

What Independence Meant

Lesson #3 of the Pursuit of Liberty Module

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did people respond to the Declaration of Independence and interpret its meaning?

OVERVIEW

The Declaration of Independence founded the United States of America and laid a vision for political and societal liberty. However, there were limits to the Declaration of Independence, and the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, and future Constitutional Amendments would further expand and guarantee the concepts of liberty. The reaction to the Declaration of Independence was varied, passionate, and sometimes enthusiastic and exploring the responses to the document and the vision for the pursuit of liberty are key for understanding what independence meant...then and now.

OBJECTIVES

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

1. Knowledge
 - Describe some of the outcomes of the Declaration of Independence, specifically the founding of the United States and a document that outlined a concept for liberty.
 - Discuss the importance of the Declaration of Independence in the pursuit of liberty within the United States and in other nations.
2. Comprehension/Application/Analysis
 - Examine and analyze some of the reactions and responses to the Declaration of Independence.
3. Evaluation
 - Evaluate the foundations of liberty conveyed by the Declaration of Independence and how they have been expanded over the years in the pursuit of liberty.

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 choose two primary sources to study.
 - a. Selected primary sources are available [under the “Primary Source” section this lesson plan page.](#) (“Jefferson and Slavery” and “Declaration of the Rights of Man” will NOT be easy to use in the worksheet activity.)
4. Distribute the [primary source worksheet.](#)

5. Have the students fill out the primary source worksheet; they can share some of the details, comparisons, and conclusions with the rest of 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 In4 \(Video\)](#)

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK/ASSESSMENT/ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Option 1: Europe and the Declaration of Independence

Students can research the reaction of Europeans to the Declaration of Independence. How did the Declaration reflect Enlightenment ideals and inspire others to support the Americans in the Revolutionary War? Students can share their findings as an essay or in a more interactive activity, perhaps including a first-person report with costumes or props.

On the [Lesson Plan Page](#), there are several biographies, primary sources, and secondary sources (articles) which will be a helpful starting point for this research/activity.

Option 2: Pursuit of Liberty Discussion

Students can find definitions for Liberty, and then encourage a class discussion about what Liberty meant in the 1770s. Does it mean something similar or different now? What are responsibilities that come with liberty? What are some of your personal experiences with liberty protected or limited? What do you see as obstacles to the pursuit of liberty? How do we overcome those challenges in the pursuit of liberty?