


# Activity Plan

<i>Title</i>	<b>Utopian Visions</b>
<i>Subject</i>	Theatre: The 3Ps
<i>Author</i>	ArtsEdge: <b>Daniella Garran</b> <i>Original Writer</i>
	<b>Sources</b> <b>"Imagine"</b> <b>John Lennon</b> <b>BMI #713414</b>  <b>Lenono Music</b> <b>75 Ninth Ave. 4th Floor</b> <b>New York, NY 10011</b>
<i>Grade level</i>	Grades 9-12
<i>Time duration</i>	60-120 mins
<i>Overview</i>	In this lesson, students are introduced to the idea of a "utopia"—an idealized society. Students read Sir Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> and examine the concepts behind his vision of an ideal society. Students then contrast the ideas in <i>Utopia</i> with those found in the Constitution of the United States. In a culminating activity, students write and perform a monologue from the perspective of an inhabitant of More's utopia. Throughout the lesson, students contemplate issues such as: What constitutes an ideal society? What is the individual's role in society?
<i>Objective</i>	Students will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read Sir Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i>.</li><li>• Explore the feasibility of creating an "ideal" society.</li><li>• Read the Bill of Rights and other excerpts from the <a href="#"><b>Constitution of the United States</b></a>.</li><li>• Develop and articulate an argument about the pros and cons of a "utopian" society.</li></ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write and perform a monologue from the perspective of a resident of Sir Thomas More's Utopia.</li> </ul>
<i>Materials</i>	<p><b>Materials</b></p> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audio</li> <li>• <a href="#">Imagine - Lyrics</a></li> <li>• Printable</li> <li>• <a href="#">Worksheet - Elements of Society</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Background - Utopian Quotes</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Worksheet - Utopian Quotes</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Venn Diagram - Utopian Visions</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Assignment - Utopian Visions</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Required Technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Computer per Learner</li> </ul> <p><b>Required Plugins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•  <a href="#">PDF</a></li> </ul>
<i>Activities and procedures</i>	<p><b>ENGAGE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Play the song "<a href="#">Imagine</a>," by John Lennon. Engage students in a discussion of the lyrics. Provide students with the lyrics, a handout is available in the Resource Carousel. Ask them whether they agree with Lennon's vision of a perfect world (no heaven or hell, no countries, no religion, no possessions, etc.).</li> <li>2. Introduce the idea of a "utopia," or an idealized society. Ask students if they have heard this term before. Explain that the word "utopia" is originally the title of a work by Sir Thomas More (1477–1535), an English scholar and Catholic saint who was executed by Henry VIII after he refused to sign an oath recognizing the king as supreme head of the Church of England.</li> </ol> <p>More's utopia is a fictional account of an idealized society with a just government, a happy and prosperous population, and a peaceful attitude. More describes the society in an anthropological way, as if he visited the country. He expresses great admiration for the way of life in the utopia he describes.</p> <p><b>BUILD KNOWLEDGE</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give students an overview of More's <a href="#">Utopia</a>. An excellent <a href="#">summary</a> is available to you.</li> <li>2. Provide students with <a href="#">background</a> about Thomas More himself. Be sure to cite the basics about this text:</li> </ol>

- It was written in 1516 in Latin.
- It tries to define an ideal republic.
- One of its main themes is the idea that all private property should be abolished and that all goods and materials should be held collectively by the people and distributed equally.

3. Have students read More's *Utopia*. As a class, discuss More's "ideal society." Be sure to discuss:

- What are the main themes of More's *Utopia*?
- What would the implications be for society if this were achieved?

4. Distribute the *Elements of Society* worksheet located within the Resource Carousel. Have students identify specific characteristics or elements of the society that they admire.

5. Once the worksheets are completed, allow students time to discuss their responses in small groups.

6. Then, distribute the *Utopian Quotes* handout and the accompanying *Utopian Quotes Worksheet*, both of which are available in the Resource Carousel. Ask students to work in small groups to respond to the text excerpts, indicating whether they feel these attributes would be conducive to an ideal society.

7. Ask students to think about the roles that individuals played in the society described by More. How does the society balance the role of the individual with that of the government? Discuss preliminary ideas as a class.

8. Introduce the Bill of Rights. Discuss the rights and responsibilities of American citizens vis-à-vis this document.

9. Using the *Venn Diagram* found in the Resource Carousel, compare and contrast the kind of society that the American forefathers tried to create with that which More was suggesting.

#### APPLY

1. Have students choose ONE of the following topics and write a brief monologue in the voice of the character. Your spoken monologue should be approximately one minute in length. Be prepared to perform the monologue for the class.

- You are a woman who is about to be married into a new family in More's utopia. You are spending your last night with your own family. Talk about your feelings as you pack your belongings to leave.
- You are a father in a family with many children. Your city is approaching the maximum population of 6,000. The Utopian authorities have informed you that you must relinquish your newborn baby to a childless family in another city. You are

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wondering aloud about how you will tell your wife about this situation.

- You are the Prince of Utopia. A neighboring country, friendly to Utopia is being threatened with invasion, and it has requested your assistance in war. The magistrates do not want to support the war, but you feel it is just. Try to convince the council to support the war, using arguments that echo the Utopian philosophy about war.
- You are a Utopian slave. You were sentenced to this punishment after you were twice caught traveling without a passport. Tell the story of how you fell into slavery.

This information is also available above as a handout called "Assignment - Utopian Visions" in the Resource Carousel above.

### *Conclusions*

#### REFLECT

1. Have students write a short essay on the following topic:

*Sir Thomas More described a country in which all inhabitants worked together to benefit the greater society. The Bill of Rights was crafted primarily to preserve individual freedoms. Using the Venn diagram you completed, write a comparative analysis of the fictionalized government of More's utopia and the government of the United States. Take a position on which government would be more conducive to a productive society.*

This information is also available above as a handout called [Assignment - Utopian Visions](#) in the Resource Carousel above.

### *Adaptations*

### *Links and Websites*

#### Teacher Background

Teachers should have read Thomas More's *Utopia* and should be familiar with the ideas asserted in the Constitution in general but especially in the Bill of Rights.

#### Prior Student Knowledge

Students should be familiar with:

- The concept of utopia.
- The Constitution.
- Old English.
- Formal debating.
- Monologues.

