

## ***Thomas Jefferson's World: A Resource for Middle and High School Classrooms***

*Thomas Jefferson's World* introduces audiences to key notions regarding Jefferson's ideas and accomplishments, especially his core concepts about liberty that have reached far beyond his place and time in history to the present day.

*Thomas Jefferson's World* illustrates how Jefferson's vision for America and his optimism about the future were driven by his fundamental beliefs in human rights, personal freedom, and democratic values.

Jefferson's crucial role in America's revolutionary struggle for independence, his political career, his varied interests, and the conflict in his championing liberty while owning slaves are all explored.

The film also acquaints viewers with the other people - both enslaved and free - who lived and worked on Jefferson's mountaintop, the activities of the plantation, the main house, and to the extraordinary landscapes of Monticello for which Jefferson had such deep affection.

<http://www.monticello.org/site/visit/film-thomas-jeffersons-world>

### **Curriculum Links:**

*Thomas Jefferson's World* would be an excellent addition to any middle school or high school class on American History. It fulfills the following themes of Social Studies from the National Council for Social Studies: (1) Culture, (2) Time, Continuity, and Change, (3) People, Places, and Environments, (4) Individual Development and Identity, (5) Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, (6) Power, Authority, and Governance, (10) Civic Ideals and Practices

It fulfills the following Virginia standards (SOLs): Revolution and the New Nation: 1770s to the Early 1800s USI 6, USI 7, Expansion and Reform: 1801 to 1861 USI 8, Revolution and the New Nation VUS 4, VUS 5, Expansion and Reform: 1788 to 1860 VUS 6

### **I. Key Terms:**

Students should identify the following terms:

1. Monticello
2. Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom
3. The Declaration of Independence
4. Horticulture
5. Mulberry Row
6. Cuisine
7. Tranquil

8. Boisterous
9. Vestige
10. Depravity
11. Deplorable
12. Established church
13. Tyranny
14. Legacy

## **II. Comprehension Questions:**

1. What did Thomas Jefferson believe was the surest path to human progress? What are some of his direct actions taken to affect that outcome for his fellow Americans?
2. If Thomas Jefferson said he would rather be at Monticello than away in his public service of forty years, why did he do it? Explore the idea of civic virtue in correlation to this answer.
3. How did Thomas Jefferson initially acquire his estate at Monticello and how is this significant as a reflection of the Virginia planter class?
4. The film mentions in a matter of fact manner the death of Thomas Jefferson's wife, Martha, and four of his children. Why is the discussion of such tragedy so understated and what could be concluded based on the tone about mortality in 19<sup>th</sup> century Virginia?
5. What do you think Jefferson meant when he referred to Monticello as his "essay in architecture"?
6. What did Thomas Jefferson believe should be harnessed to improve the human condition? What actions did he take to provide this for his fellow Virginians?
7. The film calls Monticello "Jefferson's laboratory" in what ways did he test his ideas at his estate?
8. How does the film describe the paradox between Jefferson's love of liberty and his ownership of over one hundred African-American slaves?
9. What action was taken by Jefferson to "build a wall of separation between church and state"?
10. The film describes the Declaration of Independence as an experiment in political liberty. Give some of the other historic examples the film cites as having continued the legacy of the Declaration.

## **III. Extended Activities**

1. This film describes Thomas Jefferson's love of fine cuisine and the introduction of new foods to America. Using the following link construct a virtual Jefferson garden of your own inspired by Monticello. <http://www.monticello.org/site/blog-and-community/posts/garden-explorers-family-style> and

<http://explorer.monticello.org/> Or develop a menu for a week based on the foods that were available at Monticello and then help contribute to a class feast. <http://www.monticello.org/slavery-at-monticello/about/spring-crop-harvest>

2. Monticello was Jefferson's "essay in architecture", using the following link construct a house of your own and justify the choices you made in terms of livability and why you chose the elements you did.

<http://classroom.monticello.org/teachers/activities/>

3. One of the great problems for Thomas Jefferson was the existence of slavery, yet he owned slaves throughout his life. Using one of the primary sources from the following link read a slave account and explain to your classmates what being a slave at Monticello was like. Then consider why Jefferson could not allow himself to free his slaves during his lifetime. <http://classroom.monticello.org/kids/resources/>

4. Thomas Jefferson kept detailed and meticulous notes of his daily activities. After examining a day in the life of Thomas Jefferson, construct your own 24 hour journal account and compare how you spend your average day to our 3<sup>rd</sup> President. <http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/day-life-thomas-jefferson>

#### **IV. Primary Source Exploration:**

Thomas Jefferson was perhaps the greatest writer who ever served his country as president. President John Kennedy once told a gathering of all the living Nobel Prize winners, "I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered together at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone." Jefferson has a host of quotations on an extraordinary varied source of subjects. Using the collection at Monticello examines a primary quote by Jefferson and explains in an essay what his point of view and central thesis was.

<http://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/quotations>

#### **V. Resources:**

##### **Books**

Bernstein, R. B. *Thomas Jefferson*. (2003)

Brodie, Fawn McKay. *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*, W.W. Norton, 1974

Burstein, Andrew. *Jefferson's Secrets: Death and Desire at Monticello*, New York: Basic Books, 2005

Ellis, Joseph. *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (1996).

Gordon-Reed, Annette. *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American controversy*, Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1997

Hitchens, Christopher *Thomas Jefferson: Author of America*, (2005).

Malone, Dumas. *Jefferson and His Time*, 6 vols. (1948–82).

Meacham, John. *Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power*, New York, Random House, 2012.

Onuf, Peter S. *Jefferson's Empire: The Languages of American Nationhood*. (2000)

Peterson, Merrill D. *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation*. (1975).

### **Web sites**

1. An excellent activity considering the paradox between slavery and freedom from Columbia University:  
<http://caho-test.cc.columbia.edu/ta/13025.html>
2. Outstanding links to lesson plans and activities involving Monticello:  
<http://www.monticello.org/site/families-and-teachers>