

THE DECLARATION IN ITS TIME



Once news of the American Declaration of Independence hit London newspapers, the word spread quickly across Europe. Below is a list of the first appearances of the Declaration of Independence in European newspapers. The document may have appeared in full or partial text or may have only been mentioned as something that was published or read.

Directions:

Choose 5 colors to use on your map.

London newspapers first broke the news of the Declaration of Independence on August 16, 1776. Choose a color to make a dot near London, England and label the city.

In the next week, newspapers from other countries spread the story. Choose a new color to make a dot for the four cities that published a story between August 20 to August 24. Label each city.

By the end of August, the story from London newspapers reached as far as Poland. Choose a new color to make a dot for the four cities that published a story between August 27 and August 31. Label each city.

Some newspapers learned about the Declaration of Independence from countries other than England. For

example, a Russian newspaper copied the story from an earlier German newspaper. A newspaper in Denmark published one of the first full translations of the Declaration of Independence on the front page. Choose a new color to make dot for the three cities that published a story in September. Label each city.

At the beginning of October, Switzerland newspapers published a German translation of the Declaration of Independence in full. Choose a new color to make dot for Basel, Switzerland and label the city.

By November 1776, news of the Declaration of Independence had reached most people in Europe. Shade the rest of your map with your pencil to show the spread of news.

Publication City	Date	Modern Country
London	August 16	England
Edinburgh	August 20	Scotland
Dublin	August 22	Ireland
Frankfort	August 23	Germany
Warsaw	August 24	Poland
Madrid	August 27	Spain
Leiden	August 30	Netherlands
Gothenburg	August 30	Sweden
Vienna	August 31	Austria
Copenhagen	September 2	Denmark
St. Petersburg	September 3	Russia
Florence	September 14	Italy
Basel	October	Switzerland

LOOKING BACK: THE DECLARATION'S LEGACY



Read and analyze these lines from Jefferson's final public letter. In your own words, provide a summary for each section in the provided space.

"May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, and finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of **self-government**."

Summary:

"The form which we have substituted restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason, and freedom opinion. All eyes are opened or opening, to the rights of man."

Summary:

"The general spread of the lights of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, but the grace of God."

Summary:

"These are grounds of hope for others – for ourselves let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them."

Summary:

LOOKING BACK: THE DECLARATION'S LEGACY Answer Key

Read and analyze these lines from Jefferson's final public letter. In your own words, provide a summary for each section in the provided space.

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Summary:

Responses might include: Jefferson thinks the declaration of independence will spread all over the world encouraging nations to create their own governments.

Note: The phrase "monkish ignorance and superstition" likely refers to the divine right of kings or divine right to rule. This was the belief that monarchs gained their power to rule from the Christian God, which was prevalent in Europe during the age of absolute monarchs. By the Revolutionary War, many European countries still had absolute monarchies.

"The form which we have substituted restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason, and freedom opinion. All eyes are opened or opening, to the rights of man."

Summary:

Responses might include: Jefferson believes that the United States government offers men rights and freedoms not provided by other forms of government (specifically absolute monarchy).

Note: The line "the form which we have substituted" likely refers to a republican government — specifically the United States government — replacing a monarchy.

"The general spread of the lights of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, but the grace of God."

Summary:

Note: The phrase "lights of science" likely refers to the Enlightenment. Jefferson is also likely referring to the existence of a noble class with the phrase "favored few."

Responses might include: Jefferson believes that the world has learned that people are created equal.

"These are grounds of hope for others — for ourselves let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them."

Summary:

Responses might include: Jefferson believes that Americans should use the 4th of July to remember the rights promised by the Declaration of Independence.

PROMISE OF THE DECLARATION



Use the three people from the exhibit Promise of Equality (under Becoming Revolutionaries). Answer the questions for each historical person.

Historical Person: _____

1. Based on the display, what do you think this person thought about the Declaration of Independence?

2. Based on the display, do you think this person thought the United States fulfilled the promises of the Declaration of Independence? What makes you say that?

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UNFINISHED PAINTING



Quotes have been changed to reflect modern spelling.

Abigail Adams led her household while her husband, John Adams, worked in the Continental Congress. Adams wrote to John in March of 1776, arguing that the Congress should not forget about the women in the colonies. Years later, Adams wrote to her sister that she wished to participate in a local election and was inspired by the women of New Jersey who could vote.

Letter to John Adams, March 31, 1776

“I long to hear that you have declared an independency—and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.”

Letter to Mary Smith Cranch November 15, 1797

“...present my compliment to Mr. Whitman, & tell him if our state constitution had been equally liberal with that of New jersey and admitted the females to a Vote, I should certainly have exercised it in his behalf.”

Quaker **Elizabeth Drinker** lived in Philadelphia at the time of the Revolutionary War. On the first anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, many Quaker stores had their shop windows broken after refusing to close in honor of the day. Drinker’s husband, Henry, was one of the Philadelphia Quakers who were imprisoned by the Continental Army during the war. Drinker writes about both of these events in her diary.

July 4, 1777

“ the Town Illuminated and a great number of Windows Broke on the Anniversary of Independence and Freedom.”

September 4-9, 1777

“they according called the 4th, in the morning and took my Henry to the [Masons] lodge — in an illegal, and unprecedented manner — where are several, other Friends with some of other persuasions, made prisoners... [the Friends] have sent several Remonstrances to the Congress and Council. [On the September 9,] word was brought from the Council that their Banishment was concluded to be on the Morrow, the Wagons were preparing to carry them off — I came home in great distress...”

William Findley served as a soldier and an elected representative in the Pennsylvania state legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives. During his time as a representative, Findley locked horns with Robert Morris – the wealthiest man in America – over the very meaning of representative government. Challenging the centuries-old logic that wealthy people were the most unbiased and benevolent leaders in society, Findley argued that everyone had personal interests, and therefore government should allow competitive debate between the poor and the rich.

General Assembly of Pennsylvania, April 1, 1786

“We are one great family : and the laws are our common inheritance. They are general rules, and common in their nature. No man has a greater claim of special privilege for his £100,000 than I have for my £5. No. The laws are a common property. The legislature are entrusted with the distribution of them. This house will not—this house has no right, no constitutional power to give monopolies of legal privilege—to bestow unequal portions of our common inheritance on favorites.”

James Forten, born free in Philadelphia, first heard the Declaration of Independence at nine years old. Decades later, now a veteran of the Revolutionary War, Forten wrote a series of letters arguing against a possible Pennsylvania law that would restrict the movement of African Americans.

Letters from a Man of Color, 1813

“Those patriotic citizens, who...framed the Constitution of Pennsylvania, have by the ninth article declared, ‘that all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent and inalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying life and liberty.’

Under the restraint of wise and well administered laws, we cordially unite in the above glorious sentiment, but by the bill upon which we have been remarking, it appears as if the committee who drew it up mistook the sentiment expressed in this article, and do not consider us as men, or that those enlightened statesmen who formed the constitution upon the basis of experience intended to exclude us from its blessings and protection. If the former, why are we not to be considered as men. Has the God who made the white man and the black, left any record declaring us a different species. Are we not sustained by the same power, supported by the same food, hurt by the same wounds, pleased with the same delights, and propagated by the same means. And should we not then enjoy the same liberty, and be protected by the same laws.

It seems almost incredible that the advocates of liberty, should conceive the idea of selling a fellow creature to slavery.”

Thomas Hutchinson, a loyalist and the former governor of Massachusetts, wrote a long letter to an unknown noble about the Declaration in October 1776.

Strictures upon the Declaration of the Congress at Philadelphia, Oct. 15, 1776

“Suffer me, my Lord, before I close this Letter, to observe, that though the professed reason for publishing the Declaration was a decent respect to the opinions of mankind, yet the real design was to reconcile the people of America to that Independence, which always before, they had been made to believe was not intended. This design has too well succeeded. The people have not observed the fallacy in reasoning from the whole to part; nor the absurdity of making the governed to be governors. From a disposition to receive willingly complaints against Rulers, facts misrepresented have passed without examining. Discerning men have concealed their sentiments, because under the present free government in America, no man may, by writing or speaking, contradict any part of this Declaration, without being deemed an enemy to his country, and exposed to the rage and fury of the populace.”

Zehorakim Mtohksin, a leader of the Stockbridge Mohicans, signed a letter to John Hancock and the Continental Congress with other Stockbridge leaders. In this letter they explained their troubles in obtaining their rights to lands “west of Tyconderoga” and cited their participation and losses in the Revolutionary War as evidence that they deserved better treatment.

Letter to His Excellency John Hancock and the Honorable Congress, March 25, 1782

“...that we are small and poor in comparison to the White People who are Great and Rich; that we having taken an active part in the war, suffered very greatly by it in Blood and Interest trusting the good [illegible] people of this Island to do us justice with regard to our lands we thought we deserved better treatment. We now send this our complaint to your honorable body. That as you have always kindly heard us, we now request you would look on your covenant with us and hold our rights in your power till such time as we have full satisfaction made us and you. Petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray — Chiefs of the River Tribe — Joseph Shauquethqucat, Jehoiakim Mtohksin, Jehoiakim Naunauptank, Hendrick Aupaumut, Joseph Quonnukaw, John Konkpot”

Zehorakim's first name is sometimes written as Jehoiakim.