



Unit 8 Activities

After the Declaration: What Happens Next?

This lesson will introduce students to some of the unintended audiences of the Declaration of Independence in the newly independent states, and to some of the reasons these audiences felt inspired by the document. It will highlight a few of the ways their hopes were realized, as well as a few they weren't, and will introduce students to the Declaration's ongoing national and global impact.

Aims /Objective

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

- Analyze primary source document transcripts to draw conclusions about the immediate impact of the Declaration of Independence
- Practice historical empathy by examining the experiences of historical figures and making inferences about their response to historical events
- Research current events to demonstrate the United States' current progress toward fulfilling the Declaration preamble's emphasis on human equality

Materials

Unit 8 Big Idea:
After the Declaration: What Happens Next?

Primary Sources

- Declaration of Independence transcription
<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

Other Resources:

- Unit 8 Worksheet: Exploring the Aftermath (included)
- Unit 8 Primary Source Cards (included)
- *Season of Independence* interactive
- Museum Virtual Tour

Procedures

Engagement 10 – 15 minutes

WHAT IF?

Ask students to imagine waking up one morning and discovering that the place that they live had separated from the nation, state, province, etc. that they are a part of. Discuss the following questions with students:

- How would that make you feel? Why?
- Do you think others might feel differently? Why or why not?
- What would change? What might stay the same?

- What consequences might there be? What might you be worried about?
- What do you think this experience may have felt like for British Americans?

Engagement 10 – 15 minutes

ON A MISSION

Teacher Preparation: Prepare several examples of mission statements from a variety of businesses and organizations. Print them out to distribute to student groups so that each will have one.

Split students into small groups and provide each group with a sample of a mission statement from a business or other organization. Have students read their document, then discuss with class what their statements are, introducing the definition and purpose of a mission statement.

Next, distribute or project the Preamble to the Declaration of Independence. Ask students to read it carefully, then discuss:

- Is this also a mission statement? What similarities and differences do you see?
- What, if anything, do you think this statement says that represents a break from the past? What, if anything, maintains the status quo?
- Who do you think would be excited by this statement? Who wouldn't be?
- If this preamble were a mission statement for a new nation, today, what do you think that nation's first steps would be in order to deliver upon their mission?

Development 30 – 40 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Print out Unit 8 Primary Source Cards and familiarize yourself with them. Hang the Primary Source Cards around the classroom. Prepare copies of the Unit 8 worksheet and Unit 8 Big Idea essay for students. Familiarize yourself with the sections entitled "Independence and Rebuttal" and "A Treaty of Alliance" in the Big Idea essay.

EXPLORING THE AFTERMATH

Instruct students to walk around the classroom, finding and examining each primary source sample. As they do so, have students use the Unit 8 worksheet: Exploring the Aftermath to summarize what each one tells them about the response to independence throughout the colonies and elsewhere. Once finished, students should read the Unit 8 Big Idea essay sections entitled "Independence and Rebuttal" and "A Treaty of Alliance". After enough time has been provided for exploration of the primary sources, give students the opportunity to share out their findings. Discuss with students: How would some of the events being described be perceived by Revolutionaries? By Loyalists? By those hoping to remain neutral?

Development 50 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Prepare copies of Unit 8 Big Idea essay for students. Read the section entitled "Life After Independence" in the Unit 8 Big Idea essay.

LIFE AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Assign each student one of the 10 historical figures featured in the *Season of Independence* interactive, then have them access the interactive and read the information provided about each individual. Afterward, pair students up and instruct them to write a script for a casual conversation between the individuals they each represent, taking place shortly after the United States declared independence from Great Britain. Ask students to provide the following information during their conversations, making inferences from the information available to them when necessary:

- Which historical figures they are representing
- Where their historical figures are from, geographically
- How they feel about Congress approving and signing the Declaration of Independence and why they feel that way
- What they plan to do now that the United States is at war with Britain for its independence
- How they hope the war will resolve and what they hope will change or stay the same

After creating their conversations, have several pairs act their conversations out in front of the class, answering questions about the inferences they made where necessary. As an alternative to scripting verbal conversations, have students create a text message chain between their two assigned individuals. Have students read the section entitled "Life After Independence" in the Unit 8 Big Idea essay, then have them create a second conversation discussing their thoughts on the outcome of the war from the perspectives of their assigned individuals, emphasizing how they feel about the outcome and what they plan to do next.

DEEPEN: Have students further develop their conversations, based on feedback from classmates additional research. Then have students record their conversations as a series of class podcasts to share with the school community.

Development 40 – 50 minutes

Teacher Preparation: Prepare copies of the Unit 8 Big Idea essay and post-it notes for students. Prepare post-it notes to distribute during lesson.

WORDS MATTER

First, share the transcript of the Declaration of Independence with students and draw their attention to the following excerpt from it: “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.” Write the word Equality on the board, then distribute a post-it note to each student. Have each student write what they think equality looks like on their post-it note and then place it on the board. Next ask students who they think the Declaration’s statement about equality was originally intended to refer to and discuss whether it was the same as their own interpretation.

Once students have had time to share, instruct them to view “The Promise of Equality” gallery in the Museum’s virtual tour, investigating the displays about Abigail Adams, Elizabeth Freeman, and William Findley. After allowing time for exploration, read aloud or have students read the section entitled “Unintended Audiences” in the Unit 8 Big Idea essay. Distribute additional post-it notes to each student and ask them to use them to brainstorm examples of how the struggle for greater equality in the United States continues into the present day. Share and discuss responses with class afterward.

DEEPEN: Ask students to define the meaning of liberty. What is the relationship between equality and liberty? Are they ever in conflict? What are some possible examples of this? If so, how do we choose which to value more?

Extensions and Adaptations

AMERICANS, ASSEMBLE!

Ask students to evaluate whether or not the Declaration was successful in uniting the colonies together. Instruct students to research events that transpired after the Declaration of Independence to help them answer this question. Events showing colonists cooperating or comingling with others outside their colony can be used

Culmination 50 minutes

STATUS REPORT

Teacher Preparation: Prepare copies of the Unit 8 Big Idea Essay for students. Familiarize yourself with the section entitled “An Ongoing Revolution”.

Remind students of the ideals of the Declaration (All men are created equal) and ask them if these ideals were fulfilled at the end of the Revolutionary War, allowing them to share why they do or do not believe they were. Read the section entitled An Ongoing Revolution in the Unit 8 Big Idea essay together, noting at its conclusion that the American Revolution is still ongoing and the people of the United States are still trying to live up to the Declaration’s ideals of equality today.

Task students with the job of presenting a report on the Status of the Ongoing Revolution to members of Congress. Instruct them to create a multimedia presentation (powerpoint, video, etc.) that explains the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the United States’ current level of success in living up to them. Students should include a statement about progress that has been made since the Revolution towards meeting the ideals, in addition to an assessment of where improvement is still needed. Have students research and report on different organizations and movements that are involved in advocating for greater equality. Have students conclude their presentation with a list of recommendations for how Congress can contribute to the Ongoing Revolution.

as evidence of success. Events showing animosity or a failure to collaborate can demonstrate that it did not work. Have students create their own timeline with descriptions of events they have selected that demonstrate the success or failure of the Declaration in unifying colonists.

ONGOING REVOLUTION TIMELINE

Instruct students to research events that have taken place in the United States since the Revolutionary War which have helped move the nation closer to fulfilling the promise of equality from the Declaration of Independence. Use a long piece of butcher paper or a long whiteboard to create a timeline that organizes these events. If desirable, color code different events to show their contribution toward progressing racial, gender, social, or economic equality.

DECLARATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

The Declaration of Independence has inspired many Declarations in nations around the world, serving as evidence of its ongoing impact on the development of other democracies and republics. Assign transcripts of the following Declarations and manifestos to pairs or small groups, then ask them to compare or contrast the language in them with that of the United States Declaration. Discuss the similarities and differences as a class, as well as how the Declarations span the 18th, 19th, and 20th century. Ask students: How have ideas and words in the Declaration impacted human rights around the world? Is the Declaration still relevant today? Will it still be relevant in the future? Why or why not?

- Declaration of Independence of the Mexican Empire
- Estonian Declaration of Independence
- Argentinian Declaration of Independence
- Manifesto of the Province of Flanders
- The Haitian Declaration of Independence
- Venezuelan Declaration of Independence
- A Declaration of Independence by the Representatives of the People of the Commonwealth of Liberia
- Czechoslovak Declaration of Independence
- Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam
- Declaration of the Establishment of Israel