

Thomas Sowell: Maverick Intellect

K-8 Activities and Assignments

Picture Worth 1000 Words – Sowell's hobby of photography changed his life. Students will draw a picture of themselves as adults working in their dream job or doing their favorite hobby. **(Grades K-4)**

Prompt - *Much later in life, when asked why he chose economics, Sowell answered: "It was my best subject, and it just made sense to me."* (Slide 14)

Materials needed: crayons, colored pencils, white paper

Time allotment: 15-25 minutes (teacher discretion)

Talk It Out – This activity allows students to incorporate grammar (adjectives), SEL (sharing), and public speaking (storytelling, posture, vocal projection). **(Grades 3-8)**

Prompt - *Sowell was a bright student, but he often had conflicts with students and teachers. In grade school, fighting was a way of life, and it usually involved gangs. Sowell recalled that "[at] one point, getting home for lunch safely became such an ordeal that a friend would lend me his jacket as a disguise, so that I could get away before anyone could spot me."* (Slide 7)

Materials needed: 1 notecard per student, writing utensil or colored pencil

Time allotment: 5-7 minutes individual prep, 1-2 minutes of sharing per student

- 1) Share prompt. Ask students to recollect a fearful or difficult moment in school or in their neighborhood and write three adjectives for what they felt during that moment. On the other side of the notebook card, students should summarize the event in 3-5 complete sentences.
- 2) Each student can stand at their desk and share their three adjectives, their 3-5 sentences, and spend up to 1-minute sharing what they wish had been different about the event.

From Homeless to Harvard - Independent creative writing activity followed by student presentation. (Grades 6-8)

Prompt - *After this painful falling out with his adoptive mother, Sowell ended up in the Home for Homeless Boys in the Bronx. These next years were formative for Sowell, though he was still far from the path that would lead him to Harvard and Stanford.*

Students write two fictional journal entries of Sowell's thoughts as a homeless teen. These entries feature him talking about his dilemma, his dreams, and his determination to excel (10–15-minute activity). Standing before the class, students read their entries, allowing their voices to dramatize "Sowell's" thoughts. (2 min/student)

Student Debate – Divided into groups, students participate in a Socratic Seminar, in which each group prepares and presents a thesis, that is then questioned or synthesized by the other groups. (Grades 3-8)

Objectives:

- **Resolve conflict through discourse**
- **Present arguments with evidence**
- **Synthesize ideas**
- **Articulate clear positions**

Teacher may find pre-planning groups beneficial.

Each group should spend 5-10 minutes making a claim based on their topic (claim can be intentionally controversial) and what they gleaned from the PowerPoint presentation. (See below). Watching these short videos will also help students with their content: [How the Welfare state ruined black families - YouTube](#), [Thomas Sowell - Welfare - YouTube](#)

Additional videos in **Lesson Plan**.

Group 1 - economy - how money is made;

Group 2 - society - how people function;

Group 3 - welfare - governmental assistance for the needy;

Group 4 - morality - a sense of right and wrong.

Group spokesperson presents and defends their claim, and the other groups examine the validity of the claim.

Time allotment: 6-10 minutes/topic*

*This activity can be adjusted to allow a longer time of student research to prepare the basis of their claim.