

“If the Declaration of Independence could talk, what story would it tell?”

Social Studies

Topic:	If the Declaration of Independence could talk, what story would it tell?”
Objective:	Students will decipher the main grievances of the Declaration of Independence into common language that is easily understandable.
Standards:	<p>Social Studies: The Responsibilities of Civic Participation</p> <p>Responsible citizenship requires active participation in our communities. Therefore, social studies instruction should engage students so they simultaneously learn about civic participation while being involved in the civic life of their communities, our state, and our nation. Social studies prepares students to participate in political life, to serve their communities, and to conduct themselves responsibly. Being a responsible student in and beyond the classroom means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Using knowledge of the past to construct meaningful understanding of our diverse cultural heritage and inform their civic judgments. ● Knowing how, when, and where to construct and express reasoned positions on public issues.(Public Discourse and Decision Making) ● Acting constructively to further the public good (Civic Participation)
Materials Needed:	<p>Notecards (one per student)</p> <p>One highlighter per student</p> <p>The Declaration of Independence</p> <p>The Declaration of Independence Made Easy</p> <p>Copy (attached) of Declaration of Independence</p> <p>6 White boards (one per group) or large construction paper, markers</p>
Introduction: (5 Minutes)	<p>On July 4, 1776 a group of 56 men gathered in Philadelphia to review and sign the Declaration of Independence. Record, on the notecard provided, a list of at least five points you already know about the Declaration of Independence. Share with a partner what you recorded. What are some things we already know? (Teacher will record points on board). Why was the Declaration of Independence an important document? Why was it risky for these men to sign it? This July 4th we are celebrating 250 years since the signing of this Declaration. This was considered a break up letter from the colonies to King George III.</p>

	<p>One of the most famous lines from the Declaration is: <i>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.</i> Why do you think this statement is memorable? How would you put that in today’s language? (Have students discuss this with a partner. Ask for examples and record them for the class to see. Ex: <i>“It is obvious that all people have the right to equal treatment and that God (or a Creator) gives people rights to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness that can’t be taken or given away.”</i> (paraphrased from <i>DOI Made Easy</i>).</p>
<p>Body: Part One (20 minutes)</p>	<p>Pass out copies of the original The Declaration of Independence. Students will read their copy silently. Highlight any points you find of specific grievances with the King. These are the “He has” statements. *Assent to laws means to follow the laws.</p> <p>Next, number the “He has” statements 1-18. Teacher will divide the class into six groups. Assign each group three “He has” statements (1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16-18) Students will rewrite those sentences in common language that we would use today. If there are words that are unfamiliar, they can look them up and define as needed.</p>
<p>Body: Part Two (20 minutes - @3 minutes per group)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Each group will report what their original “He has” sentence was and how they translated it into today’s language. The students will record these translations on their own sheets.
<p>Check for Understanding: (10 minutes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher will display (or hand out) The Declaration of Independence Made Easy. ● Students will compare their translated version to the document provided. ● Teacher will ask students to record on the back of their notecard (from the beginning of class) three new thoughts they have about the Declaration of Independence.
<p>Resources</p>	<p>PBS Explore the Declaration Lesson Plan American Battlefield Trust Declaration Lesson Plan National Archives Declaration of Independence</p>