

TAH Project
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The Declaration of Independence in the American Literature Classroom



Unit Rational: Teaching parallelism using the Declaration of Independence is a part of the English 11 American Literature curriculum. Expanding that curriculum to a five day unit to incorporate more historical context helps students gain perspective on the importance and relevance of this document to American History and their own lives.

Intended Audience:

English 11 American Literature class at Provincetown High School. At present, this is a class of 12 students including students from Jamaica (2), Mexico (2) and Serbia (1).

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks Standards:

History and Social Science Standard:US1.3

Explain the influences and ideas of the Declaration of Independence and the political philosophy of Tomas Jefferson (H,C)

English Language Arts Standards:

Standard 13: Students will identify, analyze and apply knowledge of the purposes, structure, and elements of nonfiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

Standard 24: Research: Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions.

Standard 3: Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed.

Time Frame: 5 Days of 50 minute class periods

Objectives:

Understand a document of critical importance in US History.

Recognize and create examples of parallelism.

Construct meaning by paraphrasing difficult passages and creating a personal document with others.

Practice Oral Presentation.

Background:

In 1775, violent conflicts erupted in the American colonies due to the great tension between Great Britain and her colonists. At the Second Continental Congress held in Philadelphia, a committee was formed to create an official statement of the reasons for independence from Great Britain. Thomas Jefferson from Virginia wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence. The Congress debated and revised the draft over two days and adopted it on July 4, 1776.

Materials:

Visuals from Appendix: Turnbull; Currier and Ives; \$2 Bill; Benjamin Franklin; John Adams; King George III of Great Britain; Ellie, street performer in Provincetown; Independence Hall in Philadelphia; Thomas Jefferson draft of Declaration of Independence

Flip chart paper and highlighters

School library/media center

12 dictionaries

White board and box of colored markers

Smartboard and computer

Wikispaces logon for students

Podium

Resources:

Declaration of Independence. New York: Declaration of Independence Inc. 2002.

John Adams. HBO Miniseries. 2008.

Maier, Pauline. American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.

Day 1

Activity 1 - Activator

Place unlabeled visuals from the Appendix on a table. Ask students to examine visuals and to collectively tell a story about what they know about the visuals and how the images relate to each other.

Record a TKW with students about the Declaration of Independence. With students, create on a flip chart a list of 36 questions with students about the background of the Declaration of Independence. Cut the flip chart into 12 pieces with three questions for each student.

Activity 2 - Research

Direct students' research efforts in the Library/Media Center as they seek answers to their questions. Ask students to record three new things they learned in addition to their research.

Activity 3 – Wrap Up

In the classroom, process the research results with collective notes on a smartboard. Save the notes and post to Edline for student access that evening. Fill in gaps of necessary information that students did not find.

Homework :

Based on prior knowledge and today's research efforts, write a one page informative essay on the Declaration of Independence. Remember the 5W's plus H.

Day 2

Activity 1 - Activator

On the whiteboard post the question: “What natural born rights do we have or should we have?” Ask students to do a Chalk Talk, responding in writing and silence on the white board. Process common themes and raise questions.

Activity 2 – First Look at the Declaration of Independence

Distribute texts of the Declaration of Independence and highlighters. Have students scan the document for references to rights. Discuss life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. Give a mini lecture on John Locke and pursuit of property.

Explain the structure of the document. Ask students to label the parts on their documents: **Part I.** Preamble or foreword that announces the reason for the document; **Part II.** Declaration of People’s Natural Rights and Relationship to Government; **Part III.** Log List of Complaints against George III; **Part IV.** Conclusion that formally states independence.

Remind students of the definition of parallelism. Direct students to go to Section III to highlight all the instances of parallelism.

Activity 3 – Paraphrasing the Declaration of Independence

Divide students into four groups. Distribute a dictionary to each student. Assign each group to one section of the document. Ask each group to record their paraphrasing of the section on the flip chart. In addition record and define all new vocabulary words.

Students post and present paraphrasing before the end of class. Teacher fills in any important and necessary gaps.

Record vocabulary words and definitions on Edline for student access.

Homework: Write a one page reflection on what you learned today that you didn’t know before about the Declaration of Independence. Include three new vocabulary words in context within your reflection.

Day 3

Activity 1 – Video Clip

Watch a 3:42 minute video clip from the John Adams HBO Miniseries [.http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1Txi1687wo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1Txi1687wo) where John Adams and Ben Franklin respond to the draft of the Declaration of Independence.

After the video, facilitate discussion around these questions: Why is Thomas Jefferson's work just a draft? Why is it important that the whole continental congress give input to this draft? What initial problems do Franklin and Adams have with the draft? How are these problems resolved? How does Jefferson respond?

Activity 2 – What Got Left Out?

Distribute individual copies of The Declaration of Independence: The Jefferson Draft with Congress's Editorial Changes. (Maier, Appendix C) Ask students to notice and raise questions about what gets left out. Discuss the concepts of consensus and compromise.

Activity 3 – Video Clip

Watch a 7:00 minute video clip from the John Adams HBO Miniseries <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7Y1ougODMon> which begins with John Adams making a passionate speech to the congress and ends with the reading of the Declaration of Independence at Independence Hall.

Homework: Think of a person or institution in your life that you may, at times, regard as an oppressor. Make a list of the rights you want to have but do not. Make a list of things that person(s) actually does to oppress you. .

Day 4

Activity 2 – Writing Your Own Declaration - Assessment

Take students to the Computer Lab. Divide students into three groups, each with four students. Each group must use a wikki space to create one written Teen Declaration of Independence from an oppressor.

The Declaration must be in the style of the Declaration of Independence and have four sections including a Preamble to announce to an audience; a declaration of teen's rights; a list of at least 12 specific complaints using three different series of parallelism as a technique, and a conclusion. Use at least 10 new vocabulary words from the class list.

Declaration must be delivered in final copy, double-spaced, 12 point type, ready for oral presentation in class tomorrow.

Homework: Revise and edit together via wikki space to create your group's final copy of your Teen Declaration of Independence. Email final copy to the instructor and bring a print copy to class. Assign sections for each student to present orally. Practice your oral presentation.

Day 5

Activity 1 – Actor's Present

Show 14:00 minute video: The Declaration of Independence. Produced by Norman Lear and Rob Reiner. Declaration of Independence, Inc., 2002.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYyttEu_NLU This is a reading of the Declaration by well-known actors at Independence Hall. Prep students to listen clearly for the rhetorical device of parallelism throughout the speech.

Activity 2 – Teen Declarations of Independence

Each group presents their Teen Declaration of Independence at the podium. Applaud each presentation. Audience records three strengths and three suggestions to make each presentation better.

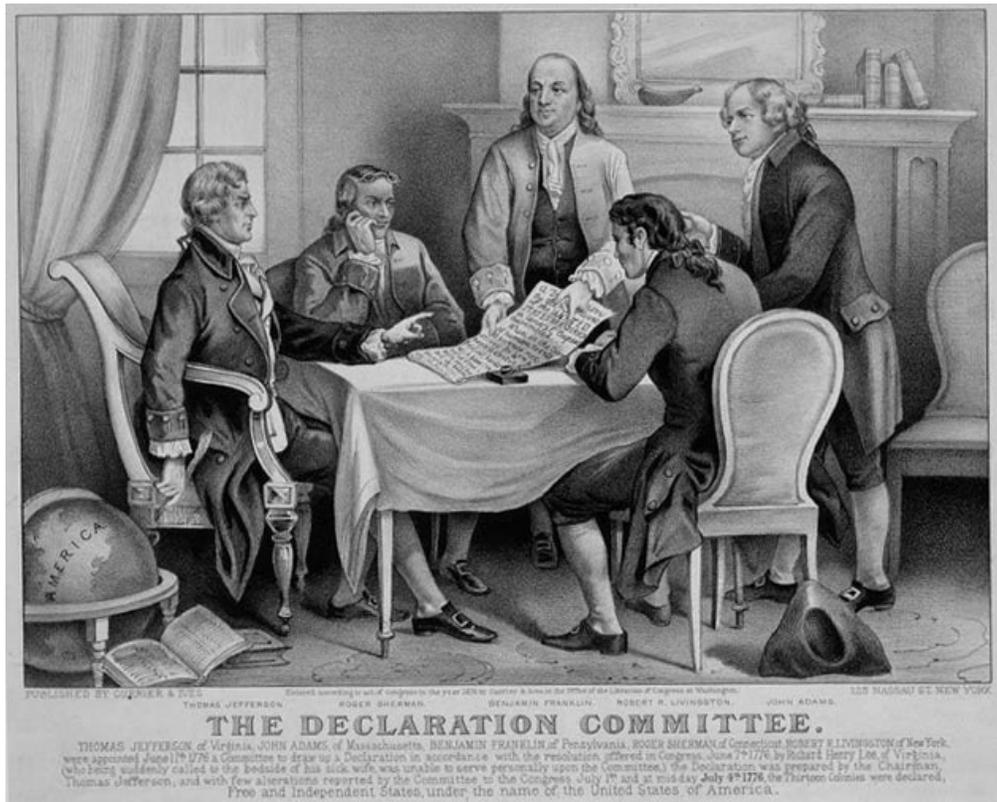
Activity 3 – Reflection Chalk Talk

Conduct a silent chalk talk as a reflection. Post: What have we learned about the Declaration of Independence? What questions do we still have? What did we leave out?

Appendix



Turnbull



Currier and Ives



Track this bill at www.WheresGeorge.com

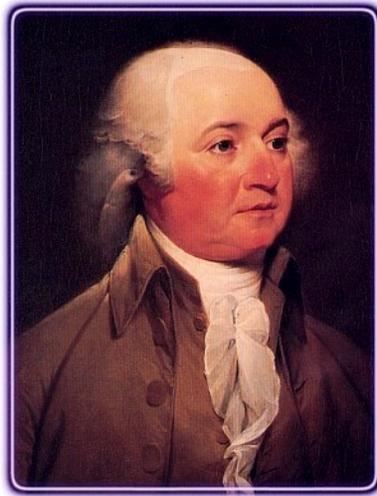


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\$2 Bill



Benjamin Franklin



John Adams



King George III of Great Britain



Ellie, street performer in Provincetown



Independence Hall, Philadelphia

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 same~~ ^{separate and equal} station to which the laws of nature & 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 ~~take~~ ^{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 inalienable rights, that among ^{these} are ~~life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness~~ ^{life, liberty, & 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~~ becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, & to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles & organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness. prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be ~~changed~~ ^{changed} for light & transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown 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 & usurpations [began at a distinguished period, & pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to ~~reduce~~ ^{reduce} them ~~under absolute Despotism~~ ^{under absolute Despotism}, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, & to provide new guards for their future security, such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; & such is now the necessity which constrains them to ~~expunge~~ ^{expunge} their former systems of government. the history of ~~the~~ ^{the} present ~~is~~ ^{is} a history of ~~unremitting~~ ^{unremitting} injuries and usurpations, [among which, ^{appears no solitary fact} ~~no solitary fact~~ ^{in Hall's} ~~to~~ ^{to} contradict the uniform tenor of the rest,] ~~all of which~~ ^{all of which} have in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. to prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world, [for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unshaken by falshood]

