

John Adams & Thomas Jefferson | Lesson Plan

How did John Adams and Thomas Jefferson overcome their political differences?

Students will understand how two of America's Founding Fathers, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, disagreed on almost everything politically and quarreled for many years. Students will understand how Adams and Jefferson eventually reconciled through the realization that what united them was greater than what divided them: their love of America.

Learning Objectives:

- Define the main differences between Jefferson's and Adams' political beliefs.
- Identify the reasons for Jefferson and Adams' quarrel.
- Identify the factors and accomplishments that united Jefferson and Adams.
- Examine the importance of unity despite differences.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Quarrel:** An argument or disagreement.
- **Federalist Party:** One of the first political parties in the United States. People in this party, like Alexander Hamilton and John Adams, wanted a strong national government. They believed this would help the country be stable and make sure different parts of the country worked well together. The Federalists also thought it was important for the United States to have good relationships with other countries, especially for trade.
- **Republican Party:** Also called the Democratic-Republican Party, was started by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. People in this party believed that states should have more power and that the national government should not be too strong. They thought that farmers and everyday people should have a big say in government. This party liked the idea of keeping things simple and not getting too involved with other countries' problems.
- **Unity:** Being united or joined together as a whole.

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

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

What You'll Need

- Video: *John Adams & Thomas Jefferson: The Founding Fathers' Friendship and Friction* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *John Adams & Thomas Jefferson: The Founding Fathers' Friendship and Friction* (Click [Here](#))
- Pictures of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson

Scan to watch episode:



Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

Warm-Up: (15 minutes)

1. Initiate a class discussion on teams and teammates. Encourage students to think of a team they have been a part of – a sports team, student government, class project, etc. Encourage students to now think of their teammates on this team and consider their similarities and differences. Invite students to share a few examples aloud.
2. Display a copy of the “John Adams & Thomas Jefferson Worksheet” and pass out worksheets to students.
3. Instruct students to list as many differences as they can on the Venn Diagram in the Warm-Up Activity. (Differences can be as simple as eye color, favorite food, etc.) Teacher may need to model an example for students.
4. Once completed, engage students in a discussion about the common goals they identified in the middle of their Venn Diagrams and the importance of unity despite differences we have with others. Preview the remainder of the worksheet as a class.
5. Transition to the lesson's main focus by showing students pictures of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Invite students to share what they already know and make predictions about what they might learn about them.
6. Give a brief introduction of both men:
 - Explain that John Adams was the second President of the United States and a strong advocate for independence from Britain. Highlight his role in helping to draft the Declaration of Independence and his work as a diplomat in Europe, helping to secure crucial support for the American Revolution.
 - Introduce Thomas Jefferson as the third President of the United States and the primary author of the Declaration of Independence. Discuss his vision for America as a land of liberty and democracy, his purchase of the Louisiana Territory, which doubled the country's size, and his advocacy for education and religious freedom.
7. Ask the students why they think it is important to remember these two individuals.
 - Discuss how their ideas and actions helped shape the nation and its values.
 - Emphasize that despite their differences and conflicts, both men worked throughout their lives to build and strengthen the new nation.
8. Set the stage for the upcoming video by highlighting the theme of unity despite differences. Encourage students to look for differences between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson throughout the video.

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 to answer questions—especially short answer responses. If necessary, model short answer responses, restating the question and writing a complete sentence.

Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. Allow students 10 minutes to complete the worksheet independently.
2. Collect as a formative assessment or discuss in class.
3. Ask students to share their responses to the Making Connections section.
4. Conclude with an open-ended prompt for students to reflect on how they can put aside differences between friends or teammates and unite to work towards a common goal, just as Jefferson and Adams did to found the United States of America.

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.