

Declaration of Independence Mini-Unit
AP United States History
Class Periods: 2 ninety-minute sessions

Objectives:

- Students will evaluate the impact of the Declaration of Independence and Enlightenment philosophies on other declarations written throughout history.
- Students will utilize two close-reading strategies to analyze the Declaration of Independence and one additional declaration.
- Students will practice speaking and listening through the structured discussion model and jigsaw activity.

Resources:

- Close reading graphic organizer for excerpted Declaration of Independence
- HAPPY Discussion role cards
- HAPPY document analysis chart
- Declaration comparison chart
- Copies of 4 sample Declarations

DAY 1:

Introduction:

- Show Soomo music video “Too Late To Apologize” (accessible on YouTube)
- In table groups, students will answer the following questions:
 - Why is it “too late” for reconciliation between Great Britain and the American colonies?
 - What evidence can be used to justify your response?
 - How does this video support our distinction between the “American Revolution” and the “War for Independence”?

Close Reading Review:

- Students will complete a quick write about the following question: “How is the Declaration of Independence” like a break-up letter?
- Review “Road to Revolution” and action of the Continental Congress (series of acts/taxes, responses by colonists, Olive Branch Petition, etc.)
 - Show clips from *John Adams* HBO mini-series that depict the meetings of the Continental Congress and King George III’s response to the Olive Branch Petition
- Students will label the three parts of the Declaration of Independence (DOI) (1) state of relationship, 2) list of grievances, 3) declaration of separation)
- Individually, students will complete the HAPPY chart based on their reading of the DOI

HAPPY Discussion

- Students will participate in a structured discussion model using the HAPPY protocol
- Students will complete the “WHY” portion and summary statement as a group

Closure

- Select a member from each group to read their summary statement aloud so students can compare responses

Homework

- Students will complete the first column of the “Comparing Declarations” matrix. Students will define the four key concepts provided based on their reading of the DOI and notes about the Enlightenment

DAY 2:

Before class, create a spreadsheet that places students in “EXPERT” and “HOME” groups. I organize students groups by reading level and academic performance to ensure that the groups are heterogenous.

Introduction (15 minutes):

- Students will take a short multiple choice quiz¹.

Homework Review (10 minutes):

- Students will spend time comparing their responses to the homework. Students should focus on finding evidence in the DOI that supports their definitions of the four key concepts on the comparison matrix.

Jigsaw Activity²:

Expert Groups (25 minutes)

- Students will move into predetermined “EXPERT” groups.
- Each group will receive copies of another historical declaration:
 - Declaration of the Rights of Man (France, 1789)
 - The Unanimous Declaration of the People of Texas (1836)
 - The Declaration of Sentiments (Seneca Falls Convention, 1848)
 - United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)
- Students will have access to Chromebooks or other devices in order to conduct brief research about the historical context of each document, if necessary.
- Students will use their “Marking the Text” toolbox to identify main claims, key vocabulary, and historical evidence.
- After the close reading, groups will complete the appropriate column in the comparison matrix to define the terms based on this new declaration.

Home Groups (20 minutes)

- Students will move into predetermined “HOME” groups.
- Each student will be given 2 minutes to summarize the purpose of the declaration they read. Students should focus on providing details about the four key concepts on the organizer.
- As each student presents, the other groups member should take notes in the appropriate box on the comparison matrix³.
- After sharing about each declaration, students will discuss which declaration is most like or most different than the DOI. Students will identify textual evidence to support their findings.

Closure

- Students will go back to the declaration they read and identify the three sections labelled on the DOI.
- Students will review the directions for the “Declaration of the Rights of Students” assignment that students will complete as a culminating task.

¹ The new AP US History framework and exam uses stimulus response multiple choice questions. The two documents sets for this quiz include a comparison of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* and the DOI and a map of British settlement from 1700-1775. I utilize a web-based quiz program so that the quiz is formative and I can review responses in real-time. This allows me to provide immediate feedback.

² This jigsaw activity is adapted from a Common Core Literacy lesson developed by the Putnam City Schools.

³ I always tell my students that I know they can just pass around their completed worksheets and copy the information; however, this does not allow for practicing speaking and listening. At the end of the activity, students can get any details they missed, but I want them to focus on listening first and copying later.

Declaration of the Rights of Students Task

Write a "Declaration of the Rights of Students" where you evaluate your own learning environment and explain what right students deserve in our world today. What changes would you make? How would you define learning, testing, grading, punishments, rewards, etc? What does/should authority look like? What is the purpose of schooling and what happens when that purpose is not met? What role can youth play in reforming education?

Parameters:

- Follow the format/vocabulary of the declarations we read in class
- 500 words minimum (submit on Google Drive)
- If you choose another medium (video, recording, performance, song, or art) please let me know.

Audience:

- School administration, teachers, and/or School Board