

## **John Adams and Thomas Jefferson: Persuasive Writing and the Founding Fathers**

This curriculum unit is a set of integrated lessons. The integration is between the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade common core standards and the Massachusetts 3<sup>rd</sup> grade social studies frameworks. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade social studies frameworks dictate that students should read and discuss Massachusetts historical figures and founding documents of the country and state. The ELA standards in Common Core dictate that students write opinion pieces supporting points of view with reasons. This standard will be satisfied by studying a correspondence between Adams and Jefferson where a difference of opinion is argued. Students will then choose a side and write a persuasive letter to someone in the class whose opinion differs. As is evidenced within the Jefferson institute, effective rhetorical writing was an integral ingredient in the founding of our nation. These two figures personified this quality. Persuasive writing to this day is a very valuable skill. By making a connection between the skill of persuasive writing and the founding of our country, this curriculum unit will allow students to develop an important academic skill (persuasive writing) through the study of two of the most important historical figures in our country's history.

This unit is designed for a third grade class in Massachusetts. However, the unit is applicable to any elementary classroom that is studying early American history or persuasive writing. Students will need some background in revolutionary America and be able to write a paragraph. Students should also be able to use 'Venn Diagrams' and 'T charts'. The unit might also be adjusted up to a middle school level by increasing the writing requirement to a 5 paragraph essay.

## Day 1

### Summary:

In this lesson, students will listen to the teacher read "*The Worst of Friends*". This picture book discusses the relationship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson and that relationship's historical significance. Students will make predictions about, give reactions to, discuss in small groups and make a 'Venn Diagram' relating to this book in the course of the lesson.

### Objectives:

Students will:

- Describe the friendship between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson
- Explain why John Adams and Thomas Jefferson are important
- Use information from a book to make predictions
- Compare and Contrast Adams and Jefferson using a 'Venn Diagram'

### Common Core ELA:

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.3.3* Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.3* Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

### Massachusetts Social Studies Frameworks

3.6 Identify the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights as key American documents. (C)

3.7 After reading a biography of a person from Massachusetts in one of the following categories, summarize the person's life and achievements. (H, C)

- E. political leadership (e.g., John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Susan B. Anthony, Edward Brooke, Benjamin Franklin, John F. Kennedy, Paul Revere)

**Resources:** Blank 'Venn Diagrams', *The Worst of Friends*

### Procedures:

- Call students to the reading spot
- Show the class the cover of *The Worst of Friends*
- Call attention to what the characters are wearing
- Ask students for ideas on what the book is about

- Ask students to make predictions on what will happen in the book
- Read the book to the class checking for understanding throughout
- At the end of the book ask students to share their reactions to the story
  - What do they think about Adams?
  - What do they think about Jefferson?
  - How are they alike?
  - How are they different?
- Have students go back to their desks
- Pass out a copy of a blank 'Venn Diagram' to each student
- Draw a blank 'Venn Diagram' on the board
  - Write Adams on one side and Jefferson on the other
  - Have one student write one way Adams differed from Jefferson on the Adams side
  - Have another student write one way Jefferson differs from Adams on the other side
  - Have another student write a similarity of the two in the middle of the diagram
  - Tell the students to copy these examples off the board
  - Tell students to talk with table partners about other ways Jefferson differs from Adams. Each table should come up with at least 3 additional characteristics that distinguish Adams from Jefferson. Circulate the room to check progress and offer assistance.
  - Tell students to talk with table partners about ways in which Adams differs from Jefferson. Each table should come up with at least 3 additional ways. Circulate the room to check progress and offer assistance to those who need it.
  - Have students talk with table partners about 3 additional ways in which Jefferson and Adams are alike. Circulate the room to check progress and offer assistance to those who need it.
  - When most groups have come up with 3 additional samples for each subsection of the 'Venn Diagram', ask the groups to share their findings. Write correct findings in the 'Venn Diagram' on the board.
- Have students put the 'Venn Diagrams' in their writing folders
- Remind students that Jefferson and Adams were real historical figures important to the founding of the United States and to their respective states.
- Restate that, like in the book, Jefferson and Adams were political rivals even though they were personal friends. They had very different ideas on what was good for the country.
- Inform the students that they will be reading some letters written by these two figures to each other that show how they disagreed on some important issues and tried to convince each other on their arguments.
- Inform the students that they will be given the opportunity to choose a side in the debate and write a persuasive letter to a classmate who has chosen the opposite side of the debate

**Assessment:** The finished 'Venn Diagram' will be used to assess each student's understanding of the book and the two main characters.

## **Day 2**

### **Summary:**

In this lesson, students will learn some major points of difference between Federalist and Republican thinking in the early years of the U.S.A. Jefferson and Adams will be named as representatives of those two early political parties. After reviewing some vocabulary words important to understanding the text, students will be exposed to excerpts from an exchange of letters between Jefferson and Adams that represents their difference of opinion on important issues of the day. The letters will be read aloud to the class as the students follow along. The differences of opinion will be identified; the reasons for the disagreement will be restated and small group and class discussions will take place in order to formulate and express personal opinions on the subject matter.

### **Setting:**

Mini-lesson on the Federalist and Republican parties will take place while students are seated at their desks. The letters will be read aloud to students while they sit at the reading spot (class library or reading rug). Whole class discussion will take place at the reading spot. The small group discussions will take place in groups at the desks.

### **Objectives:**

Students will:

- Read historical documents
- Compare and contrast the Federalist and Republican parties in the early U.S.
- Use a T chart to organize information
- Discuss differences between political parties in small groups

### ***Common Core ELA:***

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.9 Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

### ***Massachusetts Social Studies Frameworks:***

3.7 After reading a biography of a person from Massachusetts in one of the following categories, summarize the person's life and achievements. (H, C)

- E. political leadership (e.g., John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Susan B. Anthony, Edward Brooke, Benjamin Franklin, John F. Kennedy, Paul Revere)

**Resources:**

Students will be given blank T charts, copies of the correspondence between Adams and Jefferson: <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/presidents/thomas-jefferson/letters-of-thomas-jefferson/jefl65.php>, and some yellow lined paper to write a sentence or two explaining whose side they will take and why. Students will watch a video on the Federalist and the Republican parties.

**Procedures:**

- Call students to the reading spot
- Activate prior knowledge by asking the class if they have ever heard of political parties
- Ask what political parties they have heard of
- Ask what political parties do
- Read Federalists vs. Republicans aloud
- Hold a brief discussion on the differences and similarities between Federalists and Republicans in the early U.S.
- Tell students to go back to their tables
- Pass out the letter from Adams extolling Federalist ideals
  - Read aloud to the class as students follow along
  - Allow students to talk among their table mates about why they think Adams was a Federalist
- Pass out the Jefferson letter extolling Republican ideals
  - Read aloud to the class as the students follow along
  - Allow students to talk among their table mates about why they think Jefferson was a Republican
- Pass out the blank T charts labeled Federalist/Republican
  - Project or draw the image onto the board
  - As a class, list some Republican traits on one side of the T chart and Federalist traits on the other
  - Ask students if they have ever heard of one of these parties before
  - If they have, ask which one
  - Ask if the political party they have heard of seemed like the same party back in the early U.S. as it exists today
- Have the students talk among their table mates about which party they would have belonged to if they had lived in those days (remind them that the republican party is a lot different today)
- Have students write two or three sentences on the back of the T chart stating which party they would've belonged to and why

**Assessments:**

The filled in T charts will be used to assess student's understanding of the differences between Adams and Jefferson on the issue.

## Day 3

### Summary:

This lesson will require students to produce an outline of their argument for either Adams' or Jefferson's view on government. The students will use their graphic organizers ('Venn Diagrams', T charts as well as the statement of their opinions) from the previous lessons to develop the outline.

### Objectives:

Students will:

- Read historical documents
- Use graphic organizers to produce an outline for writing
- Write a thesis statement voicing an opinion

#### *Common Core ELA*

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.9 Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1a Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1b Provide reasons that support the opinion.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1c Use linking words and phrases (e.g., because, therefore, since, for example) to connect opinion and reasons.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1d Provide a concluding statement or section

#### ***Massachusetts Social Studies Frameworks***

- 3.6 Identify the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights as key American documents. (C)
- 3.7 After reading a biography of a person from Massachusetts in one of the following categories, summarize the person's life and achievements. (H, C)
  - political leadership (e.g., John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Susan B. Anthony, Edward Brooke, Benjamin Franklin, John F. Kennedy, Paul Revere)

### Resources:

Students will watch a Brain Pop ([www.brainpop.com](http://www.brainpop.com)) video on John Adams. Students will need yellow lined paper and persuasive letter graphic organizer.

### **Procedures:**

- have students take out writing folders
- tell them to find the T chart, 'Venn Diagram', and opinion statement and give them 3 to 5 minutes to look them over
- Tell the students that they will be making an outline for their particular arguments
  - The statement of opinion will be the thesis of the argument
  - The T chart and the 'Venn Diagram' will be used to find at least 3 supporting reasons for the Thesis
- Show a sample outline on the board
  - Thesis statement , one premise and a reason for accepting that premise should be written out
  - The rest of the bullet points will be left blank (see example)
- Pass out blank outlines
- Have students fill in the spot for the thesis by copying their opinion statements
- Tell the students that their premises will be found within their 'Venn Diagrams' and T charts
- Have students talk with their table mates about possible premises for their arguments
  - Walk around the room to facilitate discussions
- After about 5 minutes, tell students to start writing down their chosen premises
  - Circulate the room to help those who need it
  - Allow about 10 to 15 minutes for this
- Have students talk about their premises with their table mates for about 5 minutes with the end of coming up with reasons for those premises in mind
- Give students 10 to 15 minutes to fill in the reason bullets on their outlines
  - Circulate the room to help those who need it
  - Give 10 to 15 minutes to finish this assignment
- Have 1 or 2 students share their outlines with the class
- Have students put all materials in their writing folders

### **Assessments:**

Students will produce the first draft of a letter of at least 1 paragraph describing a point of view and stating at least 3 reasons for that point of view.

Day 4

**Summary:**

In this lesson, students will write and edit a rough draft of a persuasive letter to another student in class whose opinion on Adams and Jefferson is different from his or her own. The students will use their outlines from the previous lesson to accomplish this. The letter will have a thesis statement and at least 3 supporting reasons supporting the student's opinion. Students will edit their own letters as well as make corrections to letters belonging to others in the class.

**Objectives:**

Students will:

- Use graphic organizers and outlines to produce a rough draft of their persuasive letters
- Use the writing of Adams and Jefferson to collect premises that support their arguments
- Write reasons for why they believe their premises

***Common Core ELA***

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.9 Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1a Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure that lists reasons.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1b Provide reasons that support the opinion.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1c Use linking words and phrases (e.g., because, therefore, since, for example) to connect opinion and reasons.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1d Provide a concluding statement or section

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  - political leadership (e.g., John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Susan B. Anthony, Edward Brooke, Benjamin Franklin, John F. Kennedy, Paul Revere)

**Resources:**

Students will need white lined paper, graphic organizers from previous lessons, the Jefferson/Adams letters and the persuasive letter graphic organizer for this lesson. Students will watch a Brain Pop ([www.brainpop.com](http://www.brainpop.com)) video on Thomas Jefferson

**Procedures:**

- pass out persuasive letter graphic organizer
- Have students take out their writing folders and take out their outlines
- Tell students they will be transferring their premises and reasons from their outlines onto the graphic organizer (see organizer)
- Project an example with the thesis, one premise and one reason filled in
- Tell students to transfer the thesis, premises and reasons onto the organizer
  - Circulate and give help to students who need it
  - Give 15 to 20 minutes to finish this exercise
- Have students fill in the greeting section of the organizer with the name of another student in class who is taking the opposite position
- Have the students fill out the salutation on the bottom of the organizer
- Have students finish up their work
- Play the brain Pop video on Thomas Jefferson
  - Have students who have not finished continue working through the video
  - Pass out yellow lined paper while the video is playing
- When Video is over, have students copy their letters from the organizers onto the yellow lined paper
  - Circulate and help those who need it
  - Give 15 to 20 minutes to complete
- Either have students switch papers and peer edit while running small group conferences or collect papers and make teacher edits

**Assessments:**

The students will produce edited drafts of at least 1 paragraph with a greeting, an argument, and a salutation.

## Day 5

### Summary

In this lesson, students will finish and publish a final draft of their persuasive letters

### Objectives:

Students will:

- Produce a final draft of a persuasive letter
- Present an argument for their opinion to their peers
- Publish their finished products for public viewing

### ***Common Core ELA***

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.3.9 Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.
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### Resources:

Students will need their edited letters and access to a computer for this lesson.

**Procedures:**

- Tell students they will be making final revisions and producing a final draft of their persuasive letters.
- Pass back revised letters to students
- Make sure students have access to dictionaries or online resources for making spelling corrections
- Hand out white lined paper to students or allow them to sit at a computer if a lab is available
- Have the students make the corrections to their persuasive letters on the white lined paper or the computer
  - Circulate and give help to those who need it
  - Allow at least 45 minutes to complete this
- When students are finished, have them go to their table groups
  - Allow each student to present his or her argument to the group
  - Allow 5 minutes for each presentation
- When the presentations are over, ask for volunteers to present their arguments to the class
- Give a summative mini lecture on the tasks you have completed as a class within this unit
  - Discuss *The Worst of Friends* and the differences between Adams and Jeffers
  - Discuss the letters between Adams and Jefferson and the different points of view discussed between the two figures
  - Discuss how opinions were presented in the form of arguments in favor of either Adams' or Jefferson's point of view

**Assessments:**

Students will be assessed via their final drafts of their persuasive letters. The letters should be grammatically correct, consist of at least 1 paragraph stating an argument with at least 3 reasons backing up the thesis statement.

## Resources

1. [www.brainpop.com](http://www.brainpop.com)
2. *The Worst of Friends: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and the True Story of an American Feud*, by: Suzanne Tripp Jermain, 2008
3. Letter from Thomas Jefferson to John Adams:  
<http://founders.archives.gov/?q=Thomas%20Jefferson%20November%2013%2C%201787%20Author%3A%22Jefferson%2C%20Thomas%22%20Recipient%3A%22Adams%2C%20John%22&s=111311111&sa=&r=1&sr=>  
“From Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 13 November 1787,” Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-12-02-0342>, ver. 2013-06-26). Source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 12, 7 August 1787–31 March 1788, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955, pp. 349–351.
4. Letter From John Adams to Thomas Jefferson:  
<http://founders.archives.gov/?q=thomas%20jefferson%20john%20adams%20december%206%201787&s=111311111&sa=&r=20&sr=>  
“To Thomas Jefferson from John Adams, 6 December 1787,” Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-12-02-0405>, ver. 2013-06-26). Source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 12, 7 August 1787–31 March 1788, ed. Julian P. Boyd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955, pp. 396–397.

# From Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, 13 November 1787

## To John Adams

Paris Nov. 13. 1787.

DEAR SIR

How do you like our new constitution? I confess there are things in it which stagger all my dispositions to subscribe to what such an assembly has proposed. The house of federal representatives will not be adequate to the management of affairs either foreign or federal. Their President seems a bad edition of a Polish king. He may be reelected from 4. years to 4. years for life. Reason and experience prove to us that a chief magistrate, so continuable, is an officer for life. When one or two generations shall have proved that this is an office for life, it becomes on every succession worthy of intrigue, of bribery, of force, and even of foreign interference. It will be of great consequence to France and England to have America governed by a Galloman or Angloman. Once in office, and possessing the military force of the union, without either the aid or check of a council, he would not be easily dethroned, even if the people could be induced to withdraw their votes from him. I wish that at the end of the 4. years they had made him for ever ineligible a second time. Indeed I think all the good of this new constitution might have been couched in three or four new articles to be added to the good, old, and venerable fabrick, which should have been preserved even as a religious relique.—Present me and my daughters affectionately to Mrs. Adams. The younger one continues to speak of her warmly. Accept yourself assurances of the sincere esteem and respect with which I have the honour to be, Dear Sir, your friend & servant,

TH: JEFFERSON

P.S. I am in negociation with de la Blancherie. You shall hear from me when arranged.

# December 1787

## From John Adams

London Decr. 6. 1787

DEAR SIR

The Project of a new Constitution, has Objections against it, to which I find it difficult to reconcile my self, but I am so unfortunate as to differ somewhat from you in the Articles, according to your last kind Letter.

You are afraid of the one—I, of the few. We agree perfectly that the many should have a full fair and perfect Representation.—You are Apprehensive of Monarchy; I, of Aristocracy. I would therefore have given more Power to the President and less to the Senate. The Nomination and Appointment to all offices I would have given to the President, assisted only by a Privy Council of his own<sup>1</sup> Creation, but not a Vote or Voice would I have given to the Senate or any Senator, unless he were of the Privy Council. Faction and Distraction are the sure and certain Consequence of giving to a Senate a vote in the distribution of offices.

You are apprehensive the President when once chosen, will be chosen again and again as long as he lives. So much the better as it appears to me.—You are apprehensive of foreign Interference, Intrigue, Influence. So am I.—But, as often as Elections happen, the danger of foreign Influence recurs. The less frequently they happen the less danger.—And if the Same Man may be chosen again, it is probable he will be, and the danger of foreign Influence will be less. Foreigners, seeing little Prospect will have less Courage for Enterprize.

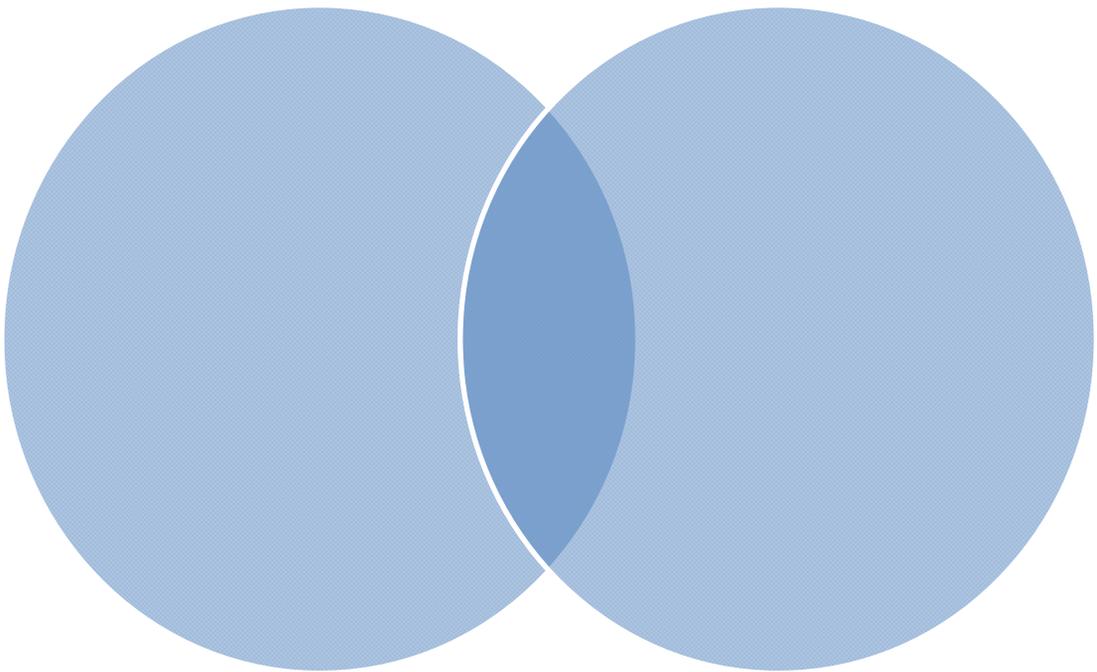
Elections, my dear sir, Elections to offices which are great objects of Ambition, I look at with terror. Experiments of this kind have been so often tryed, and so universally found productive of Horrors, that there is great Reason to dread them.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Littlepage who will have the Honour to deliver this will tell you all the News. I am, my dear Sir, with great Regard,

JOHN ADAMS

Adams

Jefferson



Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It is my opinion that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I have \_\_\_\_\_ reasons for this.

First, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Second, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Third, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

These are the reasons I believe \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

## Federalists

## Republicans

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.