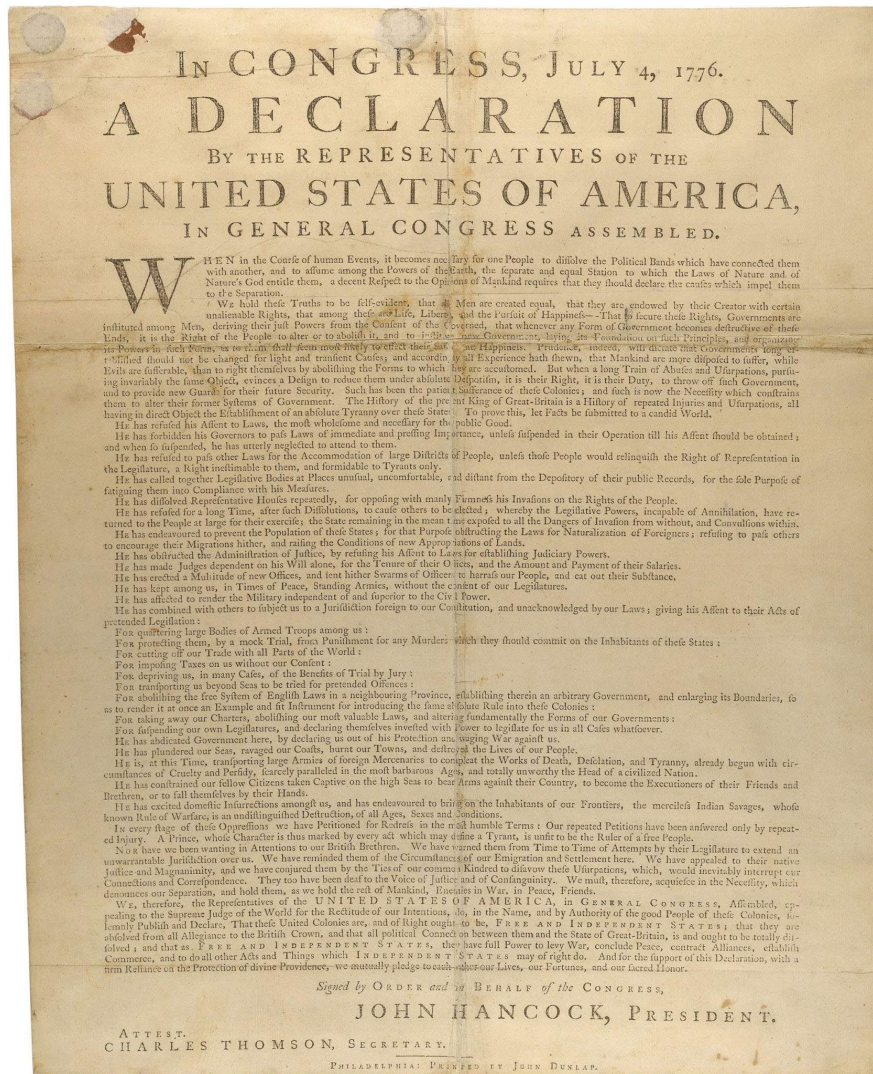


Activity 1: Declaration of Independence Grievances



Activity 1: Declaration of Independence Grievances

Guiding Questions

- How did the Declaration of Independence use persuasive language to influence its readers?
- How has the Declaration of Independence's language continued to inspire Americans throughout history?

National Standards

National Center for History in the Schools History Standards

- *Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1754 - 1820s)*
 - *Standard 1: The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory*
 - *Standard 1B. The student understands the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence.*

National Standards for Civics and Government

- *NSCG.5-8.2.A.1* The American idea of constitutional government. Students should be able to explain the essential ideas of American constitutional government.
- *NSCG.5-8.2.C.1* American identity. Students should be able to explain the importance of shared political values and principles to American society.
- *NSCG.5-8.2.D.1* Fundamental values and principles. Students should be able to explain the meaning and importance of the fundamental values and principles of American constitutional democracy.

Common Core State Standards

- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.*
- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.*
- *CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.*

College, Career, & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- *D2.Civ.8.6-8. Analyze ideas and principles contained in the founding documents of the United States, and explain how they influence the social and political system.*
- *D2.His.11.6-8. Use other historical sources to infer a plausible maker, date, place of origin, and intended audience for historical sources where this information is not easily identified.*

Educating for American Democracy Roadmap

- *HDQ4.3:A. How did ideas and debates about rights shape the American Revolution and drafting of the U.S. Constitution?*
- *HDQ4.3:B. How did ideas and debates about power shape the American Revolution and drafting of the U.S. Constitution?*

Historical Context

The Declaration of Independence: How Did it Happen?¹

The Revolution Begins

In the early 1770s, more and more colonists became convinced that Parliament intended to take away their freedom. In fact, the Americans saw a pattern of increasing oppression and corruption happening all around the world. Parliament was determined to bring its unruly American subjects to heel. Britain began to prepare for war in early 1775. The first fighting broke out in April in Massachusetts. In August, the King declared the colonists “in a state of open and avowed rebellion.” For the first time, many colonists began to seriously consider cutting ties with Britain. The publication of Thomas Paine’s stirring pamphlet *Common Sense* in early 1776 lit a fire under this previously unthinkable idea. The movement for independence was now in full swing.

Choosing Independence

The colonists elected delegates to attend a Continental Congress that eventually became the governing body of the union during the Revolution. Its second meeting convened in Philadelphia in 1775. The delegates to Congress adopted strict rules of secrecy to protect the cause of American liberty and their own lives. In less than a year, most of the delegates abandoned hope of reconciliation with Britain. On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee introduced a resolution “that these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states.” They appointed a Committee of Five to write an announcement explaining the reasons for independence. Thomas Jefferson, who chaired the committee and had established himself as a bold and talented political writer, wrote the first draft.

Writing the Declaration

On June 11, 1776, Jefferson holed up in his Philadelphia boarding house and began to write. He borrowed freely from existing documents like the Virginia Declaration of Rights and incorporated accepted ideals of the Enlightenment. Jefferson later explained that “he was not striving for originality of principal or sentiment.” Instead, he hoped his words served as an “expression of the American mind.” Less than three weeks after he’d begun, he presented his draft to Congress. He was not pleased when Congress “mangled” his composition by cutting and changing much of his carefully chosen wording. He was especially sorry they removed the part blaming King George III for the slave trade, although he knew the time wasn’t right to deal with the issue.

Declaring Independence

On July 2, 1776, Congress voted to declare independence. Two days later, it ratified the text of the Declaration. John Dunlap, official printer to Congress, worked through the night to set the Declaration in type and print approximately 200 copies. These copies, known as the Dunlap Broad sides, were sent to various committees, assemblies, and commanders of the Continental troops. The Dunlap Broad sides weren’t signed, but John Hancock’s name appears in large type at the bottom. One copy crossed the Atlantic, reaching King George III months later. The official British response scolded the “misguided Americans” and “their extravagant and inadmissible Claim of Independency.”

Educational Activity

Facts Submitted to a Candid World: A Close Reading of the Declaration of Independence

In this activity, middle school students will explore the Declaration of Independence through a close reading. They will explore the different versions and sections of the Declaration of Independence with particular attention paid to the Preamble and the selections from the list of grievances. Estimated time: 45-60 minutes.

A digital version of this activity is available on DocsTeach, the online tool for teaching with documents from the National Archives. The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.

The screenshot shows a digital interface for an educational activity. At the top, a purple header bar contains the text: "Begin this activity by observing the physical appearance of the...". Below this, a white box contains instructions: "Begin this activity by observing the physical appearance of the Engrossed Declaration of Independence, the Print of the Declaration of Independence, and the Dunlap Broadside. Consider the following questions regarding the documents and type your answers in the next available response box." followed by three numbered questions: "1. How would you describe this document to someone who wasn't looking at it?", "2. What do you notice? What specific details stand out?", and "3. What are the major similarities and differences?". Below the questions is a "Next >" button. The interface then shows a list of document options: "Dunlap Broadside", "Print of the Declaration of Independence", and "The Declaration of Independence", each with a radio button. Below these is a "Enter Your Response" button. The next step is indicated by a blue circle with an 'i' and the text: "Now, we're going to examine the text of the Declaration...". This is followed by another "Enter Your Response" button. The final step shown is a blue circle with an 'i' and the text: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men...".

Teaching Instructions

This activity can be used during a unit on the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, or while exploring key American ideals and values from our Founding documents. For grades 6-8. Approximate time needed is 45-60 minutes. Students can complete the activity individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

Begin the activity by asking students what they already know about the American Revolution in general and the Declaration of Independence specifically. Ask students to take 60 seconds to brainstorm people, places, events, and concepts they associate with these terms in small groups or pairs.

After discussing their ideas as a class, introduce the activity. Inform students that they will be doing a close reading of the Declaration of Independence, paying particular attention to the Preamble and the list of specific grievances. But first they will be looking at the [Engrossed Declaration of Independence](#) and a [Print of the Declaration of Independence](#) as an object/artifact. Tell students to focus on the following questions:

- How would you describe this document to someone who wasn't looking at it?
- What do you notice? What specific details stand out?
- What are the major similarities and differences?

¹Available online at <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration/how-did-it-happen>

After sharing their observations, tell students they are now going to analyze the language of the Declaration of Independence as a persuasive argument. They will be looking at short sections of the document. Model analyzing the Declaration of Independence by focusing attention on the first selection as a class. Following this whole class discussion, the rest of the activity can be completed individually, in pairs, or in small groups and/or as a jigsaw activity where different students explore an individual section of the document. Direct students to answer the following questions using the provided [graphic organizers](#).

- How did the authors use language to persuade people to support their case for independence?
- What are some specific examples of words or phrases used to influence people to support their case for independence?

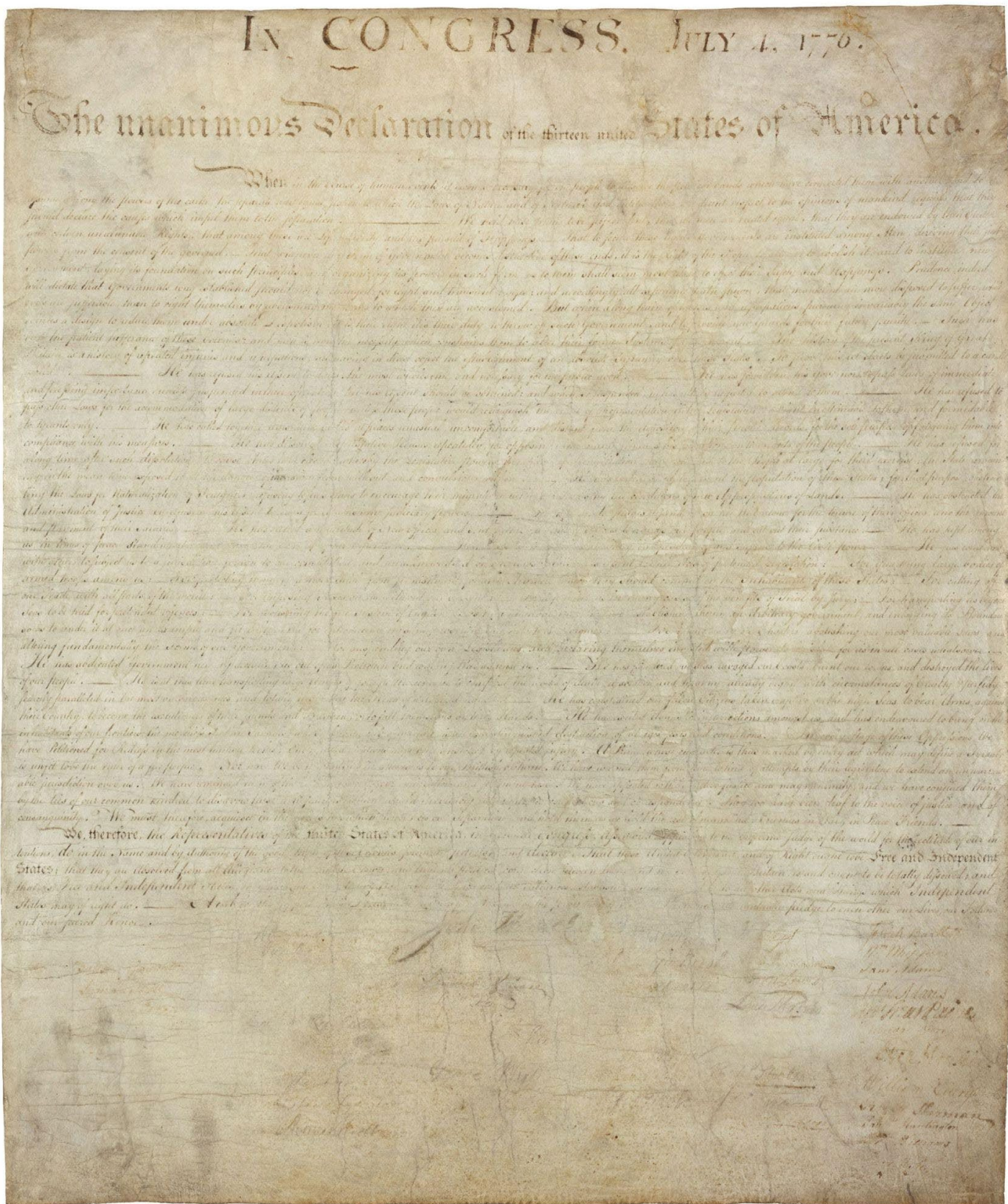
After reading the selections, ask students to enter their answer in the graphic organizer, or to conduct a turn-and-talk with a partner to share their phrase and word selections and explain why they were chosen. Ask students to volunteer their phrase and word selections, with explanations, for the rest of the class. As students share, ask if other students selected the same phrase or word, and facilitate a conversation about the reasons why specific phrases and words were selected.

Direct students to selections from the list of grievances included in the Declaration of Independence. Inform students that they will be analyzing examples of grievances, looking for persuasive language, and consider how the complaints could be reworded in a more neutral way.

- What specific words might have been chosen to appeal to people's emotions?
- How could these grievances be stated in a more neutral way?

After exploring the persuasive language of the Preamble and the list of grievances in the Declaration of Independence, answer the following:

- Which argument and appeal did you find most convincing? Why?
- Which specific grievances do you feel were most convincing? Why?
- What specific words or phrases stand out in the Declaration of Independence? How have these phrases shaped American values and ideals?



Declaration of Independence

<https://docsteach.org/documents/document/the-declaration-of-independence>

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

Button Gwinnett
 Lyman Hall
 Geo. Walton.

Wm Hooper
Joseph Hewes,
John Penn

Edward Rutledge).

Tho^o Weyman & Jun^r
 Thomas Lynch Jun^r
 Arthur Middleton

Samuel Chace
Wm. Paro
Thos. Stone
Charles Lowell of Lowell Ma

George Wythe
Richard Henry
Th Jefferson
Wm Harrison
Th Nelson jr
Francis Lightfoot Lee
Carver Braxton

Rob^t Morris
 Benjamin Rush
 Ben^l Franklin
 John Mott

Geo. Young
Jas. Smith
Geo. Taylor
James Wilson
Geo. Tapp
Casar Ramsey
Gordon
Thos. Drake

Phil. Livingston
Saml. Lewis
Lewis Morris

Rich. Stockton
 Jas. Witherspoon
 Jas. Hopkinson 1782
 John Hart
 Abner Clark

Josiah Bartlett
Wm Whipple
Sam Adams
John Adams
Bart Lysaght

Elbridge Gerry
 Stephen A.
 William Ellery
 Roger Sherman
 Sam^l Huntington
 M^{rs} Williams
 Oliver Wolcott
 Matthew T.

<https://docsteach.org/documents/document/print-of-the-declaration-of-independence>

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.
A DECLARATION
 BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
 IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

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.

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—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, 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. Such has been the patient Sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great-Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inestimable to them, and formidable to Tyrants only.

He has called together Legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of fatiguing them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasions on the Rights of the People.

He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean Time exposed to all the Dangers of Invasion from without, and Convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries.

He has erected a Multitude of new Offices, and sent hither Swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their Substance.

He has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies, without the Consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us, in many Cases, of the Benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended Offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary Government, and enlarging its Boundaries, so as to render it at once an Example and fit Instrument for introducing the same absolute Rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our Seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People.

He is, at this Time, transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the Works of Death, Desolation, and Tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the Executioners of their Friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions we have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble Terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated Injury. A Prince, whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.

Now have we been wanting in Attentions to our British Brethren. We have warned them from Time to Time of Attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here. We have appealed to their native Justice and Magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the Ties of our common Kindred to disavow these Usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our Connections and Correspondence. They too have been deaf to the Voice of Justice and of Consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the Necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of Mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace, Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in GENERAL CONGRESS, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World for the Rectitude of our Intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly Publish and Declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political Connection between them and the State of Great-Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which INDEPENDENT STATES may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

Signed by ORDER and in BEHALF of the CONGRESS,

JOHN HANCOCK, PRESIDENT.

ATTEST.
CHARLES THOMSON, SECRETARY.

PHILADELPHIA: PRINTED BY JOHN DUNLAP.

Dunlap Broadside

<https://docsteach.org/documents/document/dunlap-broadside>

Declaration of Independence Preamble Graphic Organizer

Transcript	Vocabulary	Persuasive Language and Word Choice
The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America, 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.	unanimous: in full agreement dissolve: break down impel: force	
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.	self-evident: obvious endowed: supplied unalienable: untransferable	
--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --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.	instituted: created deriving: getting consent: permission	
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 .	prudence: caution dictate: order transient: short-term disposed: willing abolishing: ending accustomed: often used	
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.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government.	usurpations: taking by force invariably: always evinces: reveals despotism: oppressive power constrains: restricts	
The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.	candid: open and honest	

Declaration of Independence Grievances Graphic Organizer

Grievances	Persuasive Language	Summarize Grievances
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. • He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. • He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance. • He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures. • He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power. 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: • For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: • For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: • For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: • For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury: • For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: • For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. • He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us. • He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people. • He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation. 		

Supplemental Educational Resources

The following educational activities are designed to support student learning. These activities are not required. Feel free to facilitate only the activities that you think would be most helpful for your students.

1. Certain Unalienable Rights (Civics for All of US Distance Learning Program)

Students will explore the Declaration of Independence as an artifact, a primary source, and a persuasive text. Students explore the document's important sections, and evaluate the persuasive elements of the Declaration of Independence.

Visit <https://civics.archives.gov/programs/certain-unalienable-rights> for more details.



2. Key American Ideals Vocabulary Activity

In this activity, students will define key vocabulary words that relate to some of the American values and ideals that are present in the Declaration of Independence. Estimated time: 45 minutes

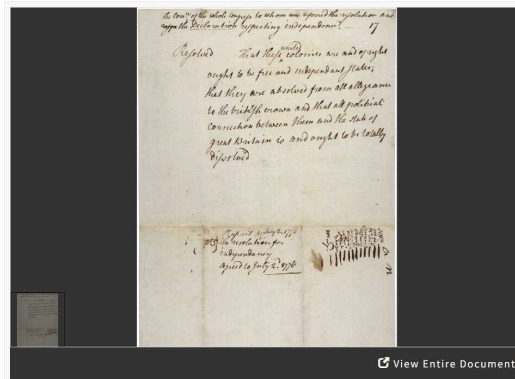
Inform students that many of these concepts have their origin in the Enlightenment (a 17th and 18th century intellectual and philosophical movement based on improving society through the use of reason) and still represent some of the key values of American social and political life.

These vocabulary terms can include: natural rights, individual rights, natural law, liberty, equality, popular sovereignty, limited government, representative government, democracy, social contract theory, separation of powers, due process. After defining these terms, ask students to explain ways that these values are expressed in contemporary life.

3. Analyzing the Adoption of the Lee Resolution DocsTeach Activity

In this activity, students will carefully analyze the Adoption of the Lee Resolution from July 2, 1776 that stated that "these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states." Estimated time: 20 minutes.

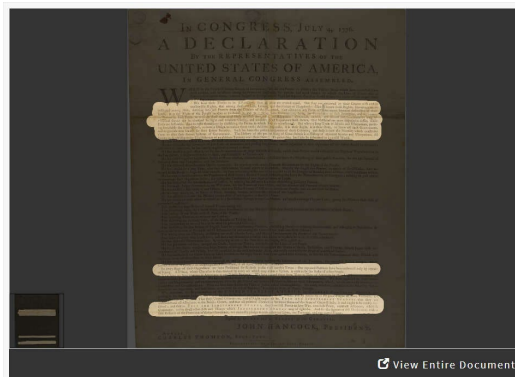
The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.



4. Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence DocsTeach Activity

In this activity, students will examine excerpts from the Dunlap Broadside, the first printed and distributed copy of the Declaration of Independence. Estimated time: 20 minutes.

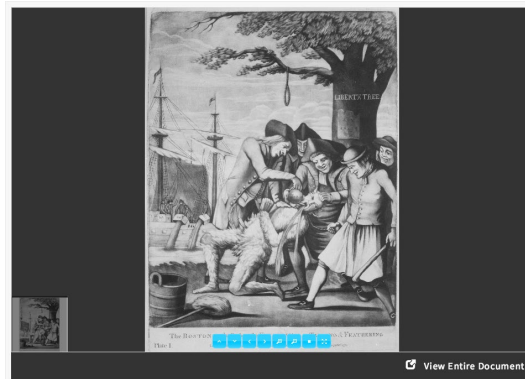
The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.



5. Road to Revolution: Patriotism or Treason? DocsTeach Activity

Students will analyze the causes of the American Revolution and examine them from various points of view. Perspectives include the Sons of Liberty, loyalists living in the colonies, patriots, and British citizens living in England. Estimated time: 20 minutes.

The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.



6. To Sign or Not to Sign DocsTeach Activity

Students will consider the arguments made by members of the Continental Congress regarding whether or not to sign the Declaration of Independence. Estimated time: 30 minutes.

The [teacher page](#) provides an overview of the activity and suggested teaching instructions. Students can access the [student page](#) on their devices or you can project or screen share the activity with the whole class.

