



## Thomas Jefferson | Lesson Plan

How did Thomas Jefferson help shape the United States through his words, leadership, and ideas?

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Students will understand how Thomas Jefferson, the 3rd President of the United States, played a key role in founding the nation, promoting democratic principles, and expanding the country's territory. They will explore his achievements as a statesman, author of the Declaration of Independence, and advocate for liberty, as well as his complex legacy.

### Learning Objectives:

- Identify the key life events of Thomas Jefferson.
- Explain Jefferson's role in writing the Declaration of Independence and his vision for a new nation.
- Discuss Jefferson's accomplishments as president, including the Louisiana Purchase and his support for religious freedom.
- Evaluate Thomas Jefferson's legacy, including his contributions to American democracy and the controversies surrounding his life and leadership.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Declaration of Independence:** The document written by Jefferson in 1776 declaring American independence from Britain.
- **Louisiana Purchase:** The acquisition of the Louisiana Territory from France in 1803, which doubled the size of the United States.
- **Democratic-Republican Party:** The political party founded by Jefferson advocating for a limited federal government and states' rights.
- **Embargo Act of 1807:** A law signed by Jefferson to stop trade with foreign nations, which had significant economic consequences.
- **Monticello:** Jefferson's plantation home in Virginia, which he designed and built.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.R.1, CCRA.R.2, CCRA.R.7, CCRA.W.2, CCRA.W.4, CCRA.W.9, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2

**Academic Subject Areas:** Biography, U.S. Presidents, Historical Figures

### What You'll Need

- Video: *Guess or Mess: Thomas Jefferson* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Guess or Mess: Thomas Jefferson* (Click [Here](#))
- PragerU Kids biographical book: *Thomas Jefferson* (Download [Here](#))
- Large paper or poster board for each group, along with markers



## Lesson Plan: Read and Discuss (60 minutes)

### **Introduction to Jefferson: (5 minutes)**

1. Begin by having students discuss the founding of the United States and the importance of its foundational documents. Ask them who wrote the Declaration of Independence.
2. Display the *Thomas Jefferson* digital book using an electronic device. Briefly highlight Jefferson's contributions to American independence, his presidency, and his diverse interests.

### **Jefferson History Huddle: (25 minutes)**

1. Read the "Meet Thomas Jefferson" section on page 2 together as a class, with the teacher leading to model fluent reading and set the tone for the lesson.
2. Split the class into small groups and assign each group a different section of the digital book to explore:
  - Group 1: *Youth and Early Career, Interesting Facts* (page 3)
  - Group 2: *The American Revolution* (page 4)
  - Group 3: *After the War* (page 5)
  - Group 4: *A Nasty Election, President* (page 6)
  - Group 5: *Retirement* (page 7)
  - Group 6: *Legacy, Renaissance Man* (page 8)
  - Group 7: *Slavery* (page 9)
3. Allow time for each group to read their assigned section, taking turns reading aloud. Students should discuss the main ideas.
4. Provide each group with a large piece of paper or a poster board and markers to write down key points and any interesting facts or quotes they find.
5. Allow each group one to two minutes to present their findings to the class. After each presentation, provide time for classmates to ask questions and discuss the content.

### **Worksheet Workshop: (15 minutes)**

1. Hand out individual copies of the worksheet to each student. Explain how to fill out each section with these instructions:
2. **Timeline:** Students should select key dates and events mentioned throughout the digital book. Suggested dates:
  - 1743 - Birth of Thomas Jefferson
  - 1776 - Drafts the Declaration of Independence
  - 1801 - Becomes President
  - 1803 - Louisiana Purchase
  - 1826 - Death of Jefferson
3. **Interesting Quote:** Have students choose a meaningful quote from the book to fill in the quote section on their worksheet.
4. **Interesting Fact:** Ask students to select an interesting fact about Thomas Jefferson that stood out to them and write it in the space provided.

5. **Vocabulary Builder:** Instruct students to choose a word from the Glossary that they find interesting and use it in a sentence that conveys its meaning.
6. **Multiple Choice:** Explain that students should complete the multiple-choice section of the worksheet individually. (Note: The multiple-choice section corresponds to the *Guess or Mess* episode about Thomas Jefferson and can also be used to play along while watching. See “Extension Activity” below.)

### **Reflection Round-Up: (10 minutes)**

1. Briefly summarize the key points covered about Thomas Jefferson, focusing on his life, presidency, and legacy.
2. **Think-Pair-Share:** Ask students to recall one fact about Thomas Jefferson and share it with a partner. Encourage them to discuss why that fact was significant.
3. Give each student a sticky note or index card and ask them to answer one of these reflection questions:
  - What did you find most interesting about Thomas Jefferson?
  - How do you think his presidency impacted the United States?
  - Can you think of a modern issue that relates to something Jefferson dealt with?
4. **Bonus Activities:** If time allows, let students solve the puzzle on page 2 by finding hidden letters throughout the book. They can also explore other interactive activities included in the book.

### **Extension Activity: (20 minutes)**

**Guess or Mess Trivia Show:** After the lesson, students can participate in the Guess or Mess trivia show for Thomas Jefferson—direct students to the multiple-choice section of the worksheet. Students can play along with the contestants to see if they can answer the trivia questions correctly.

### **PragerU 5-Minute Videos:**

Did you know that PragerU has a comprehensive video catalog of U.S. Presidents in an easy-to-watch 5-minute format? Enhance this lesson plan with one of our insightful, engaging, and educational videos that provide students with a deeper dive into the lives and legacies of America’s leaders. Click on the links below to watch these two videos about Thomas Jefferson:

- *The Genius of Thomas Jefferson* (Click [Here](#))
- *Thomas Jefferson and Equality: Making America* (Click [Here](#))

### **Don’t have time for a full lesson? Quick Activity (25 minutes)**

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.