



# Thomas Sowell: Maverick Intellect

## Lesson Plan

*This document is addressed to the instructor. Other documents in this lesson packet are addressed to students.*

This lesson provides an overview of the life and work of African American economist **Thomas Sowell**, one of America's most prolific public intellectuals, who has made serious contributions not only to economics but also cultural history, social theory, and the study of child development. Born outside of Charlotte, North Carolina in 1930, Sowell was raised in Harlem, New York City and overcame numerous personal and political challenges on his journey from high school dropout to America's most influential dissident on issues around race, economic prosperity, and the role of intellectuals in shaping public life.

### Prompt:

Present students with the questions posed in the "Opening Questions" document, either by circulating the document itself or leading an all-class discussion about some or all of the questions. Ask students to write down their answers or, for class discussion, record responses from the class so these answers can be reconsidered after the presentation.

Share the prepared PowerPoint presentation with students. Select from the list of "Critical Thinking Questions," and "Multiple-Choice Questions" to engage students in dialogue and measure their understanding. If time allows, supplement the presentation with Sowell's own writings or other resources listed below. The "Critical Thinking Questions" document also includes prompts for more in-depth research and writing assignments.

### Vocabulary:

acerbic, amenities, avocation, candor, deluge, deteriorate, empiricist, hardscrabble, idyllic, linguist, microcosm, migration, polarization, wonk, wry

### Recommended Resources:

In addition to the PowerPoint presentation and three "Questions" documents, this packet includes a list of classroom-appropriate "Videos" with further discussion questions, three texts by Thomas Sowell (two essays on Dunbar High School and "Personal Letters"), a list of Standard Learning Objectives ("SLO"), and a guide to relevant "Woodson Principles."

Media by and about Sowell are widely available online. Brief clips on fan-made YouTube channels like "Thomas Sowell Wisdom" and "Thomas Sowell TV" have helped expose his thought to Millennial and Gen Z audiences. His personal webpage contains information on his writing as well as links to his photographs, can be found at: <http://tsowell.com>

Sowell's memoir, *A Personal Odyssey* (Free Press, 2002), is appropriate for more advanced readers, as is the more recent biography from Jason L. Riley, *Maverick* (Basic Books, 2021).