

The Great British Breakup: Independence is Declared!

Declaration of Independence

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Grade Level	5th Grade	**Time Frame**	4 class periods
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	45 minute sessions
Course	U.S. History		

Essential Question

What was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence? Why does the Declaration of Independence matter to me? Who signed the Declaration of Independence?

Summary

This lesson introduces the Declaration of Independence in a fun and engaging way. The lesson explores the reason for the document, as well as modern day relevance. It also helps students to see how this document has guided our government, applies to equal rights, and how conflicts are handled. This lesson touches primarily on equality of individuals.

Snapshot

Engage: Students listen to a breakup letter presumably between two people. Students learn later that the letter was written to Great Britain from America.

Explore: Students read the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. They discuss the modern-day relevance of the document and work through the language of the paragraph.

Explain: Students learn what the word grievance means and write their own grievances in letter form.

Extend: Students watch a video about the Founding Fathers and discuss difficulties they faced.

Evaluate: Using the strategy H.I.P.P. students write about the events happening at the time the Declaration of Independence was created, as well as who the author is addressing, the role in society the signers of the Declaration had, and the purpose of the document.

Extension II: Students write the Declaration of Independence in modern day language and present their writing to their peers.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies Practices (5th Grade))

5.3.2: Analyze the ideals stated in the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson and adopted July 4, 1776, used to:
5.3.2B: declare the equality of all individuals
5.3.2D: establish the principle of self-government and consent of the governed

Attachments

- Declaration of Independence Breakup Letter-The Great British Breakup.docx
- Declaration of Independence Breakup Letter-The Great British Breakup.pdf
- Declaration of Independence-The Great British Breakup.docx
- Declaration of Independence-The Great British Breakup.pdf
- Grievances for Research-The Great British Breakup.docx
- Grievances for Research-The Great British Breakup.pdf
- H.I.P.P.-The Great British Breakup.docx
- H.I.P.P.-The Great British Breakup.pdf
- Paragraph 2 of The Declaration of Independence-The Great British Breakup.docx
- Paragraph 2 of The Declaration of Independence-The Great British Breakup.pdf
- Preamble to the Declaration of Independence-The Great British Breakup.docx
- Preamble to the Declaration of Independence-The Great British Breakup.pdf

Materials

- Preamble to the Declaration of Independence (attached; 1 per student)
- Declaration of Independence Breakup Letter (attached; 1 per student)
- Paragraph 2 of The Declaration of Independence (attached; 1 per student)
- The Declaration of Independence (attached; 1 per student)
- Grievances for Research (attached; 1 per student)
- H.I.P.P. (attached; 1 per student)
- Lined Paper
- Pencils

Engage

Teacher's Note

To pique student interest, read aloud to the class the **Declaration of Independence Breakup Letter**. Do **NOT** tell students the title or anything else about the letter. The letter is written as if from one student to another. You may use the attached sample letter or write an original letter. If you write your own letter, be sure to include language (modern day slang) that students are familiar with.

Read the letter to the class. After reading the letter aloud, allow time for students to react and discuss the letter with an Elbow Partner. Students may respond with comments such as, *"Who would write a letter like this?"* or *"They must have done something really bad."*

After a brief whole class reaction and discussion, explain to students that the breakup letter was actually written to Great Britain from the American Colonies. Ask students to think about the letter again with this new information and have a short discussion.

Explore

Declaration of Independence

You will find three attachments of the Declaration of Independence to be used as needed: The entire document, the 2nd paragraph, and the preamble.

Read aloud to students Paragraph 2 of The Declaration of Independence, (*"We hold these truths to be self evident..."*) Give students a few minutes to think about what they heard. Ask students if they have ever heard any of this before. If so, what part(s)?

Have students read the paragraph silently to themselves and highlight two or three important topics they want to discuss. Now have students participate in a Think-Pair-Share to discuss the points they each highlighted. Have a whole class discussion focusing on the main ideas and concepts the students noticed.

Create a chart as a class and/or in student notebooks focusing on the phrases in this second paragraph. The chart may look something like this sample chart.

Sample Chart	
Original Words	**Meaning in our words**
We hold these truths to be self-evident	We think these are truths that people know about.
That all men are created equal	All people are created the same
Cont....	

As you work through the language of the paragraph guide the discussions to help students think about the concept of equality.

Questions to encourage discussion:

- What does the word equality mean to you?
- How many of you noticed the paragraph mentioned equality?
- Are there any other words or phrases that stood out to you?
- Did equality mean something different when this document was written than it does now?

The Video

Preview this video ahead of time. You may want to use parts or all of the video. It features a reading of the Declaration of Independence from inside Independence Hall in Philadelphia by a group of distinguished actors, including Morgan Freeman, Kathy Bates, Benicio Del Toro, Michael Douglas, Whoopi Goldberg, Graham Greene, Ming-Na, Edward Norton, Winona Ryder, Mel Gibson, Kevin Spacey, and Renee Zellweger. *This Video is part of the Declaration of Independence Road Trip and is presented with the kind permission of the Lear Family Foundation, which retains all associated copyrights. Copyright © 1999-2022*

Show and discuss at the point in the lesson that is most appropriate for your class.

90 minutes

Explain

Teacher's Prep

Download a copy of the *Grievances for Research* handout. This has nine selected grievances with a place for students to record information. The nine listed are accessible for 5th graders and limited in number to prevent overwhelming students. Insert rows in the existing table to add grievances if necessary. Plan to either give each student a copy of the Grievances for Research handout or to cut the handout into strips so each group or pair of students receives one grievance to research.

Discuss the word *grievance*.

Ask students to think of at least one thing they want to complain about. Give them a piece of paper and explain that they should write their complaint in letter format. Tell students that the letters can be written anonymously and may be read out loud by the teacher. When the letters are finished, have students crumple the letters up and place them in a container. After all letters are turned in, pick a few at random to read aloud. Allow time for discussion and debates. Mention that while everyone's grievances are relevant, not everyone will agree with one other. At the end of this activity, direct the discussion back to how some people agreed, even though it wasn't their own complaint. Talk about agreeing/disagreeing and how the signers of the Declaration of Independence handled conflict.

Give students the following questions to ponder and/or write their thoughts about in their notebooks.

- *What were the colonists complaining about?*
- *Why did they think they wanted and deserved to be free from Great Britain?*

Pass out **Grievances for Research** to students.

When students have completed their research, have each group present and discuss their findings with the class. Students add their information to a class chart.

Suggested websites for student research:

- https://kids.kiddle.co/United_States_Declaration_of_Independence
- https://www.americaslibrary.gov/aa/jefferson/aa_jefferson_declar_1.html
- https://bensguide.gpo.gov/
- https://www.ushistory.org/

Extend

Explain to students that the people who signed the document had a lot to lose. Have students think about what they learned in this lesson and in past lessons about the colonies and then ask; What do you think the signers of the Declaration of Independence might have been at risk of losing? (ie. money, farms, family, etc.).

After discussing the purpose of the Declaration of Independence, process of signing, and language of the document, have students watch the Founding Fathers video.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=4XyyHQ_ritw

Have students compare and contrast the Declaration of Independence with modern day equality movements such as BLM, Women's Rights, LGBTQ.

Evaluate

Pass out the **H.I.P.P.** and the **Declaration of Independence** handouts. Discuss the H.I.P.P. strategy and expectations of how they are to respond.

1. **H** is for historical context: What events are occurring at the time of the document's creation?
2. **I** is for intended audience: Whom is the author addressing in the document?
3. **P** is for point of view: What is the author's perspective? What role in society does the author have?
4. **P** is for purpose: What is the author trying to accomplish with the document?

Have students share their thinking in small groups and allow time for students to add and revise their thoughts.

Additional Extension: Writing a Modern Day Declaration

Activity Option #1: Have students write about the modern-day relevance of the Declaration of Independence. Students can choose from previous equality lessons such as BLM, Women's Rights, LGBTQ, etc. or their personal grievances, to help them compare and contrast. Consider having students present.

Activity Option #2: Have students rewrite the Declaration of Independence in modern-day language. Have students present as if they were presenting the document to younger students who have never seen the document before.

Resources

- Bella Vida. (2017, February 11). Paul Harvey Our Founding Fathers. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4XyyHQ_ritw&t=3s
- Independence Hall Association. (1942). The Declaration of Independence. US History. https://www.ushistory.org/iha.html
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). HIPP. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/1618
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-pair-share. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/139
- The National Archives Records Administration. The Declaration of Independence. https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs
- Norman Lear. (2021). Declaration of Independence Road Trip. Norman Lear. https://www.normanlear.com/declaration-of-independence-road-trip or https://www.ushistory.org/declaration/VTS_01_1.mp4