

## Thomas Sowell: Maverick Intellect

### K-8 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 thinkers, who offers ideas to help enrich the lives of America's poor and uneducated. Sowell challenges a status quo that undermines individual potential. Born outside of Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1930, Sowell was raised in Harlem, New York City, and overcame many hardships, from a difficult home life to unemployment and racism. After overcoming setbacks in his teen years, Sowell strove to learn and excelled at his college. His gift for problem-solving helps him navigate popular political ideas and advocate for new and better policies.

### Lesson Objectives:

In this lesson, students will:

- Learn the span of Sowell's areas of interest;
- Understand the family environment that influenced his choices as a teenager;
- Reflect on the transition of Southern Blacks who participated in the Great Migration;
- Discuss the value of education, the challenge of poverty, and the benefit of perseverance;
- Discuss the usefulness of public dissent, critical thinking, thoughtful objection in the face of racism and other societal norms;
- Learn basic principles of economics;
- Analyze personality types, individuals giftings, and how these positively or negatively impact a person's decisions and destiny;
- Apply Woodson Principles of agency, innovation, inspiration, and resilience to SEL-based questions using Walter Williams' 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?

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 Quiz, Answer Key included (1-3)*

*Crossword Puzzle and Answer Key (4-8)*

*Coloring Page (K-2)*

*The Woodson Principles Applied*

## Vocabulary:

Amenities, Candor, Charter schools, Demerits, Deteriorate, Disillusioned, Dissertation, Emancipated, Hypothetical, Incisive, Linguist, migration, Precocious, Socialism, Unpretentious, Voraciously

## Recommended Resources:

<http://tsowell.com> - His personal webpage contains information on his writing as well as links to his photographs

Media by and about Sowell are widely available online. Brief clips on fan-made YouTube channels like “Thomas Sowell TV” have helped expose his thought to Millennial and Gen Z audiences.

The following videos can be supplemented with these questions and terms:

- Thomas Sowell on the Myths of Economic Inequality - YouTube (**Grades 6-8, first 10 minutes only**)
- Thomas Sowell discusses his newest book, Intellectuals and Race - YouTube - excerpts on Black student achievement, black subculture and academic performance. (**Grades 5 – 8, 12:09-13:08 and 23:20-28:37**)
- Wealth, Poverty, and Politics - YouTube - excerpt on Poverty and Welfare in Black America (**Grades 5 – 8, 18:00- 22:35**)

1. What surprises you about Sowell's opinions?
2. How do the lives of Black Americans today compare with their great-grandparents, educationally, economically, and in terms of the family system?
3. How is Sowell controversial?
4. Terms: Affirmative Action, Subculture, Retrogressions, Welfare, Jim Crow

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

## 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.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.
- D2.Civ.6.K-2.** Describe how communities work to accomplish common tasks, establish responsibilities, and fulfill roles of authority.
- D2.Civ.8.K-2.** Describe democratic principles such as equality, fairness, and respect for legitimate authority and rules.
- D2.Civ.10.K-2.** Compare their own point of view with others' perspectives.
- D2.Civ.14.K-2.** Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.

#### Economics

- D2.Eco.1.K-2.** Explain how scarcity necessitates decision making.
- 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.
- D2.Eco.10.K-2.** Explain why people save.
- D2.Eco.12.K-2.** Describe examples of the goods and services that governments provide.
- D2.Eco.13.K-2.** Describe examples of capital goods and human capital.

#### History

- D2.His.1.K-2.** Create a chronological sequence of multiple events.
- 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.
- D2.His.4.K-2.** Compare perspectives of people in the past to those of people in the present.

#### ELA

- D4.1.K-2.** Construct an argument with reasons.
- D4.2.K-2.** Construct explanations using correct sequence and relevant information.
- D4.3.K-2.** Present a summary of an argument using print, oral, and digital technologies.
- D4.4.K-2.** Ask and answer questions about arguments.
- D4.5.K-2.** Ask and answer questions about explanations.
- D4.6.K-2.** Identify and explain a range of local, regional, and global problems, and some ways in which people are trying to address these problems.
- D4.7.K-2.** Identify ways to take action to help address local, regional, and global problems.

## Grades 3-5

### Civics

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

**D2.Civ.6.3-5.** Describe ways in which people benefit from and are challenged by working together, including through government, workplaces, voluntary organizations, and families.

**D2.Civ.8.3-5.** Identify core civic virtues and democratic principles that guide government, society, and communities.

**D2.Civ.10.3-5.** Identify the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others' points of view about civic issues.

**D2.Civ.12.3-5.** Explain how rules and laws change society and how people change rules and laws.

**D2.Civ.13.3-5.** Explain how policies are developed to address public problems.

**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.3.3-5.** Identify examples of the variety of resources (human capital, physical capital, and natural resources) that are used to produce goods and services.

**D2.Eco.6.3-5.** Explain the relationship between investment in human capital, productivity, and future incomes.

**D2.Eco.7.3-5.** Explain how profits influence sellers in markets.

**D2.Eco.8.3-5.** Identify examples of external benefits and costs.

**D2.Eco.11.3-5.** Explain the meaning of inflation, deflation, and unemployment.

### History

**D2.His.1.3-5.** Create and use a chronological sequence of related events to compare developments that happened at the same time.

**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.

**D2.His.14.3-5.** Explain probable causes and effects of events and developments.

**D2.His.16.3-5.** Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.

### 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.

**D4.3.3-5.** Present a summary of arguments and explanations to others outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, and reports) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

**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.10.6-8.** Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

**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.4.6-8.** Describe the role of competition in the determination of prices and wages in a market economy.

**D2.Eco.8.6-8.** Explain how external benefits and costs influence market outcomes.

**D2.Eco.9.6-8.** Describe the roles of institutions such as corporations, non-profits, and labor unions in a market economy.

### History

**D2.His.1.6-8.** Analyze connections among events and developments in broader historical contexts.

**D2.His.2.6-8.** Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

**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.

**D2.His.14.6-8.** Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.

**D2.His.15.6-8.** Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past.

## 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.

**D4.3.6-8.** Present adaptations of arguments and explanations on topics of interest to others to reach audiences and venues outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, reports, and maps) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

**D4.4.6-8.** Critique arguments for credibility.

**D4.5.6-8.** Critique the structure of explanations.

**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.