

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

Lesson Description As the students learn about the steps leading to the American Revolution, they will receive an assignment to distribute a petition to friends and adults asking their viewpoint on five pivotal points on government power today. The students will not learn at this point that the key points are (or are similar to) those found in the Declaration of Independence. The students are to turn in their petitions several days prior to the lessons on the Declaration of Independence begin.

As the students are obtaining signatures on the petition, the teacher will continue teaching about the steps that led to the American Revolution. The students will need to understand the deteriorating relationship between England and the American colonies. They will also need to know the progression of meetings that led to the Second Continental Congress commissioning Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence.

The students will learn the key points of the Declaration of Independence.

The lesson is also written so that if a teacher chooses not to do the petition activity, the class can begin on day two of the lesson.

Objectives *Basic Rights:* Students will be able to (SWBAT) explain the basic rights as outlined in the Declaration of Independence.

Right to Revolution: SWBAT explain why and under what conditions the American colonists felt they could overthrow their governing system and establish a new one; SWBAT evaluate whether the colonists were justified in utilizing their theory of “right of revolution” given the grievances they list in the Declaration.

The Purpose of Government: SWBAT describe the reasons for the establishment of governments according to Thomas Jefferson and other signatories of the Declaration.

The Causes of the Revolutionary War: SWBAT describe the causes of the Revolutionary War, as listed in the Declaration.

Relationship between Religion and Politics: SWBAT evaluate the importance of the appeals to a Creator, Supreme Judge, or Divine Providence in the Declaration.

Essential Questions

1. Among its listing of self-evident truths, the Declaration holds that “all men are created equal.” What role did equality and being equal play in that time period?
2. What role does equality play today in the U. S.?
3. Should the right to revolt have been included in a founding document such as the Declaration of Independence? Give reasons for and against.
4. How did the colonial grievances frame the conditions set forth in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence?
5. Great Britain had provided trade, security and a great deal of independence to the colonies. Did the grievances of the Declaration of Independence justify the colonies in declaring their independence?
6. The colonists saw each colony as an independent unit. How could they be seen as one people? Should they have been seen as one people?

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

7. In looking at the entire Declaration of independence, what are ten of the most important concepts that we might expect to be included in the Constitution that would be written in 1787?

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Target standards)

- Social Studies U.S. History: 8.1 (A), (C)
8th Grade Social Studies TEKS:

(1) History. The student understands traditional historical points of reference in U.S. history through 1877. The student is expected to:

(A) identify the major eras and events in U.S. history through 1877, including ...drafting of the Declaration of Independence...;

(C) explain the significance of the following dates: ... 1776, adoption of the Declaration of Independence;

(4) History. The student understands significant political and economic issues of the revolutionary era. The student is expected to:

(B) explain the roles played by significant individuals during the American Revolution...Thomas Jefferson,;

(C) explain the issues surrounding important events of the American Revolution, including declaring independence;

(15) Government. The student understands the American beliefs and principles reflected in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and other important historic documents. The student is expected to:

(C) identify colonial grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence

U. S. History, High School: HS 1(A), 23 (A)
High School Social Studies TEKS:

(1) History. The student understands the principles included in the Celebrate Freedom Week program. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze and evaluate the text, intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, and identify the full text of the first three paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence;

(23) Citizenship. The student understands efforts to expand the democratic process. The student is expected to:

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

(A) identify and analyze methods of expanding the right to participate in the democratic process, including lobbying, non-violent protesting, litigation, and amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Texas

Social Studies U.S. History

Essential

Knowledge

and Skills

(Prerequisite standards)

8th Grade Social Studies TEKS

(1) History. The student understands traditional historical points of reference in U.S. history through 1877. The student is expected to:

(A) identify the major eras and events in U.S. history through 1877, including colonization through the sequencing of significant individuals, events, and time periods.

(4) History. The student understands significant political and economic issues of the revolutionary era. The student is expected to:

(A) analyze causes of the American Revolution, including the Proclamation of 1763, the Intolerable Acts, the Stamp Act, mercantilism, lack of representation in Parliament, and British economic policies following the French and Indian War.

Vocabulary

- Equal
- Law of Nature
- Right to revolution
- Unalienable rights
- Consent of the governed

Time

Required

Prior to lesson: 10 minute explanation of assignment to be completed and returned prior to the Declaration of Independence lesson

Three or four 45-minute class lessons (depending on whether the teacher includes the petition activity and the time allowed for discussion)

Materials

Required

One copy of Activity 1 run front and back for each student

One copy of Visual 1 (Declaration of Independence) to project as well as run front and back for each student to highlight. Use PDF or

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

Highlighters

Pencils

Chart Paper

Markers in at least 10 different colors

Procedure

Engage:

Early

homework

assignment

One to two weeks prior to the lesson, distribute one copy of Activity 1. The students are *not* to know that this activity deals with the Declaration of Independence. Have the students read the directions and then discuss how to complete the activity. The petition is a paraphrase of the main points of the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. The goal of the activity is to have the students begin to discuss concepts in a modern sense that they will later deal with in the classroom from a 1776 perspective. The key is that the petitions need to be completed ahead of the introduction of the Declaration of Independence to the class so that the

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

responses are based on current viewpoints. Allow several days for the students to turn in the petition so that students who are absent or who tend to be late with assignments are empowered to fully participate. The teacher can assign a grade based on completion because there are no right or wrong answers.

After collecting the petitions over several days and providing completion credit, begin the lesson.

Engage: First day of lesson Think, Pair, Share
Think: Return the petitions to the students. Ask them to review the responses that their signers provided. Ask the students to summarize the reasons for/against the petition in a paragraph of at least 5 sentences.

Explore: Pair: Have students work with one or two others to discuss what people believe about each of the five points. As a group, summarize the overall beliefs of the signers. Also, have the group

Explain:

Elaborate:

Evaluate:

Alternative Activity for Day One

Engage

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

Day 2: total the votes for and against each of the five points. The students are to Include their own votes in the total, too.

Share: Have the students move their seats back to a general classroom position. Do a quick class wide summation of the votes for each of the five points. Post the votes on the board in a chart format.

Engage further:

As a teacher facilitated dialogue, discuss each of the five points. What were the views of the people questioned and why? How did people understand each of the five points? Were there any important disagreements as to what any of them meant?

Have the students write a paragraph comparing their views with others in the small group and/or class.

Explore:

Rather than asking students to have others complete the petition, have the students simply look at the petition in class. They individually respond in writing to the five points. The teacher then follows the above lesson design.

The teacher may want to keep a running tally of the votes on a chart that can be written on the board or projected as a PowerPoint.

5 Points	All Class Totals For	All Class Totals Against	Number voting for By class period					Number voting against By class period				
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												

Project the chart showing classroom votes or write on the board.

Have each student record three things they noticed about the viewpoints based on class period votes. *(The answers will typically revolve around which points the respondents supported and disagreed with).*

Ask students why they believe the people responded as they did. *(Answers will vary).*

Have the class discuss what they noticed about the votes. Were they consistent all day long or did they change? To what do they attribute the similarities and differences of the responses?

Ask each student to record three things they know about the Declaration of Independence. Next, the teacher facilitates a short discussion allowing students to share what they know. The key summary of points include that this was a document written by the colonists and sent to King George III to announce their intention to overthrow the British control of them.

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

Explain and Elaborate:

Ask the students if they know who was the primary author of the Declaration of Independence. (*Thomas Jefferson*)

Explain to the students that Parliament actually held much of the real power in making decisions by this time period. They were the ones voting on the various acts that many colonists felt were taxation without representation. So, why would they address King George in writing the Declaration of Independence? (*They felt that there might be worse repercussions by writing to Parliament rather than the king. This is the first time they are actually making a statement against monarchies.*)

Next, distribute to each student a copy of the Declaration of Independence, a highlighter and a pencil. As you move through the lesson, students may begin to see the similarity between the petition they completed and the points of the Declaration of Independence.

Project this statement on the board:

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

Ask the students to discuss with one or two partners the meaning of this first statement in the Declaration of Independence. Each student writes notes in the margin of the handout.

As a class, discuss the meaning. (*The colonists asserted that they were justified in declaring independence from Great Britain. The justification came from the Laws of Nature and Nature's God which are a higher order than human law.*)

Show paragraph two on the board. Ask students to individually underline the 5 rights that the Declaration says that people have.

Next, move the students into groups of three or four and ask them to share their answers. They discuss their answers as to the people's rights as outlined by the Declaration of Independence. As they discuss, have them erase those statements they no longer categorize as rights and underline new key phrases as they learn from their partners.

As a class, the teacher uses questioning to facilitate the student discussion. There may need to be some short teacher "lecture" that lasts about 1 to 2 minutes to provide background such as about John Locke's beliefs that impacted Thomas Jefferson's writing of the Declaration of Independence. As the students finalize the list of 5 rights, have them highlight the answers. They can write their notes in the margin surrounding the concepts.

What is the underlying basis for the rights claimed by the colonists? After the students find the answer, project the quote on the board:

- *All men are created equal*

How will this belief lead to the rights of the colonists? (*Notice that the colonists do not ground their rights on their descent from Englishmen with rights, but rather that they*

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

are granted them by Nature's God. This allows them to claim rights that are not admitted by their rulers in Great Britain).

Background information: This statement has also raised many questions dealing with the slave trade. Thomas Jefferson was conflicted about the issue of slavery. Jefferson owned slaves and fathered children with one of his slaves. He personally understood the financial need for plantation owners to have slaves. He was concerned that freeing the slaves could lead to a conflict between the slaves and the owners. Jefferson also thought that the freed slaves would have no means to support themselves while slavery did provide work and food for them. For more information, see: <http://www.crf-usa.org/foundations-of-our-constitution/natural-rights.html>.

What are the five rights proposed in the Declaration of Independence?

Essential Questions: Have the students record their thoughts and then have the class discuss the following two questions.

Question 1: Among its list of self-evident truths, the Declaration asserts that "all men are created equal." What role did equality and being equal play in that time period?

Question 2: What role does equality play today in the U. S.?

The teacher will facilitate a discussion on these two questions.

- *Rights 1 to 3: Unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*
Project the quote in the overhead:

That they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Ask the students what un means (*not*), alien (*foreign to us*) and then how this "translates" into unalienable. (*It means that something cannot be made foreign. It cannot be taken away. So, these rights could not be taken away*). Note: There are many who believe that unalienable is not a real word. In fact, Locke called these inalienable rights.

Under what authority do they have these rights? (*Their Creator grants these rights. Again, these rights stem from a higher authority than the monarch*). The idea of Divine Right of kings to rule had been discarded by Great Britain and certainly was not believed by the colonists.

Explain to the students that John Locke used the term property rather than happiness. His definition of property included ownership of property, but it also included a person's right over himself, his decisions for his life, health and happiness. Ask the students why they think that Jefferson substituted the term happiness. (*Perhaps since all people in*

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

colonial America did not have the right to own property, he did not use that term. Also, happiness is a broader concept that includes a person's control over his own self).

- *Right 4: Consent of the Governed*
Project this quote for student viewing:

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,

Ask the students what right is included here and what that means. *(Because men begin a government and give power to it, the power comes from the men. Thus, the leaders only rule with consent from the governed. This involves either every individual directly helping to make the decisions, as in a pure democracy, or electing people to do so, as in a republic).*

Background: John Locke believed that people were born into a state of nature in which they were free. Because people might use that freedom to infringe on rights of others, people need a government to maintain order and protect life, liberty and property. To obtain this protection, there must be a contract between the people and the government. The people must agree to who will make those decisions and how decisions will be made.

- *Right 5: Right to Revolt*
Project the quote on the board:

That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.

Before asking questions, have the students in small groups number the different components of this statement. *(Precise numberings will vary.)*

In their small groups, ask the students to summarize the points. *(An answer could be: People have the right to dissolve a government when it becomes destructive but only if the abuses are severe and they have attempted to make changes through a proper chain of actions. However, citizens often allow the government to overstep their bounds without taking action. They need to take steps along the way to resist government action peacefully. Furthermore, light and transient abuses do not give the citizens the*

Evaluate

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

right to revolt, but only a long train of abuses. They are to institute a new government that will ensure their safety, security and happiness).

Ask the students to discuss ideas on how people can change government policies prior to needing to revolt. (*Vote, speak before elected officials, send letters and emails, write letters to the editor, discuss issues with friends and encourage them to email, be active in a political party, etc.*)

Engage Day 3

Extension discussion: What actions did protesters during the Vietnam War take? What actions have Tea Party members taken? Did these actions involve a revolt or methods to change the government prior to a revolt? Explain your answer. (*Although there was some violence used by (and against) the Vietnam protesters, people in both movements have utilized more peaceful means through picketing, speaking out, using the power of the ballot, etc.*).

Explore

Distribute Activity 2. In small groups, discuss how they would complete the chart. Then, have a class discussion: How did the petition with five points relate to the Declaration of Independence? Are the items in the petition the exact equivalents of the items in the Declaration of Independence? Why or why not?

<i>Petition</i>	<i>Declaration of Independence</i>
preserve their lives by all necessary means	life
enjoy freedom with a minimum of governmental restraints	liberty
seek their own happiness as they see fit	pursuit of happiness
choose all policy makers (lawmakers, judges, president, governor, county officials and mayors) for the federal, state, local levels of government	consent of the governed
overthrow the government if after a series of attempts to get the government to change, the government refuses to do as the people say	revolution after a long train of abuses

Remind the students that they were asked to determine which of the items listed on the petition they agreed with and which they disagreed with.

Have the students discuss the chart showing their answers. Ask them if their views have changed or stayed the same? Explain their answers. (*Answers will vary.*)

Explain

Essential Questions: Have the students record their thoughts and then have the class discuss the following two questions.

Question 3: Should the right to revolt have been included in a founding document such as the Declaration of Independence? Give reasons for and against.

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

Question 4: How did the colonial grievances frame the conditions set forth in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence?

Elaborate

The teacher explains: Prior to reading the Declaration of Independence, the class discussed concerns that many colonists had with Great Britain. Work with a partner to list 3 to 4 of the grievances the colonists had. (*Answers will vary.*)

Have the students call out several of the grievances. Then, explain: Today the class will explore the grievances against Great Britain that Jefferson and the signers believed needed to be stated.

Have students work in groups of 3 to 4. Have them mark the grievances (paragraph 3 of the Declaration of Independence) that they feel needed to be corrected by Great Britain.

Questions to Explore: The same 3 to 4 students will continue to work in the group for the next segment. Each group receives one piece of chart paper and a marker with a different color from other groups in the classroom. The group will decide the answers to the question below together and record them on chart paper. The students put their names at the bottom of the chart paper. Please note: students are not to look up the Constitution. They are simply telling what they think should be done. At the end of the activity, the teacher will keep the chart paper by class through the discussions of the Constitution and Bill of Rights. In several weeks, they will compare their answers written today with those established by the founding fathers in the Constitution and Bill of Rights).

Activity Question to be projected for student viewing: In looking at the entire Declaration of independence, choose 10 grievances you feel gave the colonists the right to revolt AND that should be solved in the Constitution that will later be written for the United States. Write a summary of the grievance and then how to correct the grievance.

For example (and this cannot be included on the chart paper as one of the 10)--

Declaration of Independence grievance: taxation without representation

Proposed Constitutional Solution: Only officials elected by the people at the local, state and national levels can set taxes to be paid by the citizens.

Evaluate/End

Allow the students time to complete the chart paper assignment. Post the chart papers around the room.

Future Lesson

Gallery Walk About:

Have these three symbols on the board:

1. + (plus sign) which means that our group included this one on our paper, too. We agree
2. - (minus sign) We did not feel it necessary to include
3. = (equals sign) We also think this important but did not include in our list

Each group walks to a different chart paper with their specific colored marker. As they read the 10 items on each group's chart paper, they mark each comment with one of the three symbols listed above.

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

Allowing one to two minutes at each paper, the teacher directs the students when it is time to move. Let the students review 3 to 5 papers and then have a seat.

Essential Question:

Have the students work in their chart group to answer the Essential Questions below. They are to write a letter to the future government and people of the United States.

In paragraph one, the group answers question 5.

In paragraph two, the group answers question 6.

In paragraph three, the group answers question 7.

In paragraph four, the group summarizes their answers in three or more sentences.

Question 5: Great Britain had provided trade, security and a great deal of independence to the colonies. Did the grievances of the Declaration of Independence justify the colonies in declaring their independence? Why or why not?

Question 6: The colonies saw each as an independent unit. How could they be seen as one people? Should they have been seen as one people? Why or why not?

Question 7: In looking at the entire Declaration of independence, what are ten of the most important concepts that we might expect to be included in the Constitution that would be written in 1787? The students can use any of their ten from the chart paper plus other ideas they learned from other group's chart papers.

After putting their names on the four-paragraph paper, the students turn the paper into the teacher. The teacher will grade based on their support of their statement. The answers will vary and are acceptable as long as they support their argument. These papers are intended to be short and to the point.

As the ticket out of the door, each student simply summarizes three things they learned about the Declaration of Independence.

The teacher keeps the chart papers that dealt with student suggestions for the Constitution. After the students have studied the Constitution and Bill of Rights, return the chart paper to the students. Have them mark where they found these items mentioned by the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

Next, the students find five more items included in the Constitution that they did not record but that were based on grievances by the colonists. Record where they are located in the Constitution/Bill of Rights, the grievance and the protection as listed in the Constitution/Bill of Rights.

OR, the students review the comments made by people to the petitions. Find three statements in the Constitution/Bill of Rights that support their viewpoints.

The teacher then leads a discussion of what the students have found.

Grade Level: 8 and High School Title: Declaration of Independence

Final questions to Explore: Have the students write down their thoughts on the following questions and then discuss as a class.

1. Were the colonists justified in revolting against Great Britain and declaring their independence? Why or why not?
2. The colonists signed the Declaration of Independence as one people. They established the Articles of Confederation as a confederation and then agreed upon the U.S. Constitution as a federal system of government. Could they be seen as one people? Why or why not?

Sources

John Locke's beliefs: source: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-political/>

Background for Thomas Jefferson's writing of the Declaration of Independence:
<http://www.crf-usa.org/foundations-of-our-constitution/natural-rights.html>