



## Constitutional Character: Who was James Madison? #FatheroftheConstitution

Teachers! Information and resources available through Montpelier can be used in a variety of ways in your instruction. Be sure to access Montpelier's rich online resources for lesson planning and classroom activity ideas to support your curriculum and provide meaningful material for your students as they learn about Madison and the history of the United States.

**Activity for Content Areas:** Social Studies/History/English Language Arts

### **Purpose/Rationale:**

Many lessons focus on Madison's contributions as Father of the Constitution, Author of the Federalist Papers, President, and more. Few however, ask students to explore and understand Madison as a person, as well as an illustrious founding father. Considering the personal constitution of the father of our constitution enables students to gain insight on the reasons for and the ways in which Madison was able to accomplish what he did. Seeing parallels in personality, character, and passion between themselves and great figures inspires students to reach for more than they ever dreamed themselves capable. This lesson approaches the study of Madison the great historical figure through a popular technique for literary character study: the social media profile. Using historical evidence to create a social media profile for Madison invites students to take a closer, more intimate look at the mind and character of the man that made such an impact on our constitution and the history of our country. Such an exercise carries importance for a figure such as Madison in particular, who is famous for his works, but about whom students know relatively little from a personal perspective. The format of the product allows students to research for and create in a medium that is familiar and intuitive, fostering an opportunity for teachers to increase motivation and provide variety in the types of publications with which the average student is tasked.

### **Selected Common Core Standards for Grade 8:**

Note: Others may apply in your state or district

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1](#)  
Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6](#)  
Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7](#)  
Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8](#)  
Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9](#)  
Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.



## Lesson Instructions:

**STEP 1—Pre-trip Discussion:** Ask students to think about the people who influenced the course of history in our country with questions such as the following:

- They were great thinkers (Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, etc.) who will be remembered for what they did, for whom we appreciate monuments, paintings, and statues, but weren't they also real people?
- How did these real, seemingly ordinary people manage to accomplish such special things?
- Ask students what they think James Madison (and his contemporaries) might have been like in daily life.
- If Madison were around today, would he be someone they'd like to talk with?
- Would he make a good teacher?
- Would he be cool?
- How would they be able to make a prediction?
- How they might figure out what someone is like and what they're interested in without being able to ask them directly.
- What kinds of clues give insight into someone's personality and character?
- Ask students to think about reading a friend's social media profile or seeing their room in their family home.
- What kinds of evidence would they expect to gather to help understand what that person appreciates, values, and enjoys?

**STEP 2—On-trip Exploration:** Charge students with gathering evidence about Madison 'the real person' as they learn about his great accomplishments during their visit to Montpelier. With their evidence, students will create a social media profile for Madison. They will gather information, pictures, etc. to make the best possible representation of Madison if he had a Facebook profile. Instruct that while their choices can be creative, they must all be based on genuine evidence gathered during their experience at Montpelier. Remind them that they will have to write to identify specific evidence and justify each of their choices. Have students gather notes and photo evidence about Madison and the people he interacted with during the visit to Montpelier. Depending on the number of students in the group, consider dividing them into groups, having each group focus on a different period in Madison's 'timeline' as the subject for the profile.

Have students prepare for meeting the following requirements in their project:

- Create a **profile picture and banner** in the top of the page to represent Madison. It can be a sketch of the actual character or an image to represent him or her.
- Create a **headline** to showcase Madison's current mood.
- Create a **biography/about me** section. Use details from evidence you gathered during the visit to Montpelier. You can also make inferences and predictions to fill in any "gaps" to create more of a bio, though you must be able to justify these choices with a reasonable connection to facts and evidence.
- Think in the point of view of Madison and fill in a **relationship status** line.
- Think in the point of view of Madison and have a section detailing **body type, children, occupation, and income**.
- Think in the point of view of Madison and have a **people I'd like to meet** section.
- Think in the point of view of Madison and have a **playlist of songs** section showing what kind of songs/music that he would listen to. (These can be contemporary or historical.)



- Have a **TV/Hobbies/Movies/Books** section, thinking in the point of view of Madison, listing what shows, hobbies, movies, or books he would watch, read, etc. (These can be contemporary or historical.)
- Have a section where “friends or enemies” of Madison have posted (school appropriate) **messages** to them and have a few examples featured.
- Include the following elements to demonstrate Madison’s online activity:
  - 3 original posts
  - 10 comments from his contemporaries
  - 5 photos
  - 3 groups
  - 2 events

**STEP 3—Post-visit Project Creation:** After the visit, have students work together in groups to create Madison’s social media profile(s). If computer access is possible, have them create an online profile. Alternatively, have students use poster boards and print-outs to create a physical representation of a profile. Templates are available online at [www.classtools.net](http://www.classtools.net). Have students prepare a document to explain how and why they chose particular details to represent Madison and from which piece of specific piece evidence the choices are drawn.

**STEP 4—Publishing and Presentation:** Showcase student work in class and/or share with other class periods and grades. Facilitate discussion (in real life or in the virtual classroom) to review the choices each student and/or group made for their Madison profiles.

#### **Suggestions for Assessment:**

You may choose to create a rubric for students, which assesses such elements as their explanation/understanding of Madison’s personality, character, and story, whether and to what extent they have made a thorough and thoughtful representation, as well as the level of professionalism exhibited in their final product. You may also choose have students publish these projects (in a physical form or on a class web page) and share with other classes and administrators.

#### **Suggestions for Alternatives and Differentiation:**

Consider having students create different profiles for different time periods in Madison’s ‘timeline.’ Also, consider assigning groups of students to represent various contemporaries of Madison (Thomas Jefferson, Dolley Madison, Alexander Hamilton, etc.), then have them communicate with one another as their assumed historical figures. Have some students or groups work to create a personal profile while others do a professional profile.



## Student Instructions:

### Hangin' with the Mad-man #FatheroftheConstitution

*Consider the people who influenced the course of history in our country. They were great thinkers who will be remembered for what they did, for whom we appreciate monuments, paintings, and statues, but weren't they also real people? How and why did this 'normal' people come to accomplish such great things? What do you think James Madison (and his contemporaries) might have been like in daily life? If Madison were around today, would he be someone they'd like to talk with? Would he make a good teacher? Would he be cool? What kinds of evidence will help you make predictions?*

#### Assignment:

- **Step 1)** Based on the evidence you gathered during your visit to Montpelier and your outside research, **create a social media profile** to demonstrate what you've come to understand about James Madison's personality and character, both as a founding father and a person. Be sure to address all of the 'required components' (below) for your page. (You are welcome to add other categories beyond those, if you like.) **\*\*Think carefully about which pieces of information come directly from Madison's perspective, and which ones come from other sources. Think about whether he'd agree with the information you find, and how he'd respond if he heard or saw it.**
- **Step 2)** Create a written **document of support** for the choices you made in the profile. Explain how each detail is anchored in some piece of evidence you gathered during your visit to Montpelier or in your outside research. **\*\*\*To conclude your document, include two well-developed paragraphs to explain how these personality and character traits contributed to Madison's work and contributions to our constitution and our country's founding. Also, include any citations for outside research in MLA format.**
- **Step 3)** **Present your work** to your classmates, complete with explanation of how you used your gathered evidence to inform your profile-building choices.

#### Required components for your page:

#### Did you remember to.....?

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- Create a **headline** to showcase Madison's current mood.
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- Have a **TV/Hobbies/Movies/Books** section, thinking in the point of view of Madison, listing what shows, hobbies, movies, or books he would watch, read, etc. (These can be contemporary or historical.)
- Have a section where “friends or enemies” of Madison have posted (school appropriate) **messages** to them and have a few examples featured.
- Include the following elements to demonstrate Madison’s online activity:
  - 3 original posts
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  - 2 events
- Be sure your final product is of good quality—professionalism and visual appeal should be evident in your work.
- Work carefully to prepare and revise your **document of support**, which should be ready to submit when your work is presented. Be sure to include all elements outlines in the assignment instructions.