

Walter Williams: Economist of Liberty

Critical Thinking Questions & Assignment Prompts

*These questions can be distributed in any form to students **after** they have been presented with the story of Walter Williams' life, for use as discussion questions, a quiz on lesson content, research questions, or writing assignment prompts.*

Slide Deck Review

K-2

Where did Walter Williams grow up? What were his weekend activities?

Who helped Williams achieve success in life?

When did Williams decide to become a teacher? Why did he love teaching economics?

3-5

What did Williams do on the weekend while he was a boy living in public housing?

How did Walter Williams become an economist? What drew him to this field?

What drove Williams to protest racism and discrimination in the Army? Who opposed him?

What did Williams want Americans to do with the Constitution?

6-8

What did Williams do on the weekend while he was a boy living in public housing?

What were Williams' politics as a young man? What changed his mind?

What drove Williams to protest racism and discrimination in the Army? Who opposed him?

Why was Williams criticized by mainstream Black leaders? How did his economic ideology challenge Blacks and whites with opposing views?

How would you describe Williams' personality? How did this help him in life?

Character and Destiny

K-2

Why did Walter Williams want to be an economist?

How did he learn how to think deeply about problems?

What problems in your community would you like to help fix?

Why do different people have different solutions to the same problem? How do you resolve conflict when you and a friend have two different ideas?

What advice did his stepfather, Pops, give him that affected his future? How could this advice help you?

3-5

How would you describe Williams' personality? How did this help him in life?

Why was his personality distasteful to some people?

What would Williams have meant by "think with my brain instead of my heart?"

How does pointing out the problems in society help us? What are the problems that you would like to see fixed?

Why is it important to not "go with the crowd" but think for ourselves?

Why do different people have different solutions to the same problem? How do you resolve conflict when you and a friend have two different ideas? What virtues help conflict resolution? What personality traits make conflict resolution difficult?

6-8

What would Williams have meant by “think with my brain instead of my heart?” What societal consequences come when we “think with our brain?” What societal consequences happen when we “think with our hearts?”

Why is it important to not “go with the crowd” but think for ourselves? What kind of personality traits or virtues help independent thinking? How do you react when someone has a different opinion or belief than you on a matter?

Why was Williams’ personality distasteful to some people?

What people or events in your life have shaped your beliefs? Has something you learned in class or read independently ever changed your mind about something? Describe a time when your ideas about something were transformed radically?

Why are the economic ideas Williams advocated unpopular with some people? Does that make them wrong?

What are some ideas that were once deeply unpopular but eventually vindicated?

What’s the best advice you’ve ever been given? Who gave you this advice, and why did you trust them? Why do you think this advice would be important for others to hear?

When is social protest appropriate or necessary? Are some types of protest counter-productive? Describe a situation in which you think some kind of protest is a moral imperative.