

Declaration of Independence: The Beginning of Freedom

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Group Website

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After hearing about this year's theme, Debate and Diplomacy, we began looking at events throughout history. The Declaration of Independence caught our eye. While researching the Declaration, we saw how the document tremendously impacted and influenced the world, and realized how significant independence was for the American people. Not many people know what events led up to the Declaration, and how the debate among colonists on whether to declare independence from Britain led to many new ideas and influential pamphlets, such as Thomas Paine's 'Common Sense.' Seeing how much debate and diplomacy surrounded the document, we decided The Declaration of Independence was a great fit for the History Day theme this year.

When we first started working on our topic, we visited databases like Britannica and Gale in Context. Then, through hours of research on Google, websites, sources, and other search engines, we found what we needed from credible sources. Later, we began focusing on finding more sources for our topic. We found a database containing correspondence between delegates on the Declaration. The database was our main primary source and helped us give a more detailed picture of how the document was viewed in the eyes of the delegates.

We decided to do a website because we thought the website would help us show how important The Declaration of Independence was. Building our website, we were mostly experimenting and exploring. Our background color on the website is dark blue because dark blue is the color of independence. Our teacher had instructions on building the website, but we thought it would become rigid and less creative, so we followed our intuition. We got a better grasp of the website builder by exploring the pages and resources, and by doing that, we were able to create our website with the originality we wanted.

Throughout our website, we were able to explain the Declaration's writing, drafting, and the triumph involved in creating and publishing the Declaration of Independence. We wanted to showcase what the Declaration of Independence meant and accomplished in a few short sentences for our thesis. Our thesis is; The Declaration of Independence, approved by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, in Pennsylvania, ended the debate on whether to declare independence from Great Britain. The document symbolized Americans' right to self-govern, freedom from British rule, and led to the formation of their own country. The Declaration also influenced other countries to follow America's lead, representing the right to freedom to nations across the globe.

Over the years, countries have looked at the principles, ideas, and writing of the Declaration to declare independence. Because of the document, America was recognized as a country when it declared independence from Britain. The United States is now one of the most powerful and influential countries in the world. The document also sparked organizations and movements such as the abolitionist movement. The Declaration of Independence isn't just a milestone and foundation for America, but an influence on the entire world.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

“Delegates to the Second Continental ... - America in Class.” *Delegates to the Second Continental Congress on the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE July 1776 __ LETTERS (EXCERPTS)*, National Humanities Center,
<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/rebellion/text8/delegatesdecindep.pdf>.

This is a letter from Joseph Reed written in 1776. After reading through the letters of Delegates, it gave us new perspectives on who opposed and supported *The Declaration of Independence*, and why. Using these letters helped add more details on how people thought of independence during that time period.

“Delegates to the Second Continental ... - America in Class.” *Delegates to the Second Continental Congress on the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE July 1776 __ LETTERS (EXCERPTS)*, National Humanities Center,
<https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/rebellion/text8/delegatesdecindep.pdf>.

We decided to include this letter from Thomas Jefferson because we wanted to show how and why he wrote *The Declaration of Independence* the way he did. We think this segment explains that.

“1776: Paine, Common Sense (Pamphlet).” *Online Library of Liberty*, Part Of The Library Fund Network, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/page/1776-paine-common-sense-pamphlet>.

***Common Sense* was written by Thomas Paine, a colonist that supported independence. Using a section of *Common Sense* helped us show how colonists were trying to convince others to support independence, and why they themselves supported independence.**

“The Second Continental Congress and the Declaration of Independence.” *National Parks Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.nps.gov/inde/learn/historyculture/resources-declaration-secondcontinentalcongress.htm#:~:text=Contact%20Us-,The%20Second%20Continental%20Congress%20and%20the%20Declaration%20of%20Independence,Congress%20was%20preparing%20for%20war.>

We used this quote from Richard Henry Lee to show how many colonists were resolute about independence from Great Britain. We decided not to use any more primary sources in that paragraph because we decided that it wasn't needed.

Timmons, Greg. “The Argument of the Declaration of Independence.” *NEH*, National Endowment for the Humanities, 26 June 2019, <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/argument-declaration-independence>.

We used a section from *The Declaration of Independence* to explain why America was breaking free from Britain. Reading *The Declaration* helped us understand the reason why colonists were adamant about being free.

Secondary Sources:

Armitage, David. "The Declaration of Independence in Global Perspective | AP US History Study Guide from The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History." *AP Gilder Lehrman*, <http://ap.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/road-revolution/essays/declaration-independence-global-perspective>. Accessed 10 April 2022.

There are so many countries that have taken ideas out of *The Declaration of Independence* and used them for their own declaration. It surprised me how one document could have such a big impact on the whole world. Using the site we were able to explain how big of an influence *The Declaration* was on other nations.

"Diplomacy: A Key Component of the Revolution." *U.S. Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, <https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/short-history/diplomacy>.

We decided to add this quote because it analyzed how diplomacy was used by the Americans to convince the French to join the war. We wanted to showcase how and why France decided to side with the Americans during the War.

"Effects." *Declaration of Independence*, Weebly, <https://decofind1776.weebly.com/effects.html>.

Having support from other countries was vital if America wanted to win the war against Britain. This quote perfectly sums it up and includes information on who helped America win the Revolutionary War.

Fleming, Esther. "Home." *SidmartinBio*, 23 Oct. 2019, www.sidmartinbio.org/what-happened-to-the-american-colonies-in-the-1700s/.

We used this quote from Alan Taylor to convey how big the colonial population was during the 1750s. This helped us smoothly go from talking about the population to what jobs colonists had.

“From Colonial Rule to Independence.” *Ben's Guide To the US Government*, Government Publishing Office,

<https://bensguide.gpo.gov/m-from-colonial-rule?highlight=WyJjb25zdGl0dXRpb24iLCJjb25zdG10dXRpb24ncyJd>. Accessed 10 April 2022.

We used this secondary source to further explain and emphasize the topic we were discussing in the paragraphs prior to and later to this quote. The quote acknowledges the natives who lived in America before the Europeans came. This quote also helps to wrap up the first paragraph above it and begin introducing the paragraph coming soon after.

Gale Middle School Online Collection. “Scholarly Resources for Learning and Research | Gale.” Declaration of Independence, Gale, a Cengage Company, 2021, <https://www.gale.com/>.

We used this quote to help explain what was going on but written in someone else's words. It is so that we can restate what was previously said, but it is backed by the fact that it is by another source.

Hand, Tom. “The Declaration of Independence: Debate.” *Americana Corner*, Americana Corner, 22 Dec. 2021, www.americanacorner.com/blog/declaration-independence-debate.

We used this primary source quote from John Adams found on the secondary source ‘Americana corner’ underneath the paragraph about influence because we thought it would fit in with the idea. We also wanted to end the paragraph with a

bang and so we decided the quote by John Adams would be perfect to show how independence was an important thing.

History.com Editors. "Revolutionary War." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 29 Oct. 2009, www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/american-revolution-history.

Using this site we were able to explain and describe why Americans felt conflicted over British rule. Reading through the site I was able to better understand what events, such as Britain taxing colonists, caused Americans to debate whether to separate from Great Britain.

"How Did the American Revolution Change America?" *Reference*, IAC Publishing, <https://www.reference.com/history/did-american-revolution-change-america-65b49130f2052ae0>.

Using this site we were able to better explain how *The Declaration of Independence* changed America. Before reading this site, I honestly had no idea how the document changed America. After reading the site I was blown away by how immensely *The Declaration* changed the U.S.

Important Effects of the Declaration of Independence. (2021, May 19). Retrieved from <https://studymoose.com/important-effects-of-the-declaration-of-independence-essay>

Explaining why the colonists were fighting in the Revolutionary War is important. Using the quote from the site helped us explain the reason that colonists were fighting.

"The Declaration of Independence: A History | National Archives." *National Archives* |, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 14 May 2018,

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-history>. Accessed 10 April 2022.

We decided to add a quote from this website because it explained the reasons why Americans were declaring independence from Britain. This quote goes with the context surrounding it and adds meaning to the website.

“The Declaration of Independence and Its Influence on the Constitution.” *The Declaration of Independence and Its Influence on the Constitution* | *The National Constitution Center*, National Constitution Center, 20 June 2019,

<https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/podcast/the-declaration-of-independence-and-its-influence-on-the-constitution>.

We decided to add this quote because it showcased how much the Declaration was looked back to for its ideas and principles. So many influential people such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. have looked back on the document. Adding this quote added to the importance of the Declaration and how it had been used through history.

“Timeline of the Revolution.” *National Parks Service*, U.S. Department of the Interior,

<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/americanrevolution/timeline.htm>.

Describing the Revolutionary War, such as the battles that took place, it's important to give the full picture of the Revolutionary War. The quote described what battles took place during the Revolutionary War, and helped us understand what those battles looked like.

Timmons, Greg. "The Argument of the Declaration of Independence." *NEH*, National Endowment for the Humanities, 26 June 2019, <https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/argument-declaration-independence>.

We used this small primary source segment from *The Declaration* to tie it into *Common Sense*. Although the quote came directly from Thomas Jefferson, we found it in a secondary source, which is why it resides in the secondary source section. We put this quote underneath our paragraph to show how even before the *Declaration* was written, the thought process as to why they should separate from Great Britain was so similar.

Images:

Amin, Arafat, and Arafat Amin. "Week 2 (The Founding and U.S Constitution)." *Arafat Amin CUNY KBCC*, Cuny Academic Commons, 21 Oct. 2020, <https://pol5100.commons.gc.cuny.edu/2020/10/21/week-2-the-founding-and-u-s-constitution/> .

We chose this image because it shows the declaration- which is the topic of our website. We needed an image that showed the main idea on the thesis page, and this one was perfect.

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2021, December 9). *Boston Tea Party*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Boston-Tea-Party>

The Boston Tea Party is just so hard to justify with words- Which is why we have this image, it shows what is going on and is by an artist at the time. It brings in the older 18th-century vibe to the website.

“Colonial Times.” *Farming the United States of America*,

<http://farmingtheunitedstatesofamerica.weebly.com/colonial-times.html> .

Using this image helped us show what farming looked like in the 17th century, it brought more detail to our website and helped readers visualize what that job might be like.

“Continental Congress, 1774.” *NYPL Digital Collections*, The New York Public Library Digital Collections, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-9fd9-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

We decided to add a picture of the Continental Congress because we mentioned how the Congress made the key decision of making a committee of 5 to draft the Declaration of Independence. We wanted to have a picture showing the Continental Congress so viewers can have an idea how what Congress looked like back in the day.

“Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 29 Jan. 2022,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Man_and_of_the_Citizen#/media/File:Declaration_of_the_Rights_of_Man_and_of_the_Citizen_in_1789.jpg.

We chose this image because it brings in an element of another country, we hadn't talked much about other countries at the start of the website, so when we brought this in, it included more and felt more like it was wrapped up and well written.

“France in the American Revolutionary War.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 25 Dec. 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/France_in_the_American_Revolutionary_War.

We didn't have many images about the war and other countries, so having that represented is an important factor of the website. We want everything to make sense to readers, so the purpose of this image is to explain artistically what we're talking about in an easier way to understand.

“How Did the Publication of ‘Common Sense’ Affect Public Opinion?” *JYF Museums*, American Alliance of Museums, 23 Nov. 2020, <https://jyfmuseums.org/learn/learning-center/how-did-the-publication-of-common-sense-affect-public-opinion/>.

The image provides evidence of Common Sense, and what it looked like so that people can envision it better and understand what we're talking about.

“In Congress July 4, 1776.” *Neutron Bytes*, 3 July 2018, neutronbytes.com/2018/07/03/in-congress-july-4-1776-2/.

This image was mostly included because it is famous and well-known by many, so it can bring something to our website that people understand. It also represents exactly what we are talking about in the paragraphs next to it.

Jacobs, Lydia. "Antique Image: Map of Early America Free Stock Photo ..." *Public Domain Pictures.net*,

<https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/view-image.php?image=101995&picture=antique-image-map-of-early-america> .

Using this image we were able to show and describe what the 13 colonies looked like, to add more visual appeal and information.

"Teaching American History with NYPL Digital Collections: Revolutionary New York." *The New York Public Library*,

<https://www.nypl.org/blog/2020/06/11/teaching-american-history-nypl-digital-collections-revolutionary-new-york>.

We decided to add this image because it really showcased how much the Americans wanted to be free of Britain, and what steps they were taking to erase traces of Britain in America.

The Art of Wigmaking, 6 Dec. 2019,

<https://rodama1789.blogspot.com/2019/12/the-art-of-wigmaking.html>.

In colonial times wig making was a well-paying job, but the trade didn't last long. Having this image of wig-making helped show the interior of a wig-making shop as well as the people working inside the shop. The purpose of the image is to add visual representation, to let readers know more and see more.

The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. (1882). *Bostonians reading the Stamp Act* Retrieved from <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-f4b5-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

An image is equal to a thousand words, so this image is mainly used to express what we wanted to say but with more detail. It adds a sense of ‘Oh, that’s what it looked like’ so that readers can know exactly what’s going on, not basing everything on imagination.

“The Paradox of the Declaration of Independence.” *The Aspen Institute*, The Aspen Institute, 17 Jan. 2020,

<https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/every-american-know-paradox-declaration-independence/>.

We chose this image to show readers what the signatures on the declaration looked like, because just saying who signed it isn’t enough, we want a visual representation of how they signed it and what it looked like.

“Thomas Jefferson Declaration of Independence: Right to Institute New Government.” *Thomas Jefferson*, Library of Congress, 24 Apr. 2000,

<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/jefferson/jeffdec.html>.

We decided to add a picture of where Thomas Jefferson lived because it gives viewers an idea of what the place looked like. Adding the picture enhanced the overall layout of our website and added meaning.

“Thomas Jefferson.” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 14 Feb. 2022,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Jefferson.

We were previously talking about Thomas Jefferson in our paragraph, so including a picture of him made sense, so that people can link our words and that image together.

Vinkhuijzen, and Hendrik Jacobus. “Military Uniforms: Germany, Prussia, 1771-1779.” NYPL's Public Domain Archive, <https://nypl.getarchive.net/media/germany-prussia-1771-1779-b18bb2>.

This image depicts a German soldier uniform in the time of the Revolution. We used this image to represent and describe what the soldiers looked like so that readers could get not just a description but a visual representation of the German soldiers we had mentioned in a quote.

“Washington Crossing the Delaware, by Emanuel Leutze, 1851.” *Washington Crossing the Delaware, by Emanuel Leutze, 1851.* | *The Core Curriculum*, Columbia College,
<https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/content/washington-crossing-delaware-emanuel-leutze-1851>.

An image of this battle is necessary for this website- The battle and painting itself are both very famous landmarks in the revolutionary war. We were discussing this topic in the paragraph next to it as well, so we have context for the image. The image adds an understanding of what was happening in the battle.

Videos:

Hand, Tom. *The Declaration of Independence, Pt 2: The Colonies' Unsuccessful Attempt to Reconcile with England*. Americana Corner, n.d.. *YouTube*,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48wOV7gtaVg>. Accessed 14 Feb. 2022.

We decided to add this video because it explained the events leading up to the Declaration very well. We thought this video would add to the Build Up and not take anything away from what we had written down, so we added it.