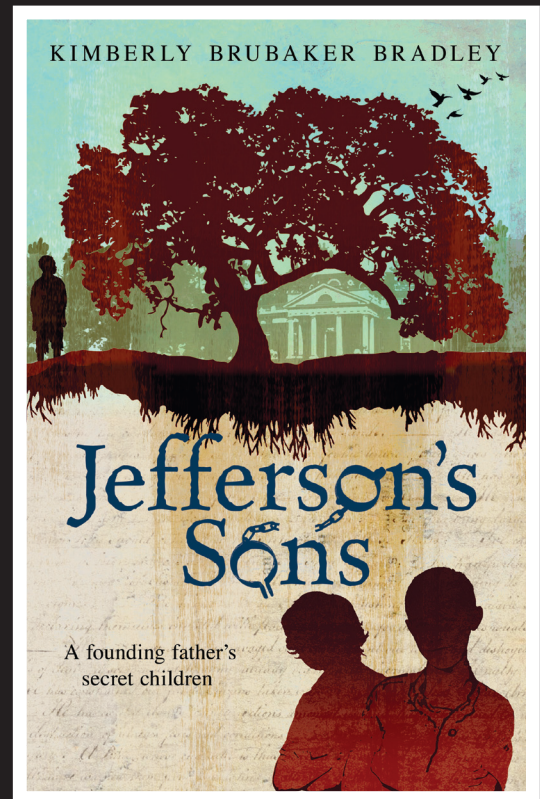




Penguin Young Readers Group



Core Curriculum Lesson Plans for **JEFFERSON'S SONS**

by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Lesson plans meet
Common Core State Standards
for grades 5–7

Dear Educator:

Jefferson's Sons is historical fiction set in the early 1800s during Thomas Jefferson's presidency and up to his death. While students might have prior knowledge of Thomas Jefferson, this book presents them with the untold stories— the stories of his enslaved children. Because the narrative is presented from the points of view of three enslaved children (two of whom are Thomas Jefferson's own sons with his slave Sally Hemings), students will grapple with the **themes of injustice and inequality** right alongside the main characters. Students learn about **family and friendship in a time of slavery**, and they also learn about the **universal need for a sense of belonging**, as the enslaved children try to understand why their father treats them differently from how he treats his white children. This layered novel also allows students to discuss **prejudice** and **social class** seen from a child's perspective.

These Core Curriculum Lesson Plans present discussion questions, activities, and writing prompts that align with the **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and History and Social Studies for grades 5–7**. This guide is broken up into **three parts** and mirrors the structure of the book, which is presented from three different points of view (that of the characters Beverly, Maddy, and Peter). The lessons can be used as part of a comprehensive English and/or History unit that lasts for three to four weeks, or you might choose to use the lessons as enrichment activities to deepen student thinking as you conduct a whole class or small group novel study. This novel offers many options for further exploration and research about the Declaration of Independence—specifically, what it means that “all men are created equal,” and the contradictions presented through this story.

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Content of these Core Curriculum Lesson Plans was created by Jennifer M. Bogard, who taught elementary school for more than ten years. She is a literacy coach for the Maine School Administrative District 35 and a PhD candidate at Lesley University. Her research focuses on transitional readers, specifically the sociology of families, reading pedagogy, and family and school engagement. Jennifer is also an adjunct professor in the Language and Literacy Division of the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University. Her work is published in *The Reading Teacher*, and she has presented for the Center for Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

In the front matter of the book, the author presents a chart called “Descendents of Thomas Jefferson.” Project this chart. Guide students in reading the chart using the key at the bottom right. Ask students to:

- Make observations about the dates and names. Ask them to infer why some of the children have the same name, and the meaning of the roman numerals I and II. What does the code b/d mean?
- Write an “I Am From” poem to explore their own roots

Set up an artifact display to generate anticipation. The display should include pictures with labels and objects, of time-period items with labels that are mentioned in the book. (and actual objects whenever possible. Images can be found at <http://classroom.monticello.org>. Ideas for images and artifacts include breeches, a waistcoat, callimanco print, a landau, pictures of Monticello and Poplar Forest, a primer, sheet music from the time period (specifically “Money Musk”), the Declaration of Independence, items related to the trades of blacksmith, carpentry, and tailor, and to spinning (including raw wool and flax).

- Have students choose a picture or object and write about it in their journal's. Ask them to infer the purpose of the object or the meaning of the picture.
- As students read the text, and the artifacts are mentioned, have them research the meaning and use technology to record a description of the artifact. They might use Audacity to create a podcast or the Livescribe Pen in which they make a dot and record—then cut the dot out and place it by the object.

****Correlates to Common Core Standards: RL 5.7, RH 6-7.7, SL 5.5, W 5.1, 5.7, 5.10 RH 6.7, 7.7, 6-7.10**

Week 1: Point of View of Beverly (p. 1–115)

At the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to Beverly, and we are told that whenever he thought about Master Jefferson, “his stomach gave a little twist, almost like he was hungry” (p. 3).

- What is Beverly hungry for?
- How might this statement foreshadow or give us clues about Beverly's relationship with his father?
- As students continue to read, have them hunt for clues that suggest what Beverly wants from his father.
- Chart specific phrases that reveal clues about their relationship.

On page 23, Beverly asks his mama if Master Jefferson loved him. His mama responds, “Of course he loves you, He named you. William Beverly, after a friend of his father's.”

- Ask students to use books in the library or sites on the Internet to research the significance of the names in the text. For example, who was Maddy (James Madison) named after and why?
- Direct students to the Afterword in which the author reveals Maddy grew up to have eleven children. What is the significance of his children's names? Why did he name one daughter Ellen?
- Have students debate whether Master Jefferson's naming his sons shows that he loves them, and why or why not.

Mama uses storytelling to teach her children important messages, or to counter narratives that society tells them. For example, Mama tells the story of their great-grandma, and on page 44, she says, “Your great-grandma wasn't born a slave. . . She didn't have something wrong with her turned her into a slave. She didn't deserve to be captured. You remember that.”

- Have students find other messages that Mama teaches her children.
- Direct students to pages 33–35 and page 74.
- Discuss: How are Mama's messages different from the messages society communicates to the children?

Beverly longs to have a relationship with his father. On page 51, readers learn that Beverly “hardly even saw him from afar.”

- Taking the perspective of Beverly, have students choose to write one of the following: a letter to “Papa,” a monologue, or a poem to exploring how Beverly feels.

Use a chart to start collecting evidence from the text to characterize the different roles of Thomas Jefferson in the book. Have students:

- Have students create a classroom chart with three headings: Master Jefferson, “Papa,” and President Thomas Jefferson.
- As students continue to read the book, stop and record words and phrases that show his character in each area. What are his character traits as a slave master? What are his character traits as a father to his enslaved children? To his white children? What are his character traits and/or achievements as president?

On page 55, Master Jefferson introduces Beverly to the word *tranquility*. Master Jefferson tells Beverly that this word is “beautiful in meaning and in sound.” As students read the book, they will find that this word appears again and again. Ask them to write down the page numbers where they find the word *tranquility* throughout the book.

- In small groups, share the paragraphs that reference the word *tranquility*. For example, chapter twelve is titled, “The End of Tranquility.” On page 203, Beverly suggests they try for tranquility instead of talking too much; on page 208, Master Jefferson likes a tranquil dining room; on page 238, Maddy remembers Beverly's word tranquility when he yearns for his friend James.
- Discuss: Why does the author choose to repeat this word throughout the text?

On page 87, Mama tells Beverly that she knows he needs a job. She says, "More than that, you need a trade. A way to earn a respectable living, once you're free and on your own." Joe Fossett is a blacksmith, and Uncle John is a carpenter. Ask students to research the craft and tools involved in the following: blacksmith, carpenter, tailor, chef, and in addition to the concept of being an apprentice during the early 1800s.

- Divide the class into groups according to trade. Have each group locate scenes in the book that reveal details about the trade.
- Have each group create help wanted advertisements that provide details and descriptions about the trade.
- Have students write interview questions to ask prospective job candidates that include details of the trade.

Uncle John tells Beverly and Harriet, "You can't sell love. You can't steal it. It can't run away. You two, you'd better learn this. I don't want to hear anything between you except love. Not ever. You got that?" (p. 95). Have students:

- Discuss the theme of family in the time of slavery. Why is Uncle John's message a powerful one?
- Use sticky notes to mark pages that show this theme of family as they read.

Conduct a whole class discussion to explore:

- How does Beverly's point of view influence the stories that are presented, how they are described, and the language in this section of the book?
- What is the author's purpose in presenting Beverly's point of view?

****Correlates to Common Core Standards:** RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.4, W 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.10, L 5.4, SL 5.1 5.6, RH 6-7.1, 6-7.4, 6-7.6, WHST 6-7.4, 6-7.5, 6-7.7, 6-7.8, 6-7.9, 6-7.10

Week 2: Point of View of Maddy (p. 116–286)

The three main settings of the book are Monticello, Poplar Forest, and Mulberry Row. The author reveals issues of social class and injustice by presenting details of everyday life at each of the three settings.

- Ask students to go back into the text and locate parts in the book that describe each setting.
- Using an interactive white board or a chart, name the three setting and list important details and specific word choices that the author uses to describe each setting. Be sure to include the great house description and James' comment on page 122: "Who ever heard of a book on Mulberry Row?"
- Have students write an informative text to compare and contrast the details of each setting, including the daily operations involved and what everyday life was like for people who lived there.
- Discuss the meaning of social class, injustice and inequity in relation to the settings.

Maddy thinks, "Beverly loved musical words" (p. 135). As students read the book, have them collect the words that Beverly enjoys or Maddy reads in addition to other words they find interesting.

- Have students write the words in their journals, noting the page number.
- Ask students to look up the definitions in the dictionary or an online resource.
- Have students go to <http://www.wordle.net> and create a "word cloud" to visually represent their collection of words.

Maddy and James catch a mocking-bird for Master Jefferson. Have students reread the following quote: "Maddy swallowed. The most awful feeling came over him, all at once, like water poured out of a bucket onto his head. That bird had been free, and now it was a slave. He, Maddy, had sold that bird into slavery" (p. 144).

- Ask students to discuss: What did Maddy realize about himself? What might readers learn from this?
- Have students research the symbolism of birds and how birds have been a symbol of freedom and independence throughout history in art, literature, and more. Discuss the bald eagle and what it represents for the United States.

Classroom Lesson Plans for Jefferson's Sons: *A Founding Father's Secret Children*

Family is a central theme in the novel. On pages 154 and 155, the author repeats the line “*So far south he’ll never see his family again,*” which are the words Master Jefferson used to express his anger about how James Hubbard ran away again. Ask students to consider the writer’s craft of repeating a line.

- Have students read the excerpt aloud to hear the power of the repeated line.
- In small groups, have students discuss how this repeated line shows the theme of the importance of family.
- Ask students to be on the lookout for repeated lines as they continue reading (such as the repeated line “*Please don’t die,*” on page 335.)

On page 186, Maddy “kicked his feet in anger and frustration” as Eston played the song “Money Musk” on his violin.

- Have students explain why Maddy feels frustrated and angry, using words and phrases from the text.
- Using an interactive board or a computer with speakers, go to the Library of Congress website: <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>. Type in the song “Money Musk” and have students listen to the melody. Ask students to describe the mood that the song conveys.
- Contrast the mood of the song “Money Musk” with Maddy’s feelings.

On page 193, Beverly teaches Maddy to figure out the meaning of the word *transcendent* by using the root word, *transcend*.

- In small groups, have students figure out the meaning of the words by identifying the root word, using the context, and looking the words up in the dictionary.
- Invite students use these words in their own writing pieces.

“Master Jefferson would think it impossible that he could be in any way compared to a slave trader. He would say that he’s a gentleman, an educated man. He would say that he works for the good of his country, and therefore for the good of all Americans. He’d say he’s a farmer, a landowner (p. 231).”

- Hold a class discussion about the significance of this quotation and what readers can learn from it.
- Discuss the paradox of this quote and how Master Jefferson sold Maddy’s best friend, James.

On page 255, Maddy gets cut with the saw blade as he saws wood for Uncle John. Master Jefferson comes to his aid, and on page 257, the author writes, “It was the first time he ever felt like he had a father.” Ask students to consider how this event is a turning point. Have students:

- Discuss the relationship between Master Jefferson and Maddy. How had Maddy felt before this incident? Why? Have them locate specific evidence in the text to support their ideas.
- Discuss what Maddy means when he says, “It’s like there’s a secret side of him, and here, since it’s not Monticello, he can let it show” (p. 257).

Explain the meaning of the following simile (p. 267): “The silence wore Maddy down like rough sandpaper on a board.” Ask students to:

- Ask students to locate other examples of similes in the book. For example, on page 266, the author writes, “He disappeared like a rock falling into a lake without a ripple.”
- Have students choose a place in the text to add a meaningful simile of their own.

Hold a class discussion about Beverly’s decision to return to Mulberry Row.

- Have students locate evidence from the text that tells what influenced his decision.
- Discuss how the central theme of family is revealed.

****Correlates to Common Core Standards: RL 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, RF 5.3, W 5.2, 5.4, 5.7, 5.9, L 5.4, L 5.4 5.5, L 5.1, 5.4 RH 6-7.1, 6-7.4 WHST 6-7.4, 6-7.5, 6-7.7, 6-7.8, 6-7.9, 6-7.10**

Week 3: Point of View of Peter (p. 287–360)

On page 325, Maddy tells Peter that education is important. He says, “What you learn can’t be taken from you.” Have students:

- Work in small groups to locate specific quotations in the book that convey the significance of education. Students might choose the example of Beverly’s plans to communicate through letter writing Mama’s message, “Learn to read and to write, however you can. All of you had better learn” (p. 126), or the role of literacy for Thomas Jefferson.
- Look for more examples as they read on; for example, on page 352 Maddy says, “Words are powerful things. Learn them and you’ll have their power.”
- Write an essay about the role of education, using specific example from the book.

Maddy and Peter discuss how Jefferson and Lafayette were “crying for what they did a long time ago” (p. 330) and how they believed in the words, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal” (p. 329).

- Have students discuss what Maddy and Peter mean when they say that Jefferson and Lafayette “didn’t really do it” but they “think they did?” (p. 330).

Master Jefferson died exactly fifty years after the document that he wrote the Declaration of Independence—was signed. Have students:

- Create a timeline of events in the book beginning with the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, and continuing with the dates above the chapter titles such as “Spring 1808.”
- Discuss the sequence of events and add additional events, such as Thomas Jefferson’s election and inauguration.

Direct the students to the first paragraph of the final chapter. Ask them to:

- Locate the sensory images.
- Discuss how these images set the tone for the heartbreaking events in this last chapter.

After finishing the novel, have students write an essay to answer the question, Can a person be great and still participate in evil?(p. 255).

- Ask students to draw from the ongoing classroom chart that characterizes Jefferson’s roles as Master Jefferson, “Papa,” and President Thomas Jefferson.
- Have students use specific quotations from the text to support their statements.

****Correlates to Common Core Standards: RL 5.1, 5.3, W 5.1, W 5.4, W 5.5, 5.10, L 5.5, SL 5.1, RH 6-7.1, 6-7.2, 6-7.8, WHST 6-7.1, WHST 6-7.4, 6-7.5**

Post-reading Activities

Have students explore the websites listed under “Additional Websites for Research.”

- View images of the architecture of the time period (such as the alcoves mentioned in the text), primary documents, and more. Ask students to create a slideshow by following the directions on the website: <http://classroom.monticello.org>.

Have students read more than one biography of Thomas Jefferson.

- Ask students to compare and contrast the authors’ approaches. What part of Thomas Jefferson’s life did each author chose to present? Are the stories of his enslaved children presented?
- Have students present their findings to others

****Correlates to Common Core Standards: RI 5.5 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, SL 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, WHST 6-7.7, 6-7.8, 6-7.9**

Classroom Lesson Plans for Jefferson's Sons: *A Founding Father's Secret Children*

Additional Websites for Research

www.monticello.org

In the Afterword, Kimberly Brubaker Bradley suggests to start with this website, specifically the "Report of the Monticello Research Committee on Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings," the Plantation Database, and the Digital Family Letters Archive

www.kimberlybrubakerbradley.com

Author's website

http://classroom.monticello.org

Student-friendly activities and information about Thomas Jefferson and life at Monticello, created by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation in 2007

http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/

Library of Congress website

About the Author

KIMBERLY BRUBAKER BRADLEY was inspired to tell the story of Thomas Jefferson's secret children after hearing about Sally Hemings on a tour of Monticello. After that, she read everything about Thomas Jefferson, his house, and his family she could get her hands on, and went back Monticello twice more for research. Ms. Bradley lives with her family in Bristol, Tennessee.



A Q & A with author Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Q: It was powerful to read the stories of the children whose voices were unheard. What inspired you to focus on the children's points of view?

A: First of all, that's really where my interest lies—I love to write about children who were witnesses to history. But there are also technical reasons—to write about an illicit adult relationship and still keep the book appropriate for a younger audience, I had to maintain an innocent point-of-view. A point-of-view character who grew into maturity would start asking adult questions that I couldn't answer honestly without making the book inappropriate. Then, too, I wanted very much to end the book where and how I did—and the point-of-view character at that point isn't even alive at the start of the story. Since it's a novel that follows history as closely as possible, I couldn't compress the timeline the way I might have had I been creating the story entirely myself.

Q: As you conducted research, what methods did you use to compile and organize the facts?

A: I researched in waves: first doing enough to start, then re-reading much of the material as I went through multiple drafts, then looking up answers to specific questions (such as, could Joe Fossett read?) as I needed them. I take notes on notecards during my initial research, but at one point, to keep all the characters and the timeline straight, I taped an enormous piece of butcher paper onto the hall floor outside my office. I made one axis years, and another characters, and transferred all my notes onto it, so that I could see the story as one big picture (literally!). I kept that paper taped to the floor for about four months. My family got really tired of having to walk around it.

Q: What part of your research did you find most fascinating?

A: The way what we know changed, even as I was writing the book. For example, the fate of Patsy Fossett after the auction at the end of the book was not known when I started writing. But two years later, a researcher at Monticello found her name in the census records of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1830. So we now know that by 1830 Patsy was free and had rejoined her family.

Awards, Honors and Praise for Jefferson's Sons

2012-2013 Maryland Black-Eyed Susan Book Award (Grades 6-9)

2012-2013 Pennsylvania School Librarians Association Award (Young Adult)

- ★ "Fine characterization and cinematic prose breathe life into this tragic story." —*School Library Journal*, starred review
- ★ "A big, serious work of historical investigation and imagination; the tale has never before been told this well." —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review
- ★ "[A] sensitive and richly imagined vision." —*BCCB*, starred review
- ★ "[an] eye-opening and powerful novel." —*The Horn Book*, starred review