



# THE NEW JERSEY ITALIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION



## All Men are Created Equal

**Grade Level: 9-12**

Can be adjusted to accommodate grades 6-8

**Subjects:** World History / United States History / Law / Language Arts

**Categories:** History and Society / Arts and Sciences

**Standards:**

Please see New Jersey Student Learning Standards on page 9 of the lesson plan for complete standards alignment.

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

1. trace the concept of "equality of mankind" to ancient sources.
2. determine whether the ancient understanding of equality evolved over the millennia.
3. ascertain whether the concept of equality, as understood today, is predicated on the concepts formed in the ancient world and developed over the centuries.
4. connect a nexus of ideas from ancient Christianity, ancient Rome, through the Founding period, to the twentieth century.

**Abstract:**

The concept of Equality from Paul of Tarsus in 48AD, through Ulpian in the 3rd century AD, to Filippo Mazzei's influence on George Mason and Thomas Jefferson is presented. Dr. Martin Luther King's understanding of the concept is explored.

**Key Terms:**

Egalitarianism	<i>French</i>	Affirming, promoting, or characterized by belief in total political, economic, and social equality, for all people.
Inter alia	<i>Latin</i>	Among other things.

## **Background:**

Most cultures throughout history have not accepted the concept of the equality of man, let alone the equality of all human beings. Inequality has been based on caste, class, religion, ethnicity, sex, or race, *inter alia*. One of the most revolutionary aspects of the new American Republic in 1776 is that it publicly declared "*that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights. . . .*" This concept had been suggested throughout the Christian tradition in Western Civilization, but only to various extents and usually meaning equality in the "eyes of God."

The ancient Greek and Roman Stoics, like Christians, had a belief in the universal brotherhood of mankind. Nevertheless, it was not until the third century AD, that the concept of the equality of man was advanced in Roman Law. Through his study of Roman Natural Law, Roman jurist, Domitius Ulpian claimed in *Corpus juris civilis* that "By law of nature all men are equal."

Many modern societies today advocate the idea of the "equality of man." Nonetheless, there are many arguments regarding what that actually means. In the United States equality usually means "equality under the law" and "equality of opportunity." In Marxist nations equality usually meant egalitarianism and the "equality of outcome."

## **Procedures:**

- I. Have students read the excerpt from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech."
- II. Students will notice that King harkens back to the Declaration of Independence in his 1963 demand that American society treats African Americans as equals.
- III. Students will then review other excerpts.
  - A. Younger students may need the teacher to go over the concepts in the excerpts with them.
  - B. Students will see how the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Declaration of Rights used the Italian friend of Thomas Jefferson, Filippo Mazzei's ideas on concept that all men are equal. They also will see that Mazzei used Ulpian's 3rd century proposition, "By law of nature all men are equal," in his 18th century writings.
  - C. Students will then review precedents from, Algernon Sidney, Ulpian, and Paul of Tarsus.
    1. Explain to students that Sidney was an English philosopher who was read by many of the Founders.
    2. Ulpian lived during a time when there were as many slaves as freemen, when women had very little, if any, rights, when only Roman citizens had privileges, and there were established class strata within the Roman society itself.
    3. Point out to students that Paul's ideas of male and female equality were considered outrageous in much of the ancient world. Also, the idea of master-slave equality was considered radical, as was his notion that Jews and Greeks were equals, especially when his fellow Jews looked upon themselves as God's chosen people.

- a. Paul's concept of equality did not transcend into official Roman society when Christianity became the religion of the Empire during the 4th century, though women, slaves, and non-citizens enjoyed many more rights than they had previously.
- D. On a teacher-made worksheet, students will determine how each writer defined equality.
  - E. Using Critical Thinking, students will then answer the following questions in paragraph form. Ask them to thoroughly explain their answers.
    1. Each answer will be written as a paragraph (4 paragraphs in all) with an introductory sentence, supporting details, and a concluding sentence.
      - a. Do you believe the writers of the excerpts used precedents to further advance their ideas?
      - b. Is this why education is vital to advance society?
      - c. Is this why the study of history is vital to advance society?
      - d. In American society today, what does the concept of equality mean?

**Assessment:**

Teachers will read the students' definitions of "equality" to evaluate their comprehension of the objectives. Teachers should make a check list to evaluate the students' definitions. Assess the paragraphs by using the *New Jersey Registered Holistic Writing Rubric* for scoring.

# All Men are Created Equal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Excerpt One

So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition. In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.

This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. . . .

. . . I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

**Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream" Speech  
August 28, 1963**

## Excerpt Two

All men are by nature equally free and independent. This equality is necessary to establish a free government. Each one must be equal to the other in natural rights. Class distinctions are not always static and will always be nothing more than an effective stumbling block, and the reason is most clear. Whenever you have many classes of men in one nation, it is necessary that you give each one its share in the government; otherwise one class will tyrannize the others. But the shares cannot be made perfectly equal; and whenever one class takes power, human events will demonstrate that the classes are not in balance; and bit by bit the greater part of the machine will collapse.  
**Filippo Mazzei, *Virginia Gazette*, 1775**

### **Excerpt Three**

That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

**Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776,**

### **Excerpt Four**

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

**Declaration of Independence, 1776**

### **Excerpt Five**

That Hayward, Blackwood, Barclay, and others who have bravely vindicated the right of kings in this point, do with one consent admit, as an unquestionable truth, and assent unto the natural liberty and equality of mankind . . . .

**Algernon Sidney, Discourses, Concerning Government, 1698**

### **Excerpt Six**

By law of nature all men are equal.

**Domitius Ulpian, Roman jurist-- third century AD**

### **Excerpt Seven**

For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.

**Paul of Tarsus' letter to the Galatians, circa 48 AD**

# Supplemental Information

## Filippo Mazzei

Filippo Mazzei was born in Poggio-a-Caiano, Tuscany, Italy, on Christmas Day, 1730., As a young man Mazzei studied medicine at the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence and practiced medicine in Pisa and Livorno. Mazzei first left Italy in August 1752 to practice medicine in Smyrna and Constantinople, then in the Ottoman Empire. In 1756, he went to London, where he organized the firm of Martini and Company, which imported cheese, wine and olive oil into England. While Mazzei was in Britain, the Grand Duke of Tuscany placed an order with Mazzei for the purchase of two Franklin stoves, resulting in Mazzei's meeting the inventor Benjamin Franklin, himself, and several other Americans, including Thomas Adams.

Mazzei's new American acquaintances suggested that he form a company to promote the culture of silkworms, olives, and grapes, and the production of wine, in the British colony of Virginia. Mazzei decided to follow the Americans' advice and set up a business in the New World. He left Britain to return to Italy, where he hired men and obtained the materials needed for this venture. On September 7, 1773 Mazzei and his entourage set sail from Livorno, arriving at Jamestown, Virginia, by late November. Mazzei had brought many people with him to *Colle*, including his future wife, the widow Maria Martin, whom he married in 1774.

Mazzei's acquaintance from England, Thomas Adams, was giving Mazzei a tour of the Virginia countryside when they stopped at Jefferson's *Monticello*. Jefferson was fascinated by Mazzei, and it was then he convinced the Florentine to buy land next to *Monticello*. Mazzei's new American estate, *Colle*, sat near Shadwell Station, about four miles from Charlottesville.

In Virginia Mazzei immediately delved into politics. He and Jefferson worked feverishly on political propaganda to elect men from each county to become representatives for a "Convention" rather than the Virginia "Assembly." (when people elected the same men to the "Convention" who were already members of the Assembly, the Royal Governor, Lord Dunmore could not simply dissolve the "Convention"). Within six months Mazzei was also elected to the vestry of the local Anglican church, and he began to speak in various area churches about Jefferson's ideas on religious freedom.

When Mazzei introduced his "Proposal for Forming a Company or Partnership, for the Purpose of Raising and Making Wine, Oil, Agruminous Plants, and Silk," many men chose to invest in his enterprise. Unfortunately, in May 1774 a bitter frost destroyed the vines that he had been planted; nevertheless, Mazzei believed that Virginian climate and fertile soil would produce bountiful harvests.

Despite Mazzei's optimistic outlook, the vineyard did not thrive. Although his company did not succeed, Mazzei continued in his political endeavors and strongly supported the Revolutionary War. He enlisted in the Albemarle militia as a private, once the British troops first landed in Hampton, Virginia.

Between 1774-1776 Mazzei wrote patriotic articles in Italian under the pseudonym "Furioso." Jefferson then translated the articles into English, to be published in the *Virginia Gazette*. Mazzei wrote:

All men are by nature equally free and independent. This equality is necessary to establish a free government. Each one must be equal to the other in natural rights. Class distinctions are not always static and will always be nothing more than an effective stumbling block, and the reason is most clear. Whenever you have many classes of men in one nation, it is necessary that you give each one its share in the government; otherwise one class will tyrannize the others. But the shares cannot be made perfectly equal; and whenever one class takes power, human events will demonstrate that the classes are not in balance; and bit by bit the greater part of the machine will collapse.

Many see Mazzei's influence on the Virginia Convention's adaptation of the Virginia Declaration of Rights on June 12, 1776. Virginia's Declaration was written by patriot George Mason. Mason's first article began: "That all Men are created equally free and independent, and have certain inherent natural Rights, of which they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their Posterity . . . ."

Again many see Mazzei's influence less than a month later, on July 4, 1776, at meeting in Philadelphia, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, adopted a Declaration, drafted by Mazzei's neighbor, Thomas Jefferson, which stated in part: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident. That all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights . . . ."

Those who see Mazzei as the inspiration for the words regarding man's inherent equality, often site John F. Kennedy's *A Nation of Immigrants*, where the later President wrote, "The great doctrine 'All men are created equal' incorporated into the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson, was paraphrased from the writing of Philip Mazzei, an Italian-born patriot and pamphleteer, who was a close friend of Jefferson."

Kennedy might be correct that Jefferson had used Mazzei's phrase; nonetheless, American President's explanation might be a bit too naive. The idea that "**all men are created equal**" was part of the political, philosophical, and theological ethos of the period. Earlier, in 1774 the Scottish immigrant to Pennsylvania, James Wilson, wrote in *Considerations on the Nature and Extent of Legislative Authority of the British Parliament* that "**All men are, by nature, equal and free**: No one has a right to any authority over another without his consent."

Wilson could have easily been citing John Locke in 1690, who wrote that "Man being born . . . [with] of all the rights and privileges of the law of Nature, **equally with any other man**, or number of men in the world. Or, he could have been citing Algernon Sidney's *Discourses, Concerning Government*, 1698, when he cited others, stating "That Hayward, Blackwood, Barclay, and others who have bravely vindicated the right of kings in this point, do with one consent admit, as an unquestionable truth, and assent unto the natural liberty and **equality of mankind** . . . ."

Like all of the Enlightened political thinkers, Mazzei was very familiar with Roman law and the writings of the third century Roman jurist Domitius Ulpian. Ulpian wrote that "By law of nature all men are equal," nearly eighteen hundred years ago. This concept

was handed down and reinterpreted for centuries and has evolved into its present definition. Mazzei's words may have had an immediate influence on both Mason and Jefferson, but these men were long familiar with a concept that was first heard in ancient Rome and had become a clarion aspect of Western tradition.

By 1778 Jefferson, Patrick Henry, George Mason decided they could use Mazzei's talents in other areas. The Virginian Founders asked Mazzei travel abroad to borrow money from his homeland's leader, the Grand Duke of Tuscany. Governor Jefferson had the Commonwealth of Virginia pay Mazzei six hundred luigi a year from 1779 until and 1784 for his efforts. Mazzei had become a naturalized citizen of Virginia and wanted to serve as a consulate, but he was disappointed.

Mazzei left Virginia for good in 1785. His wife Maria stayed at *Colle* until she died in 1788. She was buried at the family graveyard at *Monticello*. Mazzei eventually gave *Colle* to his wife's daughter (Mazzei's stepdaughter) Maria Margherita Martini, who married Justin Pierre Plumard, Comte De Rieux in Paris in 1780 and settled at *Colle* in 1783. Jefferson later sold *Colle* for Mazzei, but could not get him the money because of Britain's war with America. When Jefferson dies in 1826, he still owed Mazzei's estate over \$7,000.

After some time in Poland, Mazzei retired to Pisa, Italy, in 1792. He married Antonina Tonini in 1796, and fathered his daughter Elisabetta in 1798. Mazzei never did return to America. He established himself as a gardener and died in 1816, three years after completing his memoirs.

**Sources:**

Filippo Mazzei, *Sicilian Culture: The People, The History, The Culture*  
Famous Italians  
[www.sicilianculture.com/people/mazzei.htm](http://www.sicilianculture.com/people/mazzei.htm)

R. Bowman. "Thomas Jefferson and Philip Mazzei." Monticello Research Department,  
October 1997.  
<http://www.monticello.org/reports/people/mazzei.html>

John Chamberlain, "A Reviewer's Notebook: World Citizen." *The Freeman: Ideas on Liberty*. Foundations for Economic Education - April 1982.  
<http://www.fee.org/vnews.php?nid=1132>

## New Jersey Student Learning Standards Social Studies

6.1.12.A.2.a Assess the importance of the intellectual origins of the Foundational Documents (i.e., Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and Bill of Rights) and assess their importance on the spread of democracy around the world.

6.1.12.A.4.b Analyze how ideas found in key documents (i.e., the Declaration of Independence, the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Gettysburg Address) contributed to demanding equality for all.

### English Language Arts

RH.9-10.1 Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information

RH.9-10.2 Determine the theme, central ideas, key information and/or perspective(s) presented in a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas

RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; draw connections between the events, to determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history and the social sciences; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone

RH.9-10.5 Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors in regards to how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts

RH.9-10.8 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claim.

RH.9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic, or of various perspectives, in several primary and secondary sources; analyze how they relate in terms of themes and significant historical concepts..

RH.11-12.1 Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.), to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to develop an understanding of the text as a whole.

RH.11-12.2 Determine the theme, central ideas, information and/or perspective(s) presented in a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events, ideas and/or author's perspective(s) develop over the course of the text.

RH.11-12.3 . Evaluate various perspectives for actions or events; determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain

RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

RH.11-12.5 Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

RH.11-12.6 . Evaluate authors' differing perspectives on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

RH.11-12.8 Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

RH.11-12.9 Evaluate an author's claims, reasoning, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other sources.

RI.9-10.1 Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.) and make relevant connections, to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RI.9-10.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze how it is developed and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.9-10.7 Analyze various perspectives as presented in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

RI.9-10.9 Analyze and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance, (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail", Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, etc.), including how they relate in terms of themes and significant concepts.

W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.9-10.1a Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence

W.9-10.1d Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g. formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

W.9-10.1e Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented.

W.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.9-10.2.a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

W.9-10.2b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

W.9-10.2.c. Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

W.9-10.2.d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

W.9-10.2.e Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g. formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

W.9-10.2.d Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

W.9-10.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well structured event sequences

W.9-10.3.c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent, complete and comprehensive piece.

W.9-10.3.d Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

W.9-10.3.e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

W.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)

W.9-10.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, trying a new approach, or consulting a style manual (such as MLA or APA Style), focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 9–10).

RI.11-12.1 . Accurately cite strong and thorough textual evidence, (e.g., via discussion, written response, etc.), to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferentially, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RI.11-12.2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text, and analyze their development and how they interact to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

RI.11-12.9 Analyze and reflect on (e.g. practical knowledge, historical/cultural context, and background knowledge) documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes and rhetorical features, including primary source documents relevant to U.S. and/or global history.

WHST.11-12.1. Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

WHST.11-12.1.a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

WHST.11-12.1.d. Establish and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the audience and purpose (e.g. formal and objective for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

WHST.11-12.1.e. Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented.

WHST.11-12.2. Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

WHST.11-12.2.a. Introduce a topic and organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

WHST.11-12.2.b. Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

WHST.11-12.2.c. Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

WHST.11-12.2.d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic; convey a knowledgeable stance in a style that responds to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.

WHST.11-12.2.e. Provide a concluding paragraph or section that supports the argument presented

WHST.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST.11-12.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.