



*Honoring the Spirit of America*

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## **“The Declaration of Independence”** *In your own words*

Grades: 8-12  
English

### **Objective**

- 1 Explain in their own words what “The Declaration of Independence” (DOI) means
- 2 Understand its importance to America’s history.

### **Character Education Words**

- Courageous
- Thankful
- Patriotic

### **Teacher’s Overview**

- Students will give their opinion on what they think the DOI is and what it means to Americans.
- They will read a brief history of the DOI and the time that it was written. After reading the DOI students will discuss and look up vocabulary words from the first one and a half paragraphs of the DOI. After these activities students will have the information needed to write the introductory statement of the DOI in their own words.

### **Materials**

- A brief history of the DOI from any of these websites:  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibit\\_hall/charters\\_of\\_freedom/declaration/declaration.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/charters_of_freedom/declaration/declaration.html)  
<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/>  
<http://www.thedeclarationofindependence.org/>

- a copy of the DOI
- paper
- pens
- dictionary

### **Introduction**

- 1 Journal: If you had to pick just one right for American citizens to have, what would it be and why?
- 2 Discuss with class
- 3 Have the students write down what they know about the DOI
- 4 In a group discuss, write down students input.
- 5 Read the history of the DOI to find out if what was written is accurate information.
- 6 Discuss why it was necessary to have a DOI

### **Activities**

- 1 Print out a copy of the DOI
- 2 Have students read the first paragraph and a half of the DOI silently and highlight words that are unfamiliar. For students with lower reading skills read to them or have a recording for them to listen to.
- 3 There are several words that they may be familiar with but not in this context. Some words I have included are dissolve, station, entitle, impel, self-evident, endowed, inherent, inalienable, deriving, consent, and institute.
- 4 Have students list words on the board. Discuss these words with the students to see if they can define the words using context clues. Those words that are difficult have them look up and define.
- 5 Students will write original vocabulary word on the board and their new synonym next to it.

### **Individual Practice/Reflection**

- Journal: do you think the DOI should be revised to reflect current society?

### **Assessment**

- Have students rewrite in their own words the first paragraph and a half of the DOI. They will use their knowledge of the vocabulary and the history of the document to keep their words true to the original spirit and ideas behind the DOI.

### **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.