

Declaration of Independence

Lesson #2 of the Pursuit of Liberty Module

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What were the reasons for the Declaration of Independence as presented in the document and 1776 discussions about it?

OVERVIEW

The Declaration of Independence is one of the founding and most fundamental documents of the United States. On July 4, 1776, during the American Revolution, the Second Continental Congress adopted the famed document drafted by Thomas Jefferson that pronounced the independence of the thirteen states, previously the Thirteen Colonies. The Declaration was adopted at a point in time when Congress had determined that their grievances against Great Britain were irreconcilable and the majority in Congress agreed that independence was the best solution. The Declaration of Independence was a reaction to years of injustices waged by Great Britain that served to unify the Thirteen Colonies together under mutual frustrations. With Congress' adoption of the Declaration, unity was felt throughout the colonies, and the Thirteen Colonies took an important step toward becoming the United States of America.

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, the students will be able to:

1. Knowledge
 - Describe some of the processes leading to the votes for independence and the writing of the Declaration of Independence.
 - Discuss the importance of the Declaration of Independence in the founding of the United States of America.
2. Comprehension/Application/Analysis
 - Examine and closely read/analyze the Declaration of Independence.
3. Evaluation
 - Evaluate the meaning conveyed by the Declaration of Independence through its structure and phrasing.

ACTIVITIES

1. Use the [Lesson's PowerPoint](#) to explore the context and history; the PowerPoint introduces Essential Questions and lays foundational knowledge about the conflict.
2. Watch the video "[Declaration of Independence In4](#)"
3. As a class, in groups, or individually, have the students read the full text of the [Declaration of Independence](#).

4. Distribute the [primary source worksheet](#)
5. Have the students fill out the primary source worksheet; they can share some of the details that stood out to them with the class.

STANDARDS

Please visit the [Lesson Plan Page](#) and select the “Common Core and NCSS Standards for Social Studies” to view the details.

RESOURCES

[Visit the Lesson Plan Page](#) to find all resources in one convenient place. You’ll find everything mentioned or linked in this Lesson Plan along with additional videos, articles, primary sources, and biographies.

Quick Links

- [PowerPoint](#)
- [Primary Source Summary Worksheet](#)
- [Declaration of Independence](#)
- [Declaration of Independence In4 \(Video\)](#)

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK/ASSESSMENT/ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Option 1: Comparing Declarations

Students can read and compare some of the documents leading to or influencing the Declaration of Independence. Have students note the dates, authors, and similar phrases of the documents. What common ideas exist? What are the major differences of the documents? Students can make a comparison chart, write a short essay, or have a class discussion about their findings.

[Mecklenburg Resolutions](#)

[Lee Resolution](#)

[Virginia Declaration of Rights](#)

[Declaration of Independence](#)

Option 2: Immediate Reactions to the Declaration of Independence

Students can research the immediate reactions of a signer of the Declaration of Independence and the plan to announce the news to the Continental Army soldiers. After noting the hopes, fears, and reactions in the primary sources, students can write a letter, imagining their own reaction to the news in 1776.

[John Adams’s Letter](#)

[John Hancock’s Letter to George Washington](#)