



THE DECLARATION'S FIRST CENTURY AT HOME

This unit allows students the opportunity to examine how Americans viewed and actively used the legacy of the Declaration of Independence during the country's first century. Students will explore and analyze the relationship between the Declaration of Independence and reform movements, Native Americans during the 19th century, and the Civil War.

All activities and resources are available online on the Museum of the American Revolution's Teacher Resource Guides page.

MATERIALS

Primary Sources

Document: Printing of the Declaration of Independence by Mary Katherine Goddard
(New York Public Library)
https://www.nypl.org/sites-drupal/default/files/styles/max_scale_1280x1280/public/field_ers_item_record_image/2021-09/PROG05.png?itok=hpGqxovf

Document: Handbill of the Texas Declaration of Independence by Baker and Bordens
(Texas State Library)
<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/sites/default/files/public/tslac/exec/documents/tx-declaration-broadside.pdf>

Document: Letter from John Ross to Abraham Lincoln, September 16, 1812
(Library of Congress)
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/mal.1845200/>

Painting: *Old '76, Young '48* by Richard Caton Woodville
(The Walters Art Museum)
<https://art.thewalters.org/object/37.2370/>

Print: *John Ross, A Cherokee Chief* by Charles Bird King
(Smithsonian American Art Museum)
<https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/john-ross-cherokee-chief-history-indian-tribes-north-america-17146>

Transcript: Declaration of Independence

Document Packet: Declarations of the 19th Century

Document Packet: Sarah P. Remond in the News

Women's Suffrage Political Cartoons
(see Politics through Pictures activity)

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

The modular activities and extensions in this unit provide opportunities for students to:

- Explore how different groups of people and individuals within the United States embraced the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution for themselves after the Revolutionary War.
- Examine how later Americans mimicked the structure and language of the Declaration of Independence for their own causes in the 19th century.
- Examine differing views of the purpose of the Declaration of Independence during the 19th century.
- Analyze artwork and how it can be used to spread social and political messages.

Other Sources

Big Idea 3: The Declaration's First Century at Home

Worksheet: Differing Declarations

A virtual version of this exhibit will appear online in January 2026.

PROCEDURES

Engagement Activities

These activities can be used as hook activities, introductions to concepts, or shorter lessons.

Memory of '76

Objectives: Explore how different groups of people and individuals within the United States embraced the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution for themselves after the Revolutionary War.

Analyze artwork and how it can be used to spread social and political messages.

Time: 5-10 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Prepare to project or display the painting [Old '76, Young '48](#).

Display the painting *Old '76, Young '48*, and have the students spend a few moments looking at it closely. Ask them what they notice in the painting. If needed, use these Close Looking questions to help guide students:

- Where is the setting of the painting?
- When does it seem to take place? What time of day? What season of the year? What year, era, or century?
- Who is present?
- What are they doing? What do they appear to be feeling?
- What objects do you see?
- What else do you notice?
Note: This question is designed to encourage students to look beyond the central figures and into the sides or background of a painting.
- What small details did you observe? What significance might they have?
- What can we learn from this sort of observation?

Tell students that these figures are not representations of specific people. Draw their attention to the seated older man on the left and tell students the title of the painting. Ask students the following questions based on the title:

- Who or what do you think the older man is supposed to represent?
Students answers may vary, but try to help students connect the older man with the Revolutionary War. Specifically, the man is supposed to represent a soldier from the Continental Army decades after the war.
- Who or what do you think the young man is supposed to represent?
Student answers may vary. Some may point out that the young soldier is looking up to the old soldier and pointing toward the portrait of George Washington. Some may

note that he appears to be from a younger generation. Specifically, the young soldier is supposed to represent a soldier from the Mexican American War.

- What do you think is the relationship between these two men? What might they be talking about?
Student answers may vary. Because this seems to be a family scene, these two men may be grandfather and grandson. Because the young man is dressed in an American military uniform and is pointing towards a portrait of George Washington, he may be talking about his military experience and connecting it to the Revolutionary War.

Explain to students that from 1846 to 1848, the United States had been fighting in the Mexican American War. Discuss how the title “Old '76, Young '48” represents different generations fighting for the United States, and how it is supported by the symbolism within the painting.

Share with students that this painting was created in 1849 and conclude with a discussion around the following question: What does this painting tell us about the legacy of the American Revolution more than 70 years after the Revolutionary War had ended?

EXTEND: Have students come up with a list of alternate titles for the painting based on your in-classroom discussion.

EXTEND: Have students seek out additional paintings about the American Revolution that were created in the 1790s or later and ask them to reflect on what these paintings say about the legacy of the Revolution and how they are similar to or different from *Old '76, Young '48*.

Visual Printing

Objective: Examine how later Americans mimicked the structure and language of the Declaration of Independence for their own causes in the 19th century.

Time: 10-15 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Prepare to project or display the [Goddard printing of the Declaration of Independence](#) and the handbill of the [Texas Declaration of Independence](#) (1836).

Teacher Note: The Goddard printing of the Declaration of Independence was created by Mary Katherine Goddard, a Baltimore printer, at the behest of the Continental Congress in January 1777. Congress instructed Goddard to create broadsides of the Declaration with the names of the signers. Goddard was the first printer to publish the list of men who had pledged their “lives,” “fortunes,” and “sacred honor” to the cause of independence. She also committed herself to the cause by printing her own, full name below the signers.

Ask students to look at the Goddard printing of the Declaration of Independence and the handbill of the Texas Declaration of Independence while focusing on the formatting of both prints. Once students have been given about one minute to examine the images, have them discuss the following questions:

- What are some visual similarities between the two printings?
Some examples of similarities include the layout of the sections (centered title, main body text, centered signers), the grouped signers (Goddard's by state and Texas's by municipalities), a president's signature, and a printer's name at the bottom. There is also a similar use of the words "Declaration of Independence" and the word "unanimous."
- Do you think it is meaningful that these two documents are similarly printed? Why or why not?

Conclude by discussing why the Texans may have wanted to evoke the United States' Declaration of Independence.

Possible answers may include that they wanted to seek the United States as an ally, that they were seeking admission to the United States, that many of the Texans were originally from the United States, that they embraced the ideals of the Declaration, etc.

Development Activities

These activities are suitable for diving deeper into a particular concept and can be used for an entire class period.

Politics through Pictures

Objective: Explore how different groups of people and individuals within the United States embraced the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution for themselves after the Revolutionary War.

Analyze artwork and how it can be used to spread social and political messages.

Time: 1 day (50-minute class)

Teacher Preparation: Ensure students have access to the images below, digitally or physically. Post the Cartoon Questions (listed below) so the students have easy access to them during the activity.

Ask students to define what the purpose of a political cartoon is, focusing on their importance as persuasive works. Explain they will use the following set of political cartoons to answer the questions further below.

Set of Cartoons

- "A downright gabbler" (Library of Congress)
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2002708975/>
- "Votes for women bandwagon" (Library of Congress)
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2016679510/>
- "Retouching an old Masterpiece" (Library of Congress)
<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/retouching-an-old-masterpiece-paul-stahr/mwGwaME0UEn-RA?hl=en>
- "Insulting the President?" (National Park Service)
<https://www.nps.gov/media/photo/gallery-item.htm?pg=0&id=a6122357-395e-4a3f-b702-6e2c74f25aad&qid=9EC64AE4-F366-41BF-83BF-FC1AFCA95200>
- "Women at the Polls in New Jersey in the Good Old Times" (Museum of the American Revolution)
<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/virtualexhibits/when-women-lost-the-vote-a-revolutionary-story/pages/new-jersey-in-the-good-old-times>
- "The Age of Brass: Or the Triumphs of Women's Rights" (Museum of the American Revolution)
<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/virtualexhibits/when-women-lost-the-vote-a-revolutionary-story/pages/women-s-suffrage-and-satire>
- "The Awakening" (Library of Congress)
<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ds.12369/>
- "The apotheosis of suffrage" (Library of Congress)
<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2016679928/>
- "Election Day" (Library of Congress)
<https://www.loc.gov/item/97500226/>
- "Does he think he can stop her?" (North Carolina Digital Collections)
<https://digital.ncdcr.gov/Documents/Detail/political-cartoons-pro-womens-suffrage/761052?item=761074>

Cartoon Questions

- What symbolism, imagery, or words are present in the cartoon? What do you think they mean?
- What do you think is the message of the cartoon? What makes you say that?
- Based on that message, is the cartoon pro- or anti-women's suffrage?

You may choose to provide students with the final discussion question so that they can keep it in mind for later: Does this cartoon reference the Declaration of Independence or its ideals? How so?

Give students time to examine each cartoon and answer the questions. Students can either use the links to investigate the cartoons, or you can print out the images and hang them around the classroom. Once everyone has finished, review their findings as a class.

Conclude by discussing which ones used or referenced the Declaration of Independence or its ideals. How did the cartoon do so? Why do you think the artist chose to make that reference? What does this say about the ongoing relevance of the Declaration in the 19th and early 20th centuries?

EXTEND: For more activities related to women's suffrage, explore the Museum of the American Revolution's [When Women Lost the Vote Teacher Resource Guide](#).

A Differing Declaration

Objective: Examine differing views of the purpose of the Declaration of Independence during the 19th century.

Time: 20-30 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Print copies of the worksheet *A Differing Declaration* or ensure students have access to a digital version of the worksheet. Review the section *Civil War in Big Idea 3: The Declaration's First Century at Home*. Ensure students have access to computers, tablets, or other devices with working internet connections to read *Big Idea 3* or print out enough copies for each student.

Have students read the section *Civil War in Big Idea 3* in class or for homework.

Provide students the worksheet *A Differing Declaration* and have them read the abstract from Jefferson Davis's Farewell Address and Abraham Lincoln's Electric Cord Speech.

As a class, have students compare the two speeches and their interpretations of the Declaration of Independence. Discuss what it says about the Declaration that both of these positions can be drawn from it. What might that mean for our nation?

Culmination Activities, Research Projects, and Group Projects

Declarations of the 19th Century

Objective: Explore how different groups of people and individuals within the United States embraced the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution for themselves after the Revolutionary War.

Time: 1 day (50-minute class), plus homework

Teacher Preparation: Print enough copies of *Big Idea 3: The Declaration's First Century at Home* or ensure students have access to computers, tablets, or other devices with working internet connections to access it online.

Divide students into seven groups and assign them one of the documents listed below. Ensure each group has enough

copies of their document for each person in the group. You may wish to reuse the documents for multiple periods.

Have students read *Big Idea 3: The Declaration's First Century at Home* in class or for homework.

Assign groups one of the following documents for a jigsaw:

- Working Men's Declaration (1829)
- Declaration of Sentiments (1833)
- Texas Declaration of Independence (1836)
- Declaration of Sentiments (1848)
- John Brown's Declaration of Liberty (1859)
- South Carolina's Declaration of Secession (1860)
- Declaration of Rights of Women in the United States (1876)

Have students read through and annotate their document. Once they have finished, they should answer the following questions on a piece of computer paper, in their notebooks, or on large chart paper:

- What is the author's or authors' goal?
- In what ways are they similar to the Declaration of Independence?
- Why might the author(s) have written them to be similar to the Declaration of Independence?

Wrap up by having students share their document with the rest of the class. Discuss what these documents say about the relevance of the Declaration in rights and sovereignty movements over time.

Sarah P. Remond

Objective: Explore how different groups of people and individuals within the United States embraced the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution for themselves after the Revolutionary War.

Time: Multiple day document-based report activity

Teacher Preparation: Review the primary sources below and *Big Idea 3: The Declaration's First Century at Home*. Print enough copies of the primary sources and *Big Idea 3* or ensure students have access to computers, tablets, or other devices with working internet connections to access them online.

Primary Sources:

- Sarah P. Remond's Autobiography *Our Exemplars, Poor and Rich* edited by Matthew Davenport Hill
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044012082301&view=1up&seq=308>
- Portrait of Sarah P. Remond
https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=1300&pid=3

- Sarah P. Remond's Naturalization Papers
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/explore-the-collection/stories/sarah-parker-remonds-application-to-become-a-british-citizen/>

- Document Packet: Sarah P. Remond in the News

Have students read the section Abolition within Big Idea 3: The Declaration's First Century at Home for homework.

Explain to students that they will be creating a newspaper article or video news report using information on the abolitionist Sarah P. Remond from the primary sources and additional research. Their report should revolve around one of the following topics and reference at least 2-3 of the primary sources:

- Remond and her possible relationship with the line "all men are created equal"
- Remond on the topics of liberty and freedom
- British perspectives on Remond becoming a British citizen

Set aside a day for students to share or view each other's reports.

Extension Activities

Memorial of the Cherokee Nation

Objective: Examine how later Americans mimicked the structure and language of the Declaration of Independence for their own causes in the 19th century.

Time: 10-15 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Prepare to project or display the John Ross print.

Teacher Note: In 1824, a Cherokee delegation petitioned Congress and listed the grievances of the Cherokee Nation against the United States. They quoted from the "memorable" Declaration of Independence as they made an impassioned appeal for their rights and independence. One of the petitioners was John Ross, who was the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation from 1828 until his death in 1866.

In the print, Ross holds the "Protest and Memorial of the Cherokee Nation," or Memorial and Protest, which he submitted to the U.S. Congress in 1836. Ross argued that the law did not allow for the state of Georgia and U.S. government to relocate the Cherokee Nation. He also protested the treatment of other Native American nations.

Have students look closely at John Ross's portrait for 30 seconds to one minute. Encourage students to talk with a partner or seatmate about what they see or notice. Then zoom in on a section of the portrait and ask students if they notice anything new. You may wish to do this a few times with different sections of the portrait or allow students to examine the portrait on their own devices.

Ask students the following questions:

- What questions would you want to ask the person in the painting?
- What do you think is happening in the painting?
- What do you wonder about the person or what is happening in the painting?

After examining the painting, explain the background of John Ross and the petition he is holding. Why might Ross have wanted to be painted with this document?

EXTEND: Have students read and analyze the [letter John Ross wrote to Abraham Lincoln](#) at the start of the Civil War.

EXTEND: Explore these other resources on the Cherokee Nation: a primary source set on [Cherokee Removal and the Trail of Tears by the Digital Public Library of America](#) or the digital interactive [Native Knowledge 360° by the National Museum of the American Indian](#).