

Competing Visions of America

Grade Levels: 10, 11

Time Commitment: 90 Minutes

Subject(s): U.S. History, Democracy

Overview: Students will explore core political and economic ideas of prominent 18th- and 19th-century northern and southern thinkers (Jefferson, Fithugh, George, and Webster) through primary source analysis. In an optional extension, students will participate in a fishbowl-style Socratic seminar, guided by an overarching question and related student-created questions.

Materials:

- Student Handouts
- Smartboard or Projector
- Desk Organization (Optional)
- Printer
- Sticky Notes

Opener (25 Minutes):

1. Tell the students to find a partner. Give each pair two sticky notes, one for the North and one for the South.
2. Project the slideshow (Pages 8-13). Explain the political spectrum and definitions.
3. Students will place their sticky note on the portion of the political spectrum chart projected on the board that they predict aligns most with the 19th-century South or the 19th-century North.
4. Put the slideshow slide containing the scale (Page 11) up on the board for students to see.
5. Provide students with a couple of minutes to place sticky notes on the board.
6. Tell the students to turn and talk with their neighbors about where they and their partner placed their two sticky notes, and why.
7. After private discussion, have a whole-class discussion on why students chose to place their sticky notes where they did.

Activity (50 Minutes):

1. Hand out the Primary Source Analysis handouts (Pages 3-7) and display a digital copy on the board. Read the first quote aloud and demonstrate how to fill out the first chart (“I do”). Tell the students to write down your analysis in their own words.
2. For the second quote, collaborate with students to analyze it as a class (“We do”). You may ask for several different student viewpoints before reaching a consensus analysis, which students will write in their own words.
3. For the third quote, have students analyze it independently before sharing their analysis with a neighbor. Then, discuss it as a class. Do not write a consensus analysis on the board (gradual release of responsibility)
4. Provide students five minutes to analyze the last quote fully independently (“You Do”).
5. Finally, give students time to answer the reflection questions on the sheets.

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Closer (15 Minutes):

1. Students should write three thoughtful questions about the primary sources that they analyzed to ask the class: something they were confused by, something they would like to learn more about, and something they would like other students' insights on.
2. Write the questions on the board and cover a few in discussion.

Tips & Tricks for the Activity

- It may be worth going over the different types of thought before doing this activity (Liberalism, Libertarianism, Socialism, and Fascism). Have students think of countries or moments in time where those types of thought are present.
- Randomly (or intentionally) assign partners to ensure that everyone participates in the activities.
- If needed, there is a rubric (Page 14) for grading this activity.

Extension Activity Ideas

- Hold a Socratic Seminar. Arrange the desks into two circles before class starts - an inside circle and an outside circle.
 - Begin the discussion by going over expectations for a respectful discussion and then asking the big overarching question to the class: "How do the ideas of prominent 18th/19th century political and economic thinkers contrast with our 21st century preconceptions of their region's biases?"
 - Divide students into two groups. One group will sit in an inner circle of chairs, and the other group will sit in outside chairs placed concentrically around the inside circle. Assign each "Outside" student to observe the "Inside" student partner directly in front of them.
 - In the inside circle, students should ask and answer each other's questions, which they created in the earlier part of this activity. Ideally, every student should both ask and answer at least one question thoughtfully.
 - Students in the outside circle should make notes/answer questions on how their "Inside" partner contributes to the discussion as a whole, how the class does as a whole, etc. They will also do discussion mapping, drawing a line from one student's desk to another as they follow the discussion.
 - After half an hour, switch the "Inside" and "Outside" student groups and repeat.

Modified Activity Ideas

- If students are struggling with the primary source analysis portion of this lesson, continue the "We do" into the last quote. Or, have students complete this assignment in groups.
- If there is less time available, take out one or two of the four quotes (make sure to keep one thinker from the North and one from the South).

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Primary Source Analysis

Name: _____

Block: _____

OVERARCHING QUESTION: How do the ideas of prominent 18th/19th century political and economic thinkers contrast with our 21st century preconceptions of their region's biases?

"I do" (Teacher Does): Thomas Jefferson, 1786

Prompt	Analysis
Thomas Jefferson was a Virginia planter, enslaver, author of the Declaration of Independence and The Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, and the third President of the United States.	"...another means of silently lessening the inequality of property is to exempt all from taxation below a certain point, and to tax the higher portions of property in geometrical progression as they rise."
This shows that:	
This is because: (Evidence)	

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Primary Source Analysis

Name: _____

Block: _____

OVERARCHING QUESTION: How do the ideas of prominent 18th/19th century political and economic thinkers contrast with our 21st century preconceptions of their region's biases?

"We Do" (The Class Does): George Fitzhugh, Sociology of the South, 1854

Prompt	Analysis
George Fitzhugh was a Virginian attorney, known for his prominent pro-slavery writings, which were amongst the most popular political writings in the antebellum South.	“The world is divided between two philosophies. The one the philosophy of free trade and universal liberty - the philosophy adapted to promote the interests of the strong, the wealthy and the wise. The other, that of socialism, intended to protect the weak, the poor and the ignorant. The latter is almost universal in free society; the former prevails in the slaveholding States of the South...The people of the North and of Europe are pro-slavery men in the abstract; those of the South are theoretical abolitionists...The people in free society feel the evils of universal liberty and free competition, and desire to get rid of those evils. They propose a remedy, which is in fact slavery...The citizens of the South, who have seen none of the evils of liberty and competition...believe free competition to be an unmixed good.”
This shows that:	
This is because: (Evidence)	

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Primary Source Analysis

Name: _____

Block: _____

OVERARCHING QUESTION: How do the ideas of prominent 18th/19th century political and economic thinkers contrast with our 21st century preconceptions of their region's biases?

"We Do" (The Class Does): Henry George, Progress and Poverty, 1879

Prompt	Analysis
Henry George was an economic and political thinker. Born in Philadelphia Pennsylvania, he also lived and worked in California and New York.	"An investigation of the nature and basis of property shows that there is a fundamental and irreconcilable difference between property in things which are the product of labor and property in land; that the one has a natural basis and sanction while the other has none, and that the recognition of exclusive property in land is necessarily a denial of the right of property in the products of labor. Further investigation shows that private property in land... lead[s] to the enslavement of the laboring class... It is seen that private property in land, instead of being necessary to its improvement and use, stands in the way of improvement and use, and entails an enormous waste of productive forces; that the recognition of the common right to land involves no shock or dispossession, but is to be reached by the simple and easy method of abolishing all taxation save that upon land-values. And this an inquiry into the principles of taxation shows to be, in all respects, the best subject of taxation.
This shows that:	
This is because: (Evidence)	

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Primary Source Analysis

Name: _____

Block: _____

OVERARCHING QUESTION: How do the ideas of prominent 18th/19th century political and economic thinkers contrast with our 21st century preconceptions of their region's biases?

"We Do" (The Class Does): Daniel Webster, McCullough v. Maryland, 1819

Prompt	Analysis
Daniel Webster was an American attorney and politician from New Hampshire and Massachusetts. He argued more than 200 cases before the Supreme Court, was a U.S. Senator, and the Secretary of State under three presidents.	"If the states may tax the bank, to what extent shall they tax it, and where shall they stop? An unlimited power to tax involves, necessarily, a power to destroy; because there is a limit beyond which no institution and no property can bear taxation. A question of constitutional power can hardly be made to depend on a question of more or less. If the states may tax, they have no limit but their discretion; and the bank, therefore, must depend on the discretion of the state governments for its existence."
This shows that:	
This is because: (Evidence)	

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Primary Source Analysis

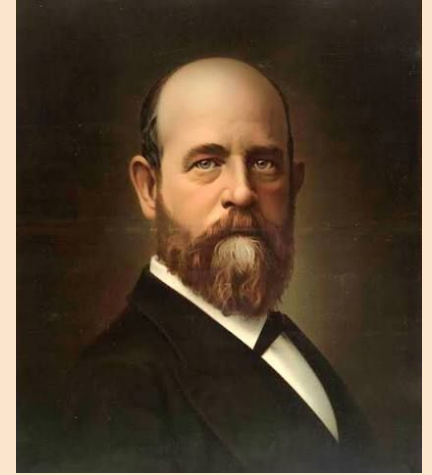
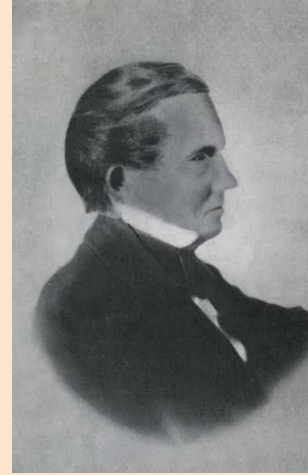
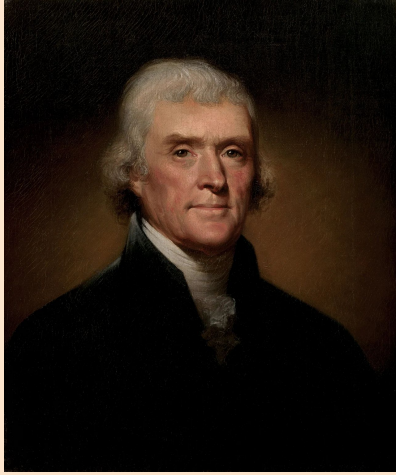
Name: _____

Block: _____

Reflection: Political and Economic Thought in 18th/19th Century America

Please answer in multiple full sentences.

1. How were your predictions about the political biases of 18th- and 19th-century American political and economic thinkers similar to and/or different from what you anticipated, considering the region they came from? Explain.
2. Do you think that the political and economic ideas of 18th- and 19th-century Americans can easily be classified into modern classifications? Why or why not?
3. What most surprised you about 18th- and 19th-century American political thought? Why?



Seminar: Political and Economic Thought in 18th/19th Century America

	Student does not complete this category			Student Mostly Meets Expectations		Student Fully Meets Expectations
Category	0	1	2	3	4	5
The successful student effectively works with a partner to make thoughtful and reasonable predictions about the political biases of 18th and 19th century American political and economic thinkers.						
The successful analyzes the sources in his or her This Shows That and This is Because statements.						
The successful student is reflective on their learning, making meaningful connections between their predictions and what they learned.						

Political Spectrum Predictor

- With a partner, you will have two sticky notes, one for the North and one for the South.
- You will place your sticky note in the portion of the political spectrum chart projected on the board that you most predict would be aligned with the 18th/19th Century South or the 18th/19th Century North.

North or South

- Partner Names
- Why you placed your sticky note where you did

19th Century America Political Thought Predictor

Liberalism

A political/economic philosophy based on civil liberty, the innate goodness of people, and the ability for government to promote social good in society.

Libertarianism

A political/economic philosophy that values private property, the free market, and seeks to promote freedom through limited government involvement.

Personal
Freedom

Left

Right

Authoritarian

Fascism

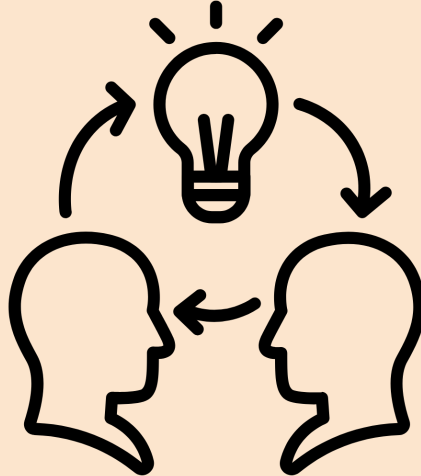
A political/economic ideology that puts a racial group above the individual, believes in a centralized government led by a dictator, glorifies violence, and government involvement in the economy.

Socialism

A political/economic philosophy based on a normally dictatorial government owning all property and employing everyone in a country, with the goal of promoting

Share!

- Turn and talk with neighbors about why you and your partner placed your two sticky notes where you did.
- Whole class discussion on why students chose to place their sticky notes where they did (volunteers or popsicle sticks)



Source Analysis: Political Thought in 18th/19th Century America

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Rubric - Primary Source Analysis

Name: _____

Block: _____

	Student does not complete this category			Student Mostly Meets Expectations		Student Fully Meets Expectations
Category	0	1	2	3	4	5
The successful student effectively works with a partner to make thoughtful and reasonable predictions about the political biases of 18th and 19th century American political and economic thinkers.						
The successful analyzes the sources in his or her This Shows That and This is Because statements.						
The successful student is reflective on their learning, making meaningful connections between their predictions and what they learned.						

Grade: ____/15 = ____%

This Lesson Plan was:

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