



Honoring the Spirit of America

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“The Declaration of Independence: In Your own Words”

Grades 4-8

Topic: Declaration of Independence

Objective: SS4CG1: The student will describe the meaning of natural rights as found in the Declaration of Independence (the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness).

This objective covers GPS requirement **SS4CG1**.

(For teachers outside the state of Georgia, check your local or state education curriculum to see what requirements this lesson plan may satisfy.)

Materials:

- A brief history of the Declaration of Independence from any of these websites:
http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/charters_of_freedom/declaration/declaration.html
<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/>
<http://www.thedeclarationofindependence.org/>
- Several copies of the Declaration of Independence
- Paper and pencils
- Dictionaries
- Notebook paper

Introduction:

1. Have students work in groups to create a web about what they know about the Declaration of Independence.
2. Conduct a class discussion on what they have written.
3. Read a history of the Declaration of Independence (found on one of the above websites) so students can edit their webs.

Procedure:

1. Have students read the first paragraph and a half of the Declaration of Independence out loud.
2. As students read, have them underline difficult or unfamiliar words. There are several words they may be familiar with but not in this context. Some examples

- include: dissolve, station, entitle, impel, self-evident, endowed, inherent, inalienable, deriving, consent, and institute.
3. Discuss these words with the students to see if they can define the words using context clues.
 4. Have students define more difficult words.
 5. Once students have gained a general understanding of the Declaration of Independence, discuss natural rights and what they mean.
 6. Relate this discussion to the natural rights that a students has in the classroom.
 7. Have each student write a “Declaration of Independence for Our Classroom”. All declarations should include at least three classroom rights that mirror the three natural rights of the Declaration of Independence: the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Each declaration should be at least one full paragraph in length and should include at least three words that were discussed/defined in the beginning of the lesson.

Assessment:

The students’ “Declaration of Independence for Our Classroom”.

Each declaration should:

- be at least one paragraph in length
- have three classroom rights that mirror the three natural rights of the Declaration of Independence: the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
- include at least three words that were discussed/defined in the beginning of the lesson
- demonstrate students’ knowledge of the vocabulary and the history of the document to keep their words true to the original spirit and ideas behind the Declaration of Independence.

Enrichment:

- Students can work on more of the DOI in terms of vocabulary and interpretation.
- They can also look at the original text as opposed to the edited document that was approved by congress.