

Slavery and the Legacy of Thomas Jefferson

General

Grade Level

Middle School

Author Info

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Summer Creek Middle School

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Type of Lesson

Document Analysis

Duration

120 minutes

Objectives

Overview

Students will critically evaluate and reflect on information concerning the life of Thomas Jefferson as a slaveholder. They will also examine slavery at Monticello and the effects of Thomas Jefferson's death on the enslaved community there by reading accounts written by those who were enslaved at Monticello. Ultimately, they will engage in a Socratic seminar about Thomas Jefferson's legacy in relation to slavery.

Prior Knowledge

It is suggested that you attempt to complete the lesson "Thomas Jefferson's Attitudes Toward Slavery" which can be found at the Monticello Classroom under lesson plans before engaging in this activity.

I would also recommend going over the procedures of how to complete a Socratic seminar that can be found at the links below:

Study Guide on Socratic Seminars: http://www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm

Journey to Excellence- Socratic Seminars:

<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org/practice/instruction/theories/miscideas/socratic/>

State Standards

The following standards are a part of the Common Core Standards for Social Studies and can be found at the link below.

<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards/history-social-studies/grades-6-8/>

The student will:

Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas, values, personalities, behaviors, and institutions by identifying likenesses and differences.

Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their differing motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.

Analyze cause-and-effect relationships bearing in mind **multiple causation** including (a) **the importance of the individual** in history; (b) **the influence of ideas**, human interests, and beliefs; and (c) the role of chance, the accidental and the irrational.

Hypothesize the influence of the past, including both the limitations and opportunities made possible by past decisions.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Students will prepare for a Socratic Seminar or discussion by reading, reflecting and taking notes on a variety of secondary and primary sources concerning slavery. They will discuss their critical interpretations with the class in a civil and engaging exchange of ideas.

Procedures

1. *15 minutes*

Warm-up:

a. Draw a word web template on the front board and write legacy in the middle. Ask students to

define “legacy” for you. You may have to give them one or two examples of a legacy to get them started. When the class has agreed on a definition, write it underneath the word.

b. Now write Thomas Jefferson above the word web. Ask students to think of as many examples as they can of Thomas Jefferson’s legacy to the citizens of the United States. Write their examples around the word web.

c. Have students copy the word web in their notes or learning log.

2. 30 minutes

Activity 1:

a. Either hand-out or provide links to the reading materials required for the preparation of the Socratic Seminar. Students will read the secondary sources from these sites found within the Monticello website, "Jefferson and Slavery"

(<http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/thomas-jefferson-and-slavery>) and Slavery FAQ

(<http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/frequently-asked-questions-about-slavery-monticello>).

Students will complete the packet of primary source readings (found in the materials section of the lesson) prior to the Socratic Seminar and come prepared with five talking points and the notes to accompany them.

Questions to Consider:

In your opinion, what was Jefferson’s attitude toward slavery? Did his attitude change over time?

How would you describe Jefferson’s treatment of his slaves? Did he believe they were his equals? Why or why not?

How did the enslaved people of Monticello remember Thomas Jefferson?

Did Thomas Jefferson free any of his slaves during his lifetime? Were any of his slaves freed upon his death? Explain your answers by giving details found in your reading packet.

Does the fact that Thomas Jefferson owned slaves lessen your opinion of him?

3. 45 minutes

Activity 2:

a. Students will engage in a Socratic Seminar or discussion of slavery at Monticello and how it impacts the legacy of Thomas Jefferson. Students are allowed to use their notes on the five talking points.

b. Present the Big Picture Question that will guide the Socratic Seminar.

Big Picture Question For Socratic Seminar:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Does the fact that the author of these words, Thomas Jefferson, was a slave holder tarnish or lessen his legacy?"

c. Allow students a moment to reflect while you hand out the Socratic Seminar Rubric to each member of the class. Ask them to take a moment to look at the rubric so that they know what they will be graded over. The rubric can be found in the materials section of the lesson.

d. If possible arrange the students in a circle. Remind them to bring their notes with them.

e. Begin the Socratic Seminar by reading the Big Picture Question aloud. You can find information on conducting Socratic Seminars at:

Study Guide on Socratic Seminars: (http://www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm)

Journey to Excellence- Socratic Seminars:

(<http://www.journeytoexcellence.org/practice/instruction/theories/miscideas/socratic/>)

f. Below is a list of helpful hints to make your Socratic Seminar flow smoothly:

1. For really large classes, it is sometimes easier to have an inner and outer circle. The inner circle discusses while the outer circle takes notes on their discussion. The inner and outer circles would exchange seats half-way through the seminar.

2. To eliminate the possibility of one person dominating the seminar, give out counting or poker chips (I recommend three) and collect a chip every time they speak. When their chips are gone, they must become an active listener rather than a speaker.

3. Make each chip you collect worth a certain number of points (say 20 pts. per chip) and mark this on their rubric as soon as you collect their chip.

4. Ask students to always begin their statements by summarizing the last comment that was made. For example, they might open their statement by saying, "Mary, I heard you say that.....".

5. Remember that the instructor is not to take part in the seminar but instead is to facilitate the discussion and take notes on student's responses and insights.

Related Assets

Handouts and Downloads

- [Slavery and the Legacy of Thomas Jefferson Document Package](#)

Materials

Materials Needed

[Slavery and the Legacy of Thomas Jefferson Document Package](#), counting chips or slips of paper for the Socratic Seminar and the rubric for the Socratic Seminar (found in the materials section).

Technology Needs

computer with internet access and a projector

Assessment

Homework

Students will read the secondary sources from these sites found within the Monticello website, "Jefferson and Slavery" (<http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/thomas-jefferson-and-slavery>) and Slavery FAQ

(<http://www.monticello.org/site/plantation-and-slavery/frequently-asked-questions-about-slavery-monticello>).

Students will complete the packet of primary source readings (found in the materials section of the lesson) prior to the Socratic Seminar and come prepared with five talking points and the notes to accompany them.

Assessment

Students will engage in a Socratic Seminar over the legacy of Thomas Jefferson and discuss whether it is impacted by his ownership of slaves.

Big Picture Question For Socratic Seminar:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Does the fact that the author of these words, Thomas Jefferson, was a slave holder tarnish or lessen his legacy?"

Accommodations

Accommodations – Students with Special Needs

Reduce the number of talking points that are required for preparation for the Socratic Seminar. Students should be provided with either a graphic organizer or a set of leading questions to help with the primary documents that are assigned.

Accommodations – Advanced Learners

Ask students to research the impact of the Declaration of Independence's influence on the abolitionists and the abolitionist movement.

