

John Locke: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>John Locke is a key enlightenment thinker. Sometimes called the Father of Liberalism, his essays influenced reform in government and philosophy. He insisted that the human mind is born as a blank slate or tabula rasa. Because of this, all men have the same natural rights - life, liberty, and possession of property. It is the job of their government, ideally through separation of powers, to protect such rights. Should the ruling form of government fail to do so and thus lose the people's consent, it is reasonable to overthrow said ruling power, even if the governing body claims the divine right to rule. Furthermore, it is not the job of the government to determine which religious practices are true. Instead there should be religious tolerance in so far that a belief does not pose a threat to the public order.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government ● History ● Politics ● Philosophy 	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/topic/john-locke-a-new-slate-for-governing/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>By the end of this lesson, students will be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Define the theory of tabula rasa. ● List Locke's natural rights and explain how they have influenced American government. ● Explain why Locke's message of religious tolerance was important but also how it's evolved. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Blank slate, tolerance, the enlightenment, liberalism, inherent	
Materials Needed	

{anything that the teacher needs to prepare for the lesson, other than the video}

Before you watch

Turn & Talk

Do you think that people are born with certain characteristics or is everything learned from experience? Defend your answer.

While you watch

Answer questions 1-4 on the worksheet

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Where do you see Locke's idea of separation of power in the American government?
2. How has Locke's idea of religious toleration evolved?
3. Why do you think the rights of "life, liberty, and property" were later changed to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?"

Activity Ideas

1. Finish the worksheet and discuss answers
2. Have students discuss what responsibilities governments should have to their citizens. If you think that governments are responsible for protecting rights, which rights? Which ones are most important? Why? If enough time remains, ask students if there are areas a government should not interfere with, and what those areas might be.
3. Debate: Do we all need to be "blank slates" to be equal?

Sources/places to learn more

1. Ashcraft, Richard. *John Locke: Critical Assessments*. Routledge, 1991. ISBN: 0415008476.
2. Dunn, John. "The concept of 'trust' in the politics of John Locke." *Philosophy in History: Essays in the Historiography of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 1984. ISBN: 0-521-27330-7.
3. Rogers, Graham A.J. "John Locke: English Philosopher." Encyclopædia Britannica, January 2020. www.britannica.com.
4. Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *John Locke and the Ethics of Belief*. Cambridge University Press, 1996. ISBN: 0-521-55118-8.