

A Lesson about the Life and Contributions of Thomas Jefferson

Goals

Students will learn about the life and contribution of Thomas Jefferson, especially pertaining to the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and the First Amendment right of religious freedom in America.

Objectives

- Students will recognize the portrait of Thomas Jefferson.
- Students will know that he lived at Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia and recognize a picture of his home. (Possibly finding it on a prepared map)
- Students will describe some of his life and contributions to our country.
- Students will describe the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment (free speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom to petition).
- Students will describe one or more reasons why religious freedom was important to pre-revolutionary colonists and why it remains important today.
- Students will explain several factors leading to the colonists' demand for religious freedom from the British authorities.
- Students will be able to place pertinent historical events on a time-line in order of chronology (for example):
 - Columbus "discovers" America
 - First English settlers arrive at Jamestown
 - First Baptists arrive in Virginia
 - Colonists pay taxes to the King of England to support the Anglican Church
 - Baptists and other non-Anglican preachers are fined, arrested and jailed
 - Thomas Jefferson writes the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom

Virginia SOLs: History and Social Science

K.1, 1.1: The student will interpret information in picture time lines to show sequence of events and distinguish between past and present.

1.2: The student will describe the stories of American leaders and their contributions to our country.

1.12: The student will recognize that communities in Virginia include people who have diverse ethnic origins, customs and traditions, make contributions to their communities and are united as Americans by common principles.

SOL 2.11, Virginia Standard 6 a,b: The student will identify the ideas of Thomas Jefferson as expressed in the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom.

4.3: The student will explain the economic, social and political life of the Virginia colony, with emphasis on backgrounds, motivation and contributions of Thomas Jefferson and other prominent Virginians in the Revolutionary era.

Materials

Map of Virginia

Portrait of Thomas Jefferson, picture of Monticello

Game board, die, game pieces, question cards

A Picture Book of Thomas Jefferson by David Adler, Holiday House, ISBN 0-8234-0881-7

Heritage Seekers, issue no. 1, Center for Baptist Heritage and Studies, PO Box 34, University of Richmond

Song, "Mason and Jefferson" by Karen Harris

Lesson Description

Essential questions:

1. What can we learn from people and events from long ago?
2. Understand the meaning of long ago/past/present, pretend/real

Teacher and students will read the stories and discuss the information in the Thomas Jefferson book and Heritage Seekers magazine.

In historical context, students will write a petition letter to the governor or House of Burgesses from the perspective of a bystander, congregant, jailor or family member who witnessed the arrest of a dissenting preacher. Students may act out these stories.

Board Game: Students will take turns asking and answering questions and move game pieces around the board.

Questions: Reading and/or defining words or concepts, identifying pictures or any other material deemed appropriate to the subject.)

Sing Song: "Mason and Jefferson"

Pre-requisites

Vocabulary: independence, religion, freedom, custom, tradition

Concepts: freedom, fairness, "rights", laws, ethnicity, differences in belief systems

Assessment/Evaluation

Students will read or act out their letters for the class.

Students will answer questions in the board game.

Students will sing the song.

Students will identify a portrait of Thomas Jefferson.

Students will identify a picture of Monticello.

Students will locate Virginia on a map.

Students will explain/read their idea of religious freedom.