

PROJECT TITLE: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness

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SUBJECT & GRADE LEVEL: 3rd Grade,
History and Civics

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

- Teaching Thesis:** This instructional kit is based upon a third grade Virginia standard, which requires students to explain the basic principles that form the foundation of a republican government by describing the individual rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and specifically the Declaration of Independence as Thomas Jefferson’s contribution to the forming of this principle. Given this Virginia History and Social Studies standard, I could have gone in many directions. One possibility I considered was a focus on Thomas Jefferson. This is the most common approach that my colleagues take. However, I really was interested in how America became a republican form of government. My research brought me to the influence of the European Enlightenment during the colonial period. How this influence fueled the call for independence and shaped Jefferson’s logic in the Declaration of Independence seemed a perfect global perspective. The challenge was to make it relevant, interesting, and comprehensible to third graders and help them see how it applies to their lives. To meet this challenge, the pedagogical premise of the lessons is that teaching is not telling. While it might save time, reading a book or delivering a presentation or lecture that covers the content, if understood at all, would likely be ephemeral in the students’ minds and be without relevance in their lives. Instead through a social constructivist and investigative approach, the students understand the content of the forming of the republican government in America by asking questions, constructing perspective through a simulation, and analyzing a primary source document. In this way students think like historians, investigating the past and relating it to the present.

Guiding Questions:

- What led the colonists to want independence from England?
- How did the European Enlightenment set the stage for the American Revolution?
- How did the colonists’ frustration with the king and the influence of Enlightenment thinking come together in the Declaration of Independence?
- How do the words “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” in the Declaration apply to our lives as American citizens today?

- Suggested Grade Level and Length of Activities:**

These three lessons are designed around a Virginia 3rd grade History and Social Science standard. However, the lessons are suitable for 3rd through 5th grade and could be adapted for middle school or U.S. history courses. Each lesson is estimated to take about one hour of instructional time.

3. Significance & Relevance:

- Selected State & National Standards –

Virginia History and Social Science SOL

3.11 The student will explain the importance of the basic principles that form the foundation of a republican form of government by

- a) describing the individual rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; identifying the contributions of ... Thomas Jefferson ...

VS.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the role of Virginia in the American Revolution by

- a. identifying the reasons why the colonies went to war with England as expressed in the Declaration of Independence;
- b. identifying the various roles played by Virginians in the Revolutionary War era, with emphasis on ... Thomas Jefferson ...

- OAH Historical Inquiry Skills –

Chronological Thinking:

- Students will tell the story of the American Revolution using a graphic organizer that summarizes the lyrics of “No More Kings”
- Together with the teacher the class will put the events in order on a timeline.

Historical Research Capabilities:

- Students will formulate historical questions based upon the lyrics of the Schoolhouse Rock song “No More Kings.”
- Formulate questions from observation of the Declaration of Independence.

Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making:

- Identify the grievances expressed by the colonists and their underlying values
- Analyze the perspectives of Enlightenment thinkers interested in government and human rights.
- Compare and contrast the King’s actions (as listed by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence) with the principles of human rights and the role of government espoused by the founders.
- Hypothesize the influence of the words “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” on the everyday lives of citizens today.

4. Lesson Objectives –

- Restate the historical events preceding the American Revolution.
- Identify some of the King’s actions that angered the colonists.
- Generate questions based on known and unknown concepts presented in text.
- Summarize and sequence major events.
- Evaluate political and philosophical statements related to the principles of American government.
- Support or argue statements based on personal experience and opinion.
- Relate statements to the prominent words of the Declaration of Independence.
- Make observations about a primary source document: the Declaration of Independence.
- Generate inferences about a primary source document: the Declaration of Independence.
- Interpret the meaning of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”
- Relate the colonists’ grievances with the King to the principles and ideas they adopted from Enlightenment philosophes.
- Generalize the confluence of these two factors as the impetus for the Declaration of Independence.

5. Annotated list of supplemental resources

The Monticello Classroom <http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/home>

This website is designed for students and teachers. It is a terrific source of learning resources and images that teachers can use to teach about Thomas Jefferson and Monticello. Most relevant to this instructional kit are the following:

- Activities - *Ask Thomas Jefferson* <http://www.monticello.org/education/asktj/index.html>
Students can read letters from others and then submit their own question about the Declaration to Mr. Jefferson. Mr. Jefferson responds via email and select letters are responded to online.
- Learning Resources – <http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/resources> Includes *Info Sheets, Handouts and Downloads, Websites and Bibliographies*. Organized by topic, the resources in “Jefferson’s Public Life and Politics” and “Primary Documents and Jefferson Writings” include resources about Jefferson the politician, his ideals, and the Declaration of Independence.
- Images – <http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/gallery> This portion of the Classroom is a gallery of images of primary sources. Organized by topic, the images in “Jefferson’s Public Life and Politics” and “Primary Documents and Jefferson Writings” may prove useful to students and teachers as a supplement to the lessons in this instructional kit.

A Picture Book of Thomas Jefferson by David A. Adler

This illustrated biography is written for young children. It chronicles Jefferson’s life from boyhood to adult, covering the main achievements and events of his life. This book puts the Declaration of Independence in the larger context of Jefferson’s life, helping students understand Jefferson the person. It would be suitable as a read aloud or read by students as it is written at a third grade reading level.

6. Lesson Plans or Instructional Activities –

Lesson 1: No More Kings

This is the first in a series of three lessons aimed at helping students discover the basic principles that form our republican government. This lesson is intended to pique student interest in American history and build background knowledge of the historical setting.

Learning Objectives (SWBAT)

- Restate the historical events preceding the American Revolution
 - Identify some of the King’s actions that angered the colonists
 - Generate questions based on known and unknown concepts presented in text
- Summarize and sequence major events

Lesson 2: Enlightened

The principles that were to become the basis of a new government and that supported the colonists’ revolution against the monarchy were consistent with the Enlightenment movement begun in 17th Century Europe and which gained momentum in France in the early part of the 18th Century. While Jefferson and his contemporaries did not necessarily participate in salons, American colonists were indirectly influenced by the philosophes. In this lesson, students will participate in a salon-like experience in order to help them identify with the ideas fueling the founders’ desires to be free of the monarchy and create a republic.

Learning Objectives (SWBAT)

- Evaluate political and philosophical statements related to the principles of American government
- Support or argue statements based on personal experience and opinion
- Relate the statements to the prominent words of the Declaration of Independence

Lesson 3 of 3: Independence Declared

A close look at the Declaration of Independence and its parts (Introduction, Preamble, List of Grievances, Conclusion and Signatures) will reveal how the frustration with the King of England and the

influence of Enlightenment ideas empower and compel the colonists to declare independence from the crown. In addition, students will connect the principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to modern America to conclude that the Founder's ideas are an important part of the American way of life.

Learning Objectives (SWBAT)

- Make observations about a primary source document: the Declaration of Independence
- Generate inferences about a primary source document: the Declaration of Independence
- Interpret the meaning of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness"
- Relate the colonists' grievances with the King to the principles and ideas they adopted from Enlightenment philosophes

7. **Technology** - The technology used throughout these lessons enhances the delivery of instruction through the use of audio and visual content. The following technologies are incorporated in this kit:

In Lesson One *No More Kings*

- "No More Kings" Schoolhouse Rock Video:
Watch on YouTube or download a copy from iTunes. Both are available at Schoolhouse Rock's web site: <http://www.schoolhouserock.tv/No.html>
- "No More Kings" Powerpoint <http://www.slideshare.net/nmccullen/no-more-kings> The Powerpoint is also included in the Lesson Resources Folder.

In Lesson Two *Enlightened*

- Wordle (<http://www.wordle.net/create>) of the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence
- A projected image or printed copy of In the Salon of Madame Geoffrin in 1755 available at <http://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/1/lemonnie/geoffrin.html>

8. Modifications, Differentiation, and Extensions –

For Lesson One *No More Kings*:

- Students may have access to the video to replay the song in order to have the lyrics read and reread to them as needed.
- Students may create movements and gestures to dramatize the song.
- The teacher may assign the same graphic organizer to the whole class, allow students to choose one, or assign a specific organizer to specific individuals or groups.

For Lesson Two *Enlightened*:

- If students word process the letter assign at the end of the lesson, the body of their letters can be pasted into Wordle to see what words represent their thinking.

For all lessons,

- Questions generated at the end of each lesson may lead to independent research opportunities for students who would enjoy the challenge.
- During or after each lesson, add new or unfamiliar words to a classroom word wall. Include a picture or visual cue along with each word. Or have students add new words along with a brief definition and a picture to a personal dictionary.
- As a piece of non-fiction text, the Declaration of Independence might be used as a model for the revision process in writing. The class can examine the revisions Jefferson and the Committee of Five made, noting how the changes affected the message of the document.

Transcript of the rough draft with revisions is available at

<http://shs.westport.k12.ct.us/lin/U.S.%20History/Establishing%20the%20Ideal/Rough%20Draft%20of%20the%20Declaration%20of%20Independence.htm>

An image of the rough draft with revisions and a transcript of the original draft are available at

<http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/gallery/image/91/Jeffersons-Rough-Draft-of-the-Declaration-of-Independence>

- Author's purpose is a concept introduced in third grade. The Declaration lends itself well to analyzing its format, structure and content to deduce the author's purpose(s).

- Take a field trip to Monticello. Participate in the “Jefferson’s Contributions” program for students.
http://www.monticello.org/education/study_tours.html

APPENDIX

12. Related Materials & Resources –

- **Lesson plans**
No More Kings: Y1M2LessonPlan1of3_NoMoreKings.doc
Enlightened: Y1M2LessonPlan2of3_Enlightened.doc
Independence Declared: Y1M2LessonPlan3of3_IndependenceDeclared.doc
- **Supplemental PowerPoints, worksheets, handouts, answer keys**
No More Kings Timeline PowerPoint: NoMoreKingsTimeline.pptx
All other materials are attached to or embedded in the lesson plan documents
- **Grading Assessment (Formative or Summative) with answer keys and/or rubric**
Included in lesson plan documents

***Make sure to label each document/handout so that it is easy to identify and use.**