



*Declaration of Independence:
Suggested Activities*

Written for the National Student/Parent Mock Election

www.nationalmockelection.org

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

Suggested Activities

Declaration of Independence



For Grades K - 6, Junior
High and High School
and Advanced
Placement/College Level

Copyright © 2014 National Student/Parent Mock Election. All right reserved.
Schools and teachers may reproduce in any quantity desired.

In Congress, July 4, 1776

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.

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 a Manner as 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 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 Oppressions, all having in direct Object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid Consideration.

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; and after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have constantly been brought into the most obnoxious and dangerous Situation in the Minds of 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; and 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 joined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to Acts of pretended Legislation:

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 Colonies:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

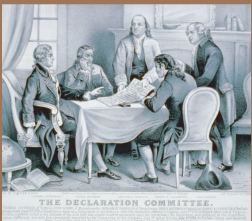
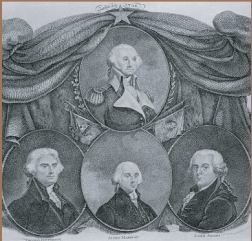
For depriving us in many Cases, of the Benefit of Trial by Jury:

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 altering our 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 has kept standing Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the Works of Death, Desolation, and Tyranny, already characterized by Stages of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.



1 With a classmate, stage a debate for the class with one of you as a Patriot and one as a Loyalist.

Discuss whether the colonies should or should not break away from Great Britain.

2 Create a game such as Jeopardy! Or, a crossword puzzle about different aspects of the Declaration. such as the freedoms the colonists wanted, the truths they considered “self evident”, the complaints they listed against the king. What did the authors of the Declaration mean when they argued for government by consent of the governed? How do the citizens of a democracy give their consent?

3 Create a class museum of the era of the Declaration of Independence. Include exhibits about Independence Hall, the writing of the Declaration (including the role played by the Magna Carta), the different people involved, the colonies involved and colonial life.

Make sure to incorporate quotes, vocabulary (and an example of a vocabulary word used in a sentence).

Vocabulary words or phrases:

1. *suffrage*
2. *“consent of the governed”*
3. *taxation*
4. *natural rights*
5. *self-evident*
6. *patriot*
7. *loyalist*
8. *any words or phrases that you come across and do not understand*

4 Write a skit about some facet of the creation of the Declaration of Independence. Perform it for the class and videotape it if possible, such as the feelings of the men who made the decision to risk their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to create a democracy. Imagine them explaining to their families why they were taking such a

risk and what it might mean for their families.

5 DISCUSSION! What did the colonists mean by: “No taxation without representation”? How does the Declaration of Independence relate to this?

1 Create a timeline of important events leading up to the Declaration of Independence and shortly after. Include in your timeline, as part of one of the suggested possibilities below, the significance to the future of what happened at the time of the Declaration. Answer the question, “Why was it written?”

1215: The Power of the Monarchy is Reduced

The Magna Carta restricts the absolute power of British monarchs, holding them accountable to the rule of law.

Magna Carta

- The period from the signing of the Magna Carta (1215) to the English Civil War (1640s) was an era of governmental dualism in England. This dualism was: 1) to protect Parliament from the king in order to strengthen civil liberties, and 2) to protect certain individual rights, natural rights, from infringement from all government.
 1. Parliament Shall Assemble Once a Year
 2. Freedom of Speech
 3. No Soldier Shall be Quartered-within the homes of citizens without consent
 4. Due Process of Law
 5. A Speedy and Public Trial
 6. Double Jeopardy-a defendant cannot be tried more than once for the same crime
 7. No Person Shall Be a Witness Against Himself
- In the 1640’s, the King of England had a falling out with Parliament and there was an ensuing war lead by Oliver Cromwell, who defeated the King.
- Cromwell died and the King of England’s son was restored to the throne.

1689: The Rights of English Subjects Are Defined

The English Bill of Rights guarantees free speech to members of Parliament, bans cruel and unusual punishment, and supports a limited right to bear arms.

1754-1763: The French and Indian War

New taxes were imposed by the British on their American Colonies after the French and Indian War in order to pay for the military protection they were receiving:

- Proclamation of 1763: limiting what land the colonists could purchase from the natives.
- The Sugar Act of 1764: This placed tariffs on sugar imports.
- The Quartering Act of 1765: forced colonists to house and support British military.
- The Stamp Act of 1765: taxed every document printed or read in the colonies.

- The Townsend Acts of 1766: taxed on lead, paint, paper, glass and tea imported by colonists. In addition, the New York legislature was suspended until it agreed to quarter British soldiers. The Acts also insured that colonial officials, including governors and judges, would receive their salaries directly from the Crown.
- The Coercive Acts of 1774: the Royal governor took control over the Massachusetts government and would appoint all officials, sheriffs would become royal appointees, as would juries. In addition, the British took the right to quarter soldiers anywhere in the colonies.

1770: The Boston Massacre

It was the culmination of civilian-military tensions that had been growing since royal troops first appeared in Massachusetts in October 1768 to collect the heavy taxes imposed by the British.

1773: The Boston Tea Party

The colonies refused to pay the levies required by the Townsend Acts claiming they had no obligation to pay taxes imposed by a Parliament in which they had no representation. In response, Parliament retracted the taxes with the exception of a duty on tea - a demonstration of Parliament's ability and right to tax the colonies.

Parliament's decision to leave intact the duties on tea imports further angered the colonists, who responded by dumping the tea from three ships into the bay. NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION.

1776: The Power of the Monarchy is Rejected

How were these taxes violations of English law against the colonists of America, who were English citizens, by the entire English government, i.e. Parliament and the King?

THINK! What rights for citizens of the United States are expanded from English law under the Declaration of Independence and The Constitution?

According to Jefferson, "That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed..." What obligation does this place on the citizens?—Refer to the Declaration if necessary.

How does the Greek Root for idiot apply here? See

[http://old.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?layout.reflang=greek;layout.reflookup=i\)diwth;doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3D%2349909](http://old.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?layout.reflang=greek;layout.reflookup=i)diwth;doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3D%2349909)

2 Create a PowerPoint or some other multimedia show about the challenges faced by the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Why were they willing to risk their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor? What would have happened to them if the Revolution had failed?

3 Read a book about one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and write a book report. Would you have made the same decisions your chosen signer made? Why? Why not?

Extra Credit

Expand your timeline to the years beyond the Declaration of Independence. How did our Federated Republic constantly expand the right to vote?



1 Why did John Adams risk his reputation and future career by

defending the British soldiers accused of the Boston Massacre when even British lawyers were afraid to do so?

Hold a Mock Trial and role play John Adams defending the principle he believed was the most important to defend – the principle of a fair trial in a democracy.

Select a committee to chart the concepts in the Declaration of Independence that appear in the Constitution and the Bill of rights.



2 Read: The History of Native American Voting Rights at <http://www.nationalmockelection.org/docs/TGTAmericanIndianVotingHistoryfinal.pdf>
Note the influence of the Iroquois approach to government by consensus on Benjamin Franklin and the other Founding Fathers. Hypothesize about how the Native American form of government observed by the early colonists might have affected the writing of the Declaration of Independence.

Can you find any historical support for your hypotheses?

3 In an unpublished manuscript, Dr. Leo Shapiro has written, "In line with Aristotle's teachings about Athenian Democracy, in drafting the Declaration of Independence,

Thomas Jefferson asserted all men are created equal and have the inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Following the Athenian model, this came to mean that everyone who was eligible to be a citizen would have an equal right to participate in their own governance by voting as well as having access to the means needed to engage in the pursuit of happiness – the highest good.”

In the Athens of 350 B.C. only 30,000 native born men who were of age had completed their military training and were free of debt were granted the rights of citizenship. How large was the population of Athens in 350 B.C.?

How large is the population of your city or town today? How many of its residents are citizens eligible to vote? (How many actually do so?)

Write an essay: Are you free to pursue your happiness if you are not free to vote for or against those who would govern you? Share your essay with your local paper, web blogs, social networking sites and/or with the National Student/Parent Mock Election. What response do you get to the position you take?

To contact NSPME: email nspme@aol.com or write to P.O. Box 68187, Tucson, AZ 85737

KEEPING DEMOCRACY ALIVE: PUBLICATIONS OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AT YOUR LIBRARY

The Declaration of Independence is an important document marking the start of this democratic nation. The work of our government is documented through publications that are collected for your information and edification. The debates and bills in Congress, the messages and proclamations of the president, and decisions of the Supreme Court record the progress of this nation.

You can follow the work of the Congressional, executive and judicial branches of the federal government, through:

- The progress of legislation from the original introduction of a bill, to the debates on the floor of Congress, reports of House and Senate committees, and finally to the passage of the bill and codification of the Public Law.
- The introduction of regulations to support the focus of the law, as drafted in the Federal Register and open for public comment. The final federal agency regulations are then printed and cumulated in the Code of Federal Regulations.
- The Supreme Court decisions on cases relevant to the Constitution.

The checks and balances of our democratic system of government, as expressed by the legislative, executive and judiciary branches of government, are demonstrated through these materials.

The federal government is made up of agencies covering a vast number of interests that affect us in our daily life. We collect the materials that range from American history to cultural diversity, space travel documented by NASA to the water supply throughout the United States, from education to farming, and many, many other interests. There are few areas of interest that our government does not document.

The Arizona State Library and Archives collects these publications for the benefit of all Arizonans. We have publications that document the growth and change in our nation for the last 200+ years. We have listed some of the many websites for federal government information that you can visit 24 hours a day on your computer or through your local library.

Located in the historical Arizona State Capitol, the Arizona State Library and Archives is not only a repository for materials published by the state of Arizona, but also collects and maintains publications from all federal agencies, which are made available through the U.S. Government Printing Office's Federal Depository Library Program.

Find it on the Web: Government Information Has Something for Everyone



<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/>

Ben's Guide for children K-12 with a section for parents and teachers.



www.gpoaccess.gov

GPO Access Web site of the U.S. Government Printing Office where you can locate the federal depository library nearest to you; buy, via the web, publications produced by the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the federal government; and view the

Core Documents of U.S. Democracy

Including, but not limited to, these **Cornerstone Documents**:

Articles of Confederation The Bill of Rights

A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1873

The Constitution of the United States of America

The Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation The Declaration of Independence

Documents from the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789

Emancipation Proclamation The Federalist Papers The Gettysburg Address



www.usa.gov

USA.gov The official U.S. gateway to government information. On this site, you can search millions of web pages from federal and state governments, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories. You will be able to perform the most comprehensive search of government sites anywhere on the Internet. USA.gov is also available in Spanish. Be sure to check out this rich treasure trove of government information, on-line resources, and services.