

John Locke | Lesson Plan

How did John Locke's ideas influence Thomas Jefferson's writing of the Declaration of Independence and shape significant historical events in American history?

Students will understand how 17th-century philosopher John Locke's ideas on freedom, human rights, and limited government influenced Thomas Jefferson's writing of the United States' Declaration of Independence. Students will understand both Locke and Jefferson's contributions to political philosophy and American history. Students will understand the power of written ideas and how these ideas can influence history.

Learning Objectives:

- Identify John Locke and Thomas Jefferson as significant historical figures and explain their contributions to political philosophy and American history.
- Identify how John Locke's philosophical ideas influenced Thomas Jefferson's writing of the Declaration of Independence.
- Identify how Locke's ideas contributed to significant historical events, such as the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution.
- Analyze how Locke's ideas are reflected in the Declaration of Independence, specifically in the concepts of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- Evaluate Locke's view on the power of written ideas and how these ideas can influence society and history.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Influence:** When someone or something has the power to change or affect someone else's thoughts, feelings, or actions.
- **Declaration of Independence:** A document written by Thomas Jefferson and adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. It announced that the thirteen American colonies were declaring their independence from British rule and emphasized the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
- **Unalienable rights:** Fundamental, God-given rights that every person possesses, which cannot be taken away or transferred.
- **The Social Contract:** The concept in which people enter into an agreement with their government to protect their unalienable rights to life, liberty, and property.
- **The Glorious Revolution:** A bloodless revolution in England that overthrew the government without any fighting and established a monarchy with limited rule.
- **Enlightenment:** An intellectual and cultural movement that took place primarily in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, celebrating the power of reason and scientific inquiry.

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

Scan to watch episode:



Academic Subject Areas: Biography, American Values, Civics

What You'll Need

- Video: *John Locke: The Influencer of America's Founding* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *John Locke: The Influencer of America's Founding* (Click [Here](#))

Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Initiate a class discussion on the meaning of influence.
2. Encourage students to think about someone who has influenced them (e.g., a parent, teacher, or friend). Prompt students to share with a partner one way someone or something has influenced them. Invite students to share examples aloud and brainstorm responses together.
3. Explain that ideas from other people often influence one's ideas and actions, even throughout history.
4. Transition to a brief discussion on what the Declaration of Independence is and why it's important. Ask students to share what they know about who wrote it and what it is about.
5. Introduce Thomas Jefferson and his role in writing the Declaration of Independence. Prompt students to share what they already know about Thomas Jefferson. Ask students to consider who or what may have influenced Jefferson and his writing. Allow students to share their predictions with a partner or the whole class.
6. Display a copy of the "John Locke Worksheet" and pass out individual worksheets to students.
7. Instruct students to complete the Warm-Up Activity. Then, have students write about the meaning of influence and give an example of someone or something that has influenced them.
8. Read through the rest of the worksheet as a class to ensure students understand what to listen for during the video.
9. Set the stage for the upcoming video by highlighting the theme of influence. Encourage students to look for ways that ideas from long ago influenced Thomas Jefferson and still influence our lives today.

Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video.
2. Assist students with completing the worksheet alongside the video, encouraging note-taking and active listening.
3. Pause throughout the video to allow students time to answer questions, especially short answer responses. If necessary, model short answer responses by restating the question and writing a complete sentence.

Wrap-Up: (10-15 minutes)

1. Allow students 10 minutes to complete the worksheet independently.
2. Collect as formative assessment or discuss in class.

3. Ask students to read aloud their responses to the Making Connections section, reflecting on what they learned from John Locke's story.
4. Conclude with an open-ended prompt on the importance of ideas and how they can shape history:
 - Why do you think John Locke's ideas about freedom and human rights were so important to Thomas Jefferson when he wrote the Declaration of Independence?
 - How do you think our lives today might be different if Thomas Jefferson had not been influenced by John Locke's ideas?
 - How did the Enlightenment change the way people thought about the world, and what connections can you see between Enlightenment ideas and the Declaration of Independence?
 - How do you think John Locke's ideas on freedom and government have shaped the world we live in today?
 - How can the ideas we learn from history help us make better decisions for the future?
 - Why do you think some ideas from history, like those of John Locke, continue to be important and influential today?
 - What are some ways you can share your own ideas to make a difference in your school or community?
5. Remind students that just like Locke influenced Jefferson, their ideas can also make a difference.

Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 minutes)

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