

## **LESSON 2: The Rule of Law and Equality:**

### Architectural Reflections of Monarchy and Democracy

#### **Content Areas:**

- History (Egalitarianism, Thomas Jefferson)
- Architecture (Interpretation)

#### **Grade Level:**

- Middle and High School

#### **Objectives:**

The student will:

- Interpret architectural structures in relation to what those structures suggest about colonial America's and the United States' political culture, founding ideals, and the rule of law.

#### **Lesson:**

This lesson involves students exploring two architectural structures, and details of other structures, from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in order to examine how those buildings reflect the political culture surrounding them at the time of their construction. Through this exercise students will not only reflect upon how architecture is influenced by factors outside of aesthetics, they will begin to understand how an entire architectural movement, the Federalist Style, was driven by political ideals surrounding the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

#### **Pre-Lesson Prep:**

1. Transfer the images of the Virginia Governor's Palace, of Monticello and the details of Monticello, and details of the interior of other 18<sup>th</sup> century Virginia homes, found below in Appendix B, to a transparency or into a PowerPoint presentation, depending on your technology capabilities. You will need to project this image so that the entire class can view it.
2. Make copies of the Virginia Governor's Palace, of Monticello and the details of Monticello, and details of the interior of other 18<sup>th</sup> century Virginia homes, found below in Appendix B.
3. Make copies of the Architectural Compare and Contrast Table found in Appendix C.
4. Each student will receive a copy of this table.

5. Provide students with an overview of the rule of law and its principles as articulated in *The Declaration of Independence*, including the philosophical Truth that “all men are created equal” and the concept of individuals possessing certain natural rights; and in *The Constitution*, including a system of checks and balances and a Bill of Rights protecting certain individual rights.
6. Make sure the students understand the following vocabulary: hierarchy, egalitarian, architecture, individualism, political culture, Georgian architecture, neo-classical or Federalist architecture.

### **The Lesson – Day 1:**

1. Begin the lesson by dividing the students into pairs and giving *each student* a copy of the Architectural Compare and Contrast Table. Each student will record the thoughts the pair develops as they will all need to take home their notes to study for homework.
2. Hand out copies of the images of the Virginia Governor’s Palace, Monticello and related details, and the 18<sup>th</sup> century interior details found in Appendix B to each pair of students.
3. Introduce these images to the class by reading or paraphrasing the following information:

“Architectural designs, both exterior and interior, are, of course, works of art. Architects constantly try to balance function, or how the structure will operate as individuals live, work, or play within the structure; and form, or how the structure reflects beauty or makes an artistic statement. Like all art, architectural structures are not created in a vacuum. Forces at work in society shape the way the architect designs a building. For example, if society is more community based than individual based, the interior of homes might have fewer rooms; in essence, people in a family may actually all sleep in the same room rather have individual bedrooms. The furniture used for eating may consist of a long table and a bench, with dining utensils consisting of a bowl and only a few spoons and knives, not enough for each person in the family. In a communal manner, the family sits on common benches and eats from a common bowl using common utensils. This is what architectural designs and family inventories reveal about family life in colonial America from the 17<sup>th</sup> century up through the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Then, beginning in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, architectural designs for homes changed as the interior space became more divided, allowing for individual bedrooms. Coinciding with this, dining rooms began to consist of individual plate settings while chairs replaced benches. Clearly, architecturally and materialistically, a rise in individuality was occurring – just as political rhetoric began to emphasize individual

rights, culminating with the writing of *The Declaration of Independence*. Today, we are going to explore how Jefferson's Monticello straddled two worlds: a world of social hierarchy and world of equality. In essence, Jefferson designed Monticello to retain older notions of hierarchy yet at the same time consciously created a dwelling in line with the ideals upon which the United States was founded: that all men are created equal. In this manner, Monticello begins to reflect architecturally how complicated Jefferson was as he struggled to bridge the gap between two very different world views: an older notion of hierarchy and a newer notion of individualism and egalitarianism.”<sup>1</sup>

4. Have the students divide the images into two stacks, with one stack containing the images of the Governor's Palace and early to mid 18<sup>th</sup> century interiors of homes and the other stack containing the images of the exterior and interior of Monticello.
5. Using the Architectural Compare and Contrast Table that each pair of students has, have the students first examine the images and list features that are similar or the same for the early to mid 18<sup>th</sup> century images and Monticello. Have the students examine both design elements and materials used to build the structures.
6. Using the Architectural Compare and Contrast Table that each pair of students has, have the students next examine and list how the structures are different in regard to design.
7. After the students have compiled their lists and formulated some thoughts about the structures and designs, write the following question on the board or depict this question on a PowerPoint slide: “How might the Governor's Palace reinforce a social hierarchy while Monticello might attempt to reflect a more egalitarian spirit? How might Monticello retain older notions of hierarchy?”
8. After the students formulate their thoughts in reaction to these questions, have the pairs of students count off by one and two, so that each pair is assigned the number one or two. Explain that the next day the students will have a debate over the following resolution: “Resolved: Thomas Jefferson's Monticello reflects and reinforces the founding principle of the United States, that all men are created equal, and it reflects the republican ideals embraced in the Constitution.” The pairs of students with the number one will be the affirmative team while the pairs assigned the number two will be the negative team.

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<sup>1</sup> See James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977/1996).

### **Homework:**

1. For homework, students must examine the thoughts they recorded on their Architectural Compare and Contrast Table. They need to each formulate three clear statements indicating how Monticello either supports or refutes the resolution, based on the position they have been assigned. Each statement must make a clear reference to Monticello and to the images of the Governor's Palace and/or interior images of other 18<sup>th</sup> century structures.
2. The students need to have their points and evidence written out on note cards and be able to explain their points to their teammates in the debate the next day.

### **The Lesson – Day 2:**

1. Have students sit within their teams for the debate – the negative and affirmative teams should be grouped on opposite sides of the classroom.
2. Have each student in the group share his or her points and evidence with his or her teammates.
3. After the students share their thoughts, have the students identify what they believe to be the three strongest points. Have the students place those note cards in the center of their group, with the other note cards off to the side. Be sure that all duplicate points are removed from the stack of evidence (they can be thrown away as they will not be used).
4. Have the groups identify a team leader. This individual will introduce the group's position (affirmative or negative) and provide a brief overview of the group's position by referencing the three strongest points the group has supporting its position.
5. Have each group identify a "refutation captain." This individual will hold on to the points that are not used as part of the three strongest points. This person will be the primary person refuting the other group's evidence.
6. End the planning stage (which should last no more than 15-20 minutes) and have the students sit in rows facing one another. The rows should be single rows, with the team captains for each side sitting at one end facing each other and the Refutation Captains sitting at the other end facing each other. The rest of the respective teams sit between these two captains.
7. The teacher will draw a T-Chart on the board to record points during the debate, with one side of the chart being labeled "Affirmative" and the other being labeled "Negative."
8. Have the Affirmative Team Captain stand up, state the resolution, state his or her group's position in relation to the resolution, and then give an overview – without referencing specific evidence – of the three strongest points the group has supporting its resolution. The captain then sits down.
9. Have the Negative Team Captain stand up state the resolution, state his or her group's position in relation to the resolution, and then give an

overview – without referencing specific evidence – of the three strongest points the group has supporting its resolution. The captain then sits down.

10. At this point, the person sitting right next to the Affirmative Teach Captain stands and gives a detailed overview of the first point. The individual should make specific references to evidence and show how this point definitively proves the group's position. When finished, the person sits down. At this point, one other team member has the opportunity to add to the material covered by his or her teammate. When finished, the person sits down.
11. If only the original teammate covered the points, and was not supported, the team receives 2 points. If another team member had to add to the material covered by the first speaker, the team receives 1 point.
12. The Negative Refutation Captain now must refute the points covered by the Affirmative speaker. If two Affirmative teammates spoke, the Refutation Captain must refute both speakers' points. The Refutation Captain should refer to the "left over" points the group created to counter the Affirmative Points. Thus, in doing this the team puts forth other points to support their position and undermines the credibility of the other group's point. The Refutation Captain can also point out that an opposing point may be inaccurate. If the Refutation Captain cannot refute a point, he or she may pass to another teammate. Also, if the team does not feel the Refutation Captain covered everything, another team member can stand after the Refutation Captain finishes and add to the debate.
13. If only the Refutation Captain speaks, and covers points put forth by the Affirmative team member or members, then the Negative team receives 2 points. If the points of both speakers, should two speakers speak, are not addressed, the Negative team receives 1 point. If two team members on the Negative side speak, the team receives 1 point. If the team cannot refute the points, the team receives 0 points.
14. At this point, the person sitting right next to the Negative Teach Captain stands and gives a detailed overview of the first point. The individual should make specific references to evidence and show how this point definitively proves the group's position. When finished, the person sits down. At this point, one other team member has the opportunity to add to the material covered by his or her teammate. When finished, the person sits down.
15. If only the original teammate covered the points, and was not supported, the team receives 2 points. If another team member had to add to the material covered by the first speaker, the team receives 1 point.
16. The Affirmative Refutation Captain now must refute the points covered by the Affirmative speaker. If two Negative teammates spoke, the Refutation Captain must refute both speakers' points. The Refutation Captain should refer to the "left over" points the group created to counter the Affirmative Points. Thus, in doing this the team puts forth other points to support their position and undermines the credibility of the other group's point. The Refutation Captain can also point out that an opposing point may be

inaccurate. If the Refutation Captain cannot refute a point, he or she may pass to another teammate. Also, if the team does not feel the Refutation Captain covered everything, another team member can stand after the Refutation Captain finishes and add to the debate.

17. If only the Refutation Captain speaks, and covers points put forth by the Affirmative team member or members, then the Affirmative team receives 2 points. If the points of both speakers, should two speakers speak, are not addressed, the Affirmative team receives 1 point. If two team members on the Affirmative side speak, the team receives 1 point. If the team cannot refute the points, the team receives 0 points.
18. Repeat steps 10 through 17 until both sides have presented and refuted all three points. Of course, the person presenting the points should continue down the line from the captain for both teams. In other words, when the Affirmative team is to make its second point, the person now sitting next to the person from the team who presented the first point will present the second point, and so on.
19. After both teams have presented all three points and refuted the other team's points, the teacher tallies the score and declares a winner for the debate.
20. The teacher should then provide a critique of the points raised and ask the class to discuss whether they agree with the resolution or not after hearing the points covered. The teacher should then discuss how Jefferson was a man really caught in two worlds – while trying to be progressive and advance classical liberalism, he occasionally fell back into an old world view of hierarchy (See “for the teacher” in Appendix A, next page).
21. If there is time, the teacher may wish to take the students on a virtual tour of Monticello by going to <http://explorer.monticello.org/>.

## **Appendix A: For the Teacher**

As indicated in the introduction the teacher should read to the students, forces that stretch beyond aesthetics many times influence architects as they create designs. While of course aesthetics are important, as architects would rarely want someone to state their design is ugly, forces such as function and culture, as well as physics, all come to bare on the architect as he or she sits down and begins the creative process. The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand that in relation to the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, Virginia, along with details of various 18<sup>th</sup> century interiors, and Jefferson's Monticello, while arguably aesthetically pleasing, the political cultures surrounding the two structures when build directly influenced their designs. In doing so, visual learners in particular will be able to see certain political ideals, ultimately directly tied to the rule of law, come to light. Monticello has clear design elements that challenge the notions of social and political hierarchy reflected in the designs of the Governor's Palace and the interiors of contemporary "power houses" which housed Virginia's gentry. The egalitarian elements in Monticello reinforce the notion that all men are created equal and should be treated equally under the law.

To begin, let us examine the Governor's Palace. This Georgian structure, completed in 1722, beautifully reflects the Enlightenment, yet simultaneously reflects the notion that power flows down to the people. The Georgian style is part of an architectural movement born in England in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century that was named in honor of King George, George II, George III, and George IV (like the Tudor style honoring the Tudor dynasty) whose reigns spanned the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The style is most noted for its balance and symmetry, which is a clear reflection of the Enlightenment ideal that through reason, man can tame and bring order to nature and this world. The balance and symmetry reflects the logic and reason associated with mathematics; in fact, some Georgian structures have windows that are actually cut in half in the interior, thus half of the window is in one room and the other half is in the neighboring room, to support the balance and symmetry so noticeable from outside of the structure.

It is tempting to tie Georgian architecture's emphasis on balance and symmetry to a Newtonian view of the universe. Yet this is not the case. Newton's work with gravity and his theories about the universe relate to disproportionate and unbalanced relationships. It is the very fact than an unequal and unbalanced gravitational relationship exists between the earth and the sun that allows the earth to revolve around the sun. If the universe were balanced, there would be no movement.

While not a reflection of a Newtonian view of the universe, arguably this emphasis on balance and symmetry does reflect the more modern British system of government best articulated through the Glorious Revolution of 1688/89, just at the time the Georgian style was emerging. As the British political system evolved during the last half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it increasingly placed a check on monarchical power and more firmly established the separation of powers so celebrated in the 18th century by political theorists such as Montesquieu. With the British constitution being an unwritten one, the Glorious Revolution helped this system mature as it strengthened Parliament and set the

stage for a continued evolution toward republican and democratic principles that increasingly deemphasized nobility and royal authority. In essence, by the late 17th century England had developed a system of checks and balances through the separation of powers found within the House of Commons, the House of Lords, and the monarchy. With balance and symmetry so defining Georgian structures, it is not a stretch to suggest that architecturally Georgian structures reflect the cultural emphasis on reason and reflect the English system of government.

This reflection of possible republican and democratic principles should not be taken too far. The evolution toward the current British system of government where the monarch is more of a figurehead and the House of Lords is severely politically impotent would not begin to truly unfold until the 19th century and not be "complete" until arguably the early 20th century. In the 18th century the House of Commons was hardly democratic as the majority of those living under the British flag found that they were unrepresented in Parliament due to antiquated districting lines that no longer accurately reflected the distribution of the population. While the Governor's Palace reflects checks and balances it also reinforces the rule of the crown and political authority.

First, the title the building was given, Governor's Palace, hints at monarchical power and nobility. This is not a state house or a town hall, suggesting the people have some ownership in the structure; it is a palace, which brings to mind royalty and royal authority. This relates to a second way the Governor's Palace reinforces crown authority: the structure is, relative to other structures in Virginia in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, massive. It is in essence a "power house," or a reflection of what I like to call "shock and awe" architecture. When the average Virginian in the 18<sup>th</sup> century lived in a small shack, to witness a structure as grand as the Governor's Mansion, or any of the Virginia elite's homes along the James River which attempted to copy and possibly surpass the Palace, would have left the visitor in both shock and awe! Being made of brick, a material harder to find than wood, the structure resonates might and stability. Having multiple levels, three in the case of the Governor's Palace plus a cellar and out buildings, also reinforced the power of those who lived in the structure whether it was the Palace or a gentry estate. Rows of windows at each level reflected how many stories the building had. In all, the Governor's Palace is over 10,000 square feet, which would have more than dwarfed the average Virginian's home.

A third way in which the Palace reinforced royal authority was through the inclusion of a balcony from which the governor could address the masses as they gather below. The governor was a royal appointment, so he represented the monarch and was entitled to the same respect. By standing above the people, those that heard him give an address were forced to look up at him; the position on the balcony in a literal manner placed him above the common subjects. In a similar manner, 18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian homes that housed the gentry always contained a staircase in the hall, the first room guests entered when visiting their homes. Quite often, the owner of the home made sure to enter the hall to meet a guest by descending the staircase. In doing so, a subtle reminder that this landowner was the guest's social superior occurred. The guest was forced to look up at the landowner in a similar manner those listening to the governor had to look up at him on his balcony.

A fourth way the Palace was able to reflect hierarchy and royal authority was through the Palace's hall containing a huge array of weaponry including muskets and bayonets. Governor Spotswood had decorated the hall in this manner in 1711 before the entire structure was complete. By having such weapons in the hall, the primary area that those doing business would be sure to visit if they were allowed in the Palace at all was a strong reminder of the authority and power of the monarch and royal power.

Finally, the large number of out buildings surrounding the palace, or any of the gentry's Georgian estates for that matter, not only reinforced their power through size but also through the implication of what those buildings meant in regard to how the household was administered. Those buildings, which might include a kitchen, blacksmith shop, stables, or laundry, just to name a few possible uses, meant that people were working in them. And of course, that meant the household had indentured servants and/or slaves. Thus the Palace or plantation demonstrated how the owner was so powerful that he even owned human beings.

Monticello at first glance shares many similarities with the Governor's Palace and other 18<sup>th</sup> century Georgian homes. It is made of brick for one, which immediately sets Monticello apart from the homes that dotted Virginia's landscape. Also, it too, in a Georgian manner, is balanced and symmetrical. However, an important addition allowed Jefferson to break free from the Georgian model and create a design in a manner known as neo-classical or Federalist. Monticello is ridden with influences from ancient Rome. The use of columns, domes, and pediments allowed the Federalist style to reflect the importance republican thought was to the emerging republic. While balance and symmetry in the Georgian style alluded to the serration of powers within the British system of government, which had republican elements but retained elements of royalty and monarchy, the American system purged royalty and monarchy from government, injecting those respective areas with a democratic and republican slant, with the emphasis on republicanism. The House of Representatives mirrors the House of Commons as it is filled with representatives chosen by the people. The Senate replaced the House of Lords and allowed for a republican element as, prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment, state legislators chose its ranks. And of course, rather than a monarch, the American system has a president chosen through the Electoral College. Thus a separation of powers and a system of checks and balances remained, and Federalist architecture remained balanced and symmetrical, but with the emphasis on a republican form of government reminiscent to some extent of ancient Rome, it was only fitting that Roman architectural elements were added to what would have otherwise been a Georgian structure. With this allusion to ancient Rome Jefferson clearly placed emphasis on a guiding principle found within the American system of government: the people would be able to choose, directly or indirectly, those that would govern them; no one person simply through birth was entitled to rule or power. Interestingly, as the nation began to embrace more democratic principles during the Age of Jackson, a Greco-revivalist movement occurred in architecture.

In other important ways Thomas Jefferson's Monticello makes an attempt to break with the architectural convention found within the Governor's Palace and other 18<sup>th</sup> century gentry homes and reflect egalitarian ideals. While by no means a common man, Jefferson went to great lengths to make Monticello "pretend to be something it is not" and be more in line with a more common domicile. Monticello is in actuality two stories with a cellar and then a third floor that is the octagonal dome. However, as visitors approached Monticello they would have had the distinct impression that in actuality it was only one story. Jefferson designed the windows to the left and right of the main entrance in an elongated fashion, meaning that the windows on the first and second floors are connected so that there is not a visible break indicating multiple stories; the windows appear as if they are just long windows for one floor. Jefferson successfully makes Monticello appear to be smaller than what it is, arguably in an attempt to make the home more in line with that of the common man.

Jefferson carried this attempt to tear down hierarchy into Monticello's hall. Breaking entirely with tradition, Monticello's hall does not have a staircase. When visitors came to Monticello, Jefferson did not make an aristocratic and grand entrance by descending a flight of stairs to literally come down to the visitor's level. Jefferson did not even have a servant or slave answer the door and greet the visitor. More often than not, Jefferson answered the door and began his social interaction with the guest at the same level. In fact, staircases in Monticello are somewhat difficult to find, as they are hidden in awkward locations, and once found, they are so narrow they are difficult to navigate.

However, while attempting to tie Monticello to the common man and the ideal of equality, Monticello is, in essence, a powerhouse. It is large, even with the illusion of being one story; it is made of brick; and it sets atop a mountain, forcing those to ascend to greater heights to meet with Jefferson. Architecturally, Jefferson's complicated nature comes through, as does the fact that Jefferson was living at a time when the Western world was in a state of flux. Classical liberalism was making great strides as a true experiment in republican thought was unfolding in the new United States and as a classical liberal revolution went awry in France. Monarchy and aristocracy would remain under assault throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, until World War I arguably witnessed classical liberalism's victory – only to then be countered by fascism. Yet Jefferson was born and grew up in an age of social hierarchy. The revolution of which he was part truly was a revolution for society as the notion of social betters became severely damaged. Jefferson clearly struggled with this. Monticello clearly reflects the character of a man caught between two very different worlds.

For more information about architecture's relationship to political culture, about material culture, about the Governor's Palace, about Monticello, and even about Mount Vernon if the teacher wishes to use Washington's home for an exercise too, please see:

The Colonial Williamsburg Website,  
<http://www.history.org/almanack/places/hb/hbpal.cfm>

The Monticello Website, <http://www.monticello.org/>

*George Washington's Mount Vernon: At Home in Revolutionary America*, by Robert F. Dalzell, Jr., and Lee Baldwin Dalzell

*In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, by James Deetz

*The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, by Rhys Isaac

*On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century*, by Kenneth A. Lockridge

## **Appendix B**

### **Governor's Palace, Williamsburg Virginia**



**Governor's Palace, gate and detail above the main entrance**



**Governor's Palace, entrance hall**



**Shirley Plantation, flying staircase**



**Carter's Grove, entrance hall and staircase**



**Jefferson's Monticello, east front**



**Monticello, entrance hall**



**Monticello, west portico**



## **Appendix C**

### **Architectural Compare and Contrast Table**

Similarities existing between the Governor's Palace, interior designs of mid 18<sup>th</sup> century homes, and Monticello.

All structures . . . :

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Differences existing between the Governor's Palace, interior designs of mid 18<sup>th</sup> century homes, and Monticello.

<b>Governor's Palace and 18<sup>th</sup> Century Interior Designs</b>	<b>Monticell</b>