

## Spring 2009 Teaching with Primary Sources Quarterly Learning Activity – Elementary Level

### Thomas Jefferson's Library: Connecting the Books to the Life Activity



*The Builder's Dictionary: or, Gentleman and Architect's Companion...2 vols. London, 1734.*  
Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress (S. 4187) [#38]

Library of Congress:

<http://myloc.gov/Education/OnlineActivities/Pages/onlineactivities/bookstothelife/BooksToTheLife.pdf>

#### OVERVIEW

##### Overview

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to Thomas Jefferson by examining some of the books from his personal library. Students, working individually or in pairs, will draw connections between Jefferson's reading and his life's work. Students will match Jefferson's books to different roles he played (scientist, builder, leader, and scholar), select the book they believe Jefferson would have used most often, and later defend their conclusions in class discussion.

##### Objectives

After completing this learning activity, students will be able to:

- Identify some of Thomas Jefferson's many roles in life
- Explain the importance of books to 18<sup>th</sup> century people, including Thomas Jefferson
- Examine some of Jefferson's books and speculate about how they might have influenced him

##### Time Required

One class period

##### Recommended Grade Range

4-6

##### Topic/s

United States History/Government

##### Subject

Social Studies, Language Arts (Reading)

##### Standards

McREL 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Standards & Benchmarks

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

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OVERVIEW (CONT'D)

*Grades K-4 History*

**Standard 4.** Understands how democratic values came to be, and how they have been exemplified by people, events and symbols

*Historical Understanding*

**Standard 2.** Understands the historical perspective

*Language Arts: Reading*

**Standard 5.** Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

*Thinking and Reasoning*

**Standard 3.** Effectively uses mental processes that are based on identifying similarities and differences

PREPARATION

Materials

Have these materials ready before the activity:

**Thomas Jefferson's Library: Connecting the Books to the Life** online activity

<http://myloc.gov/Education/OnlineActivities/ExhibitObjects/connectingthebooks.aspx>

*Note: Requires prior download of Flash 9 or higher. Direct link to an external site with free software for download is available from the Library's myloc.gov Web site.*

- Prepare to display the online activity for pre- and post-activity discussions

**Internet-ready computer for each student or pair of students**

- Set up access to run the online activity and bookmark the link for student use (see above)

**Worksheet**

- One copy for each student

Resources

**List of the activity's books matched to Jefferson's roles**

<http://myloc.gov/Education/OnlineActivities/Pages/onlineactivities/bookstothelife/BooksToTheLife.pdf>

Additional Library of Congress resources are listed in the **Thomas Jefferson's Library:**

**Connecting the Books to the Life** online activity's "Resources for Teachers" section:

<http://myloc.gov/Education/OnlineActivities/Pages/onlineactivities/bookstothelife/index.html>

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PROCEDURE

**Activating Prior Knowledge:**

1. Ask students to share what they know about Thomas Jefferson. Possible questions include:
  - What role did Jefferson play in the events leading up to the American Revolution? During the war? Afterward?
  - What other roles do you think Jefferson might have played in his life in addition to his role as a leader? (Note: write responses on the board)
  - How might Jefferson have learned the information he needed for all of his roles in life?
2. Display the “Instructions” page to the **Thomas Jefferson’s Library: Connecting the Books to the Life** online activity.
  - As a class, discuss the four roles played by Jefferson selected by the Library of Congress for this activity: scientist, builder, leader, and scholar.
  - Select the button for each role to read a brief explanation and explore related resources (accessible via hyperlinks).
3. Emphasize that people living in the 18<sup>th</sup> century relied heavily on books as sources of information. The ideas in books strongly influenced the thinking of people in this time period.
  - Thomas Jefferson once said, “I cannot live without books.” His personal library reflects his love of learning, his many interests and his various roles in life.
4. Explain that students will learn more about Thomas Jefferson in this online activity by closely examining some books from his personal library and matching them to different roles he played.

**Activity:**

1. Assign students to work at computers individually or in pairs.
2. Remind students to examine each book carefully using the online activity’s **About this Book** and **Zoom** features before matching it to one of Jefferson’s roles.
3. When all students have matched all books, hand out the **worksheets** to students (one copy per student).
4. Ask students to select one book from among those featured in the online activity that they believe Thomas Jefferson would have used most often. They should prepare to defend their selections to the class by using information from the online activity to complete their worksheets.

**Culminating Discussion:**

1. As an entire class, discuss students’ discoveries about Thomas Jefferson and his books. Ask students to explain and defend their choices regarding Jefferson’s most used book from **Thomas Jefferson’s Library: Connecting the Books to the Life** online activity as part of the discussion.

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EVALUATION

- Active engagement in online activity
- Thorough completion of worksheet
- Active, thoughtful participation in pre- and post-activity class discussions

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## **Thomas Jefferson's Library: Connecting the Books to the Life Activity**

Thomas Jefferson once said, "I cannot live without books."

You have examined some books from Jefferson's own library and matched them to different roles Jefferson played during his life.

Now it's time for you to take an even closer look at these books.

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### **Directions:**

- Return to the activity's homepage.
- Select **Start** to launch the activity
- Select **Next Book** or **Previous Book** to review all of the books
- Select **About this Book** and **Zoom** to learn more about each book

1. Of all the books, which one would you be *most interested* in reading? Why?

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2. Which book were you *most surprised* to find in Thomas Jefferson's personal library? Why?

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3. Based on what you know about Thomas Jefferson, which book do you think he would have used most often? Why?

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Now explore the book you selected as Jefferson’s most used book.

- Select **Next Book** or **Previous Book** to return to the book
- Use the **Zoom** feature to help you answer these questions:

4. What do you notice about this book? Write down details, such as title, author, date, illustrations, and anything else you see.

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5. What do you think this book is about? Write down words or phrases that give clues.

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6. Think about the time period in which Thomas Jefferson lived and his many roles in life. Why do you think he said, “I cannot live without books?”

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