



## Politics and Leadership

*The focus of this lesson plan is the relationship between great leaders and thinkers of their time.*

### **Subject**

World History

### **Grade level**

9-12

### **Duration**

One or two class periods

### **Objectives**

Students will

- research a selected leader, focusing on the great thinkers who influenced that individual;
- write an essay exploring the relationship between leaders and great thinkers; and
- apply this idea to contemporary leaders.

### **Materials**

- Paper and pencils
- Computer with Internet access
- *Politics and Leadership* video and VCR (or DVD and DVD player)

### **Procedures**

1. Begin the lesson by showing students the segment called "Enlightenment and the American Revolution," which focuses on the Enlightenment and the relationship between Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of Independence, and John Locke, a philosopher of that time period.
2. Next, have a class discussion on how great thinkers influence great leaders. Ask students the following questions:
  - What do great leaders learn from these great thinkers?
  - Do you think the leaders' ideas would have been different without the influence of these thinkers?
  - Do you think that great thinkers are ahead of their times?
  - Do you think that great leaders are ahead of their times?
  - Is the influence of great thinkers always positive?

3. Group students into pairs. Tell students that their challenge is to choose one of the leaders listed below and find out how that individual was influenced by a contemporary great thinker. These people are featured in the program.
  - Alexander the Great, influenced by Aristotle
  - Thomas Jefferson, influenced by John Locke
  - Napoleon, influenced by Machiavelli
4. A good starting point for this lesson is to watch the entire program. The following Web sites also provide valuable information:

#### **Alexander the Great and Aristotle**

- <http://www.pothos.org/alexander.asp?ParaID=20>
- [http://wi.essortment.com/alexanderthegr\\_rxdz.htm](http://wi.essortment.com/alexanderthegr_rxdz.htm)
- <http://www.interesting.com/stories/alexander/#story>
- <http://www.sonic.net/~exactsci/ancient/greek/Aristotle.htm>

#### **Thomas Jefferson and John Locke**

- <http://www.anesi.com/q0033.htm>
- <http://www.lpoh.org/locke1.html>
- [http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/philosophy/john\\_locke\\_works.html](http://www.age-of-the-sage.org/philosophy/john_locke_works.html)
- <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/locke/locke.htm>
- [http://www.homeofheroes.com/hallofheroes/1st\\_floor/birth/1bc2.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/hallofheroes/1st_floor/birth/1bc2.html)

#### **Napoleon and Machiavelli**

- <http://lilt.ilstu.edu/drjclassics/syllabi/IH/Machiavelli.shtm>
- <http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/lecture15a.html>
- <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/m/machiave.htm>
- <http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/N/napoleon/rebel.html>
- <http://www.the-prince-by-machiavelli.com/niccolo-machiavelli-biography.html>

5. Give students time in class to work on this project. Remind them to consider how each leader used what he learned from reading the great thinkers to accomplish his own goals.
6. After students have completed their research, have them write a 500-700 word essay explaining how their leader was influenced by the great thinkers of their time. Students may need to finish their essay as homework.
7. Ask for volunteers to read their essays to the class. Try to have all three leaders covered in the student presentations.
8. Conclude the lesson by asking students if they think contemporary great thinkers have influenced leaders. If so, ask for specific examples. Ask students if they believe that great thinkers are important to powerful leaders. Have students provide evidence for their ideas.

### **Extensions**

1. Ask students to choose a leader in modern history and research great thinkers who may have influenced that individual. The leader can be a president, a political activist, or a military leader.
2. Ask students if a writer, musician, or world leader has influenced them. Suggest that each student write a brief essay describing how an individual has affected his or her life.

### **Evaluation**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

**3 points:** Students participated actively in class discussions; wrote an interesting, informative, and creative essay comparing the relationship between a leader and a great thinker; and applied what they learned to other leaders.

**2 points:** Students participated in class discussions; wrote a competent essay comparing the relationship between a leader and a great thinker; and applied some of what they learned to other leaders.

**1 point:** Students did not participate in class discussions; did not complete their essays; and had difficulty applying what they learned to other leaders.

### **Vocabulary**

#### **Alexander the Great**

**Definition:** A great leader who lived between 356 and 328 B.C.; he conquered the Persian empire and spread Greek culture throughout the world.

**Context:** Strongly influenced by the *Iliad*, Alexander the Great believed that he was descended from the Greek hero Achilles and was destined to conquer the world.

#### **Aristotle**

**Definition:** Greek philosopher who lived between 384 and 322 B.C., he taught Alexander the Great. A deep thinker, he studied logic, science, ethics and politics, and literature.

**Context:** Aristotle was taught by Plato and became head of the Academy in Athens after Plato's death.

#### **Thomas Jefferson**

**Definition:** Author of the Declaration of Independence, governor, Congressman, and third president of the United States

**Context:** A leader in the Continental Congress, Thomas Jefferson was selected to write the Declaration of Independence, considered his greatest work.

#### **John Locke**

**Definition:** English philosopher who lived between 1632 and 1704; his writings, *Two Treatises of Government*, influenced Thomas Jefferson in his writing of the Declaration of Independence.

**Context:** John Locke's writings emphasize his belief that all people have certain rights, including liberty, life, and the ownership of property.

#### **Machiavelli**

**Definition:** Renaissance Italian statesman and writer who lived between 1469 and 1527; considered the father of political science

**Context:** Machiavelli believed that it was the responsibility of an effective leader to maintain the health and safety of the state at any cost.

### **Napoleon**

**Definition:** Emperor of France who lived between 1769 and 1821, whose empire included most of western and central Europe

**Context:** Napoleon's experience in Russia was the beginning of the end of his rule; he met his downfall at Waterloo and spent his remaining days on the island of St. Helena.

### **Academic Standards**

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of the NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
- Individual Development and Identity
- Power, Authority, and Governance

### **Credit**

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