss language and tone used in real tours to help students better understand how to discuss difficult topics in history.

