

Walter Williams: Economist of Liberty

Lesson Plan

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

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Walter E. Williams overcame many personal and political barriers on his journey from the North Philly housing projects to a distinguished professorship. A prolific writer, Williams published scholarly and culturally relevant articles and books; however, teaching economics was his passion. He offered non-traditional, but thought-provoking ideas about race, poverty and labor issues. Throughout his life, a network of friends, mentors, and family members made his success possible.

Lesson Objectives: In this lesson, students will:

- Use Slide Deck to evaluate family and community expectations of youth in the past and in present times.
- Compare and contrast William's childhood experience with poverty and family life with their personal experiences and/or common stereotypes.
- Discuss the meaning and value of a work ethic and upward mobility.
- Reflect on the purpose of fathers or father figures in the lives of children.
- Understand occurrences of racial prejudice in the military.
- Learn about social etiquette and norms.
- Analyze personality types, individuals giftings, and how these positively or negatively impact a person's decisions and destiny.
- Discuss pros and cons of individual and group protest; examine independent thinking and groupthink in topics like race, economics, and patriotism.
- Learn the importance of critical thinking and innovative ideas.
- Understand ideologies used in political and cultural discussions and how differences affect cooperation.
- Apply Woodson Principles of agency, innovation, inspiration, and resilience to SEL-based questions using Walter William's life as an example.

Prompt: Use any prompt to stimulate interest and group discussion.

What is the value of thinking for ourselves? How does hard work (in school, at home or in a job) pay off? What conditions stimulate poverty?

Or, refer to the Opening Questions document.

Share the prepared PowerPoint presentation with students.

Select activities from the accompanying Activity Pack according to your time allowance and student appropriateness. Some of the supplemental materials can be used to spark group discussion and allow independent classwork. Included in the Activity Pack are:

Activities and Assignments (grades 3-8)

Multiple Choice Questions (grades 4-8)

Critical Thinking Discussion Exercises (grades K-5 with guidance; 6-8 unassisted)

Matching, Answer Key included (1-3)

Crossword Puzzle and Answer Key (4-8)

Vocabulary:

Assumptions, Economist, Cultural, Memoir, Inappropriate, Drafted, Confiscated, Solidarity, Confrontational, Contradictory, Court martial, Sociology, PhD, Condescension, Libertarian, Syndicated, Mendacity, Colluded

Videos for Middle Schoolers:

Benefits of a Free Market

Part 1 Introduction to Concept of Free Market (5 min)

Part 2 The Price System (5 min, starts at 6:59)

A World of Money – (15:57)

Recommended Resources for Teacher Review:

In addition to the PowerPoint presentation and the three “Questions” documents, this packet includes a list of classroom-appropriate “Videos” with further discussion questions, a primary source mentioned in the presentation (“1975 Inquirer Article”), a copy of Williams’ essay “Minimum Wage, Maximum Folly,” a list of Standard Learning Objectives (“SLO”), and a guide to relevant “Woodson Principles.”

Essays by and about Williams are widely available online. His personal webpage, which he maintained until his death, contains links to many of his publications and media appearances, as well as resource he recommended to his own students: <http://walterewilliams.com/>

Williams’s autobiography, *Up from the Projects* (Hoover Institution Press, 2010), is appropriate for advanced middle-school readers, and a relatively quick read at 160 pages.

Standards and Learning Objectives

Mapped to the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards published by the National Council for the Social Studies

Grades K-2

Civics

D2.Civ.1.K-2. Describe roles and responsibilities of people in authority.

D2.Civ.2.K-2. Explain how all people, not just official leaders, play important roles in a community.

D2.Civ.5.K-2. Explain what governments are and some of their functions.

Economics

D2.Eco.2.K-2. Identify the benefits and costs of making various personal decisions.

D2.Eco.6.K-2. Explain how people earn income.

D2.Eco.7.K-2. Describe examples of costs of production.

History

D2.His.2.K-2. Compare life in the past to life today.

D2.His.3.K-2. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped a significant historical change.

ELA

D4.1.K-2. Construct an argument with reasons.

D4.4.K-2. Ask and answer questions about arguments.

D4.7.K-2. Identify ways to take action to help address local, regional, and global problems.

Grades 3-5

Civics

D2.Civ.2.3-5. Explain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals should participate.

D2.Civ.3.3-5. Examine the origins and purposes of rules, laws, and key U.S. constitutional provisions.

D2.Civ.4.3-5. Explain how groups of people make rules to create responsibilities and protect freedoms.

D2.Civ.14.3-5. Illustrate historical and contemporary means of changing society.

Economics

- D2.Eco.1.3-5.** Compare the benefits and costs of individual choices.
- D2.Eco.2.3-5.** Identify positive and negative incentives that influence the decisions people make.
- D2.Eco.7.3-5.** Explain how profits influence sellers in markets.
- D2.Eco.8.3-5.** Identify examples of external benefits and costs.

History

- D2.His.2.3-5.** Compare life in specific historical time periods to life today.
- D2.His.3.3-5.** Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities.
- D2.His.4.3-5.** Explain why individuals and groups during the same historical period differed in their perspectives.

ELA

- D4.1.3-5.** Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources.
- D4.2.3-5.** Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data.
- D4.4.3-5.** Critique arguments.
- D4.5.3-5.** Critique explanations.
- D4.6.3-5.** Draw on disciplinary concepts to explain the challenges people have faced and opportunities they have created, in addressing local, regional, and global problems at various times and places.
- D4.7.3-5.** Explain different strategies and approaches students and others could take in working alone and together to address local, regional, and global problems, and predict possible results of their actions.

Grades 6-8

Civics

- D2.Civ.1.6-8.** Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a variety of governmental and nongovernmental contexts.
- D2.Civ.2.6-8.** Explain specific roles played by citizens (such as voters, jurors, taxpayers, members of the armed forces, petitioners, protesters, and office-holders).
- D2.Civ.3.6-8.** Examine the origins, purposes, and impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements.
- D2.Civ.6.6-8.** Describe the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.
- D2.Civ.12.6-8.** Assess specific rules and laws (both actual and proposed) as means of addressing public problems.
- D2.Civ.13.6-8.** Analyze the purposes, implementation, and consequences of public policies in multiple settings.
- D2.Civ.14.6-8.** Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.

Economics

- D2.Eco.1.6-8.** Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.
- D2.Eco.2.6-8.** Evaluate alternative approaches or solutions to current economic issues in terms of benefits and costs for different groups and society as a whole.
- D2.Eco.3.6-8.** Explain the roles of buyers and sellers in product, labor, and financial markets.
- D2.Eco.8.6-8.** Explain how external benefits and costs influence market outcomes.

History

- D2.His.3.6-8.** Use questions generated about individuals and groups to analyze why they, and the developments they shaped, are seen as historically significant.
- D2.His.4.6-8.** Analyze multiple factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
- D2.His.5.6-8.** Explain how and why perspectives of people have changed over time.

ELA

- D4.1.6-8.** Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of the arguments.
- D4.2.6-8.** Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples, and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.
- D4.4.6-8.** Critique arguments for credibility.
- D4.6.6-8.** Draw on multiple disciplinary lenses to analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.
- D4.7.6-8.** Assess their individual and collective capacities to take action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies, and potential outcomes.