

# CITIZENSHIP AND CHARACTER: MODERATION

## FINDING THE BALANCE

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### OVERVIEW

In the course of this lesson, students will consider the value of moderation and personal self-discipline. In Part I, students reflect on the meaning of moderation as presented in selected statements from the Founders. Part II focuses the students on the definition and idea of moderation as it relates to their personal lives. The Readers' Theater activity in Part III offers students insights into how one Founder attempted to act with moderation in a stressful situation. In Part IV, students engage in role-playing scenarios that allow them to demonstrate how the virtue of moderation might be applied in their own lives. Finally, students discuss ways in which the Constitution itself is a document grounded in moderation.

### STANDARDS

**CCE (9-12) II.C, II.D, V.D**

**NCHS (5-12) 3.A, 3.B, 5.D, 3A.3**

### RECOMMENDED TIME

One 90-minute class block or two 45-minute class periods. Additional time as needed for background and homework.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- explain the importance of the value of moderation in a constitutional democracy
- explain the value of moderation and self-discipline as reflected in primary source documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Federalist Papers, and others
- compare and contrast the meaning of moderation for different people at different times
- assess the influence of moderation and self-discipline on Thomas Jefferson
- evaluate the moderating principles of the Constitution (separation of powers, checks and balances)
- evaluate the necessity of moderation for thoughtful participation in civil society
- apply the value of moderation to situations in their own lives

### Materials

#### **Required:**

- **Student Handouts**
  - A – Reading Selections: Founders' Views on Moderation
  - B – Moderation Quotes
  - C – Excerpt from Thomas Jefferson's *Dialogue Between My Head and My Heart*
  - D – Role-Playing Scenarios
  - E – Constitutional Analysis
- **Teacher Keys**
  - Focus Questions
  - Answer Key

#### **Optional:**

Historical Narratives

- George Washington: In Order to Fare Well

- Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.: Dignified and Determined

## LESSON PLAN

### I. Background/Homework [10-15 minutes the day before]

- Distribute **Handout A – Founders' Views on Moderation**. For homework, have the students read the selections and answer the accompanying questions.
- Optional*: Assign one or both of the historical narratives and accompanying questions.
- Optional*: Because of its challenging reading level, you may want to distribute **Handout C: Excerpt from Thomas Jefferson's Dialogue Between My Head and My Heart**. Students who read or paraphrase it in advance will learn more during the Readers' Theater in the next class.

### II. Warm-Up [15 minutes]

- Review the students' answers from the previous night's homework.
- Give students **Handout B – Moderation Quotes**. Ask them to choose one and write a response, focusing on their understanding of what it means to act with moderation.
- Using the provided **Focus Questions**, continue the discussion about moderation and reach class consensus about the best definition, listing class contributions on the board or overhead.

### III. Readers' Theater [15 minutes]

- Distribute **Handout C – Excerpt from Thomas Jefferson's Dialogue Between My Head and My Heart** to the students and introduce it by telling students that they are going to read a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to a married woman with whom he fell in love. Jefferson was torn between acting moderately and acting to extremes; between his emotions and his reason; between his heart and his head.
- The dialogue can be read in a variety of ways.
  - Students can read each section in a round-robin setting.
  - Students can be given an assigned section the night before and asked to paraphrase the text.
  - Individuals who are good readers and/or good actors can be assigned parts.
- At the end of the reading, ask the students the review questions.

### IV. Role-Playing Scenarios [15 minutes]

- Explain to the students that they will now be role-playing for the class some situations similar to Jefferson's. They will have to take sides in a debate between moderation (their head) and extremes (their hearts or emotions.) Divide the class into pairs(or have them divide themselves) and distribute **Handout D – Role-Playing Scenarios**.
- Assign each pair one of the scenarios and give everyone 2-3 minutes to create their dialogue. (In larger classes, students can form triads with one student serving as the Moderator or students can create their own additional scenarios.) Each pair will then present their scenario for the entire class; the class can vote on whether to side with moderation or whether to side with extremes. The discussion should be guided to the merits of moderation (in most cases.)

**V. Constitutional Analysis [15-30 minutes]**

- A. Point out to the students that not only were the Founders (like Jefferson) moderate in their own personal lives; they also wrote a Constitution that created a moderate political system.
- B. Distribute **Handout E – Constitutional Analysis** to the students. They should complete this worksheet either individually or in small groups (or this could be completed as a homework assignment).

**VI. Wrap-Up Discussion [10 – 15 minutes]**

- A. Ask students if they think a government which tries to moderate different people's interests can be an effective one? Can there be too much moderation in government? Too little?
- B. Ask students if there can be too much moderation in their personal lives? Too little?

**VII. Homework Options**

- A. Write an essay in which you argue in favor of moderation and self-discipline in our daily lives.
- B. Find an article/photograph of individuals or institutions acting without moderation and write a paragraph predicting the consequences of their lack of moderation.
- C. Find an article that illustrates the moderate character of the United States government and write a one-paragraph explanation of why this is an example of public moderation.

**EXTENSIONS**

**Founders**

Students read the journals and diaries of men like Franklin, Adams, and Washington to get a better sense of the importance of moderation (and other civic values) in their personal lives. Possible on-line sources include:

George Washington <http://wwwFOUNDATIONSmag.com/civility.html>  
John Adams [http://www.4literature.net/John\\_Adams/Characteristic\\_Entries\\_in\\_his\\_Diary/](http://www.4literature.net/John_Adams/Characteristic_Entries_in_his_Diary/)  
Benjamin Franklin <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/B/bfranklin/frankxx.htm>

**Federalists**

Complete a close reading of all of *Federalist #10* and write a 2-3 page paper analyzing why Madison feared extremist factions and why he believed that a democratic republic would serve to moderate the interests and the passions of its citizens.