

K-2: Meet the Declaration Teacher Guide

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. 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. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by overthrowing the forms to which they are accustomed. — But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Tyranny, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former System of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world. — He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. — He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. — He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to Tyrants only. — He has called together legislative Bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. — He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the People. — He has refused for a long time after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within. — He has endeavored to prevent the Population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Law for Naturalization of Strangers; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. — He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers. — He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. — He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance. — He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our Legislatures. — He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the civil power. — He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: — For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: — For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: — For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: — For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: — For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury: — For transporting us over seas to be tried for pretended offences: — For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and pit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies: — For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: — For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with powers to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. — He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us. — He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our People. — He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun, with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation. — He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands. — He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the Inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms. Our repeated Petitions have been answered by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People. — Nor have We been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow those usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of conciliation. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Boston: Printed by
Dymally Hall,
Geo. Wallcut.

John Hancock
Joseph B. Brown
John Deane

Edward Rutledge

John Jay
Thomas Lynch
Arthur Middleton

Samuel Adams
John Adams
John Jay
John Jay
John Jay

George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Th. Jefferson
Wm. Harrison
Th. Nelson
James Bracken

John Hancock
Benjamin Rush
Benjamin Franklin
John Jay
John Jay
John Jay

James Wilson
John Jay
John Jay
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ARCHIVES

How to Use this Guide

Dear Educators,

Thank you for your interest in the Meet the Declaration virtual program for grades K-2! This guide outlines the program's guiding questions, standards alignment, and program logistics. It also includes instructions and material for facilitating the program's **required** pre-program activity as well as a recommended post-program activity. We look forward to connecting with your students soon to learn more about the Declaration of Independence!

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National Standards Alignment

National Standards for Civics and Government	College, Career, & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards	National Center for History in the Schools History Standards
NSCG.K-4.2.A.1 Students should be able to explain the importance of the fundamental values and principles of American democracy.	D2.Civ.8.K-2 Describe democratic principles such as equality and fairness D2.His.12.K-2 Generate questions about a particular historical source as it relates to a particular historical event or development.	Standards for Grades K-4 Topic 3 Standard 4D: Describe the history of holidays, such as the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr., Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Veterans' Day and Thanksgiving, that celebrate the core democratic values and principles of this nation.

Required Pre-program Activity

Historical Context

Note: The following provides background information for content covered during the Meet the Declaration virtual program. It is adapted from material available online at [The Declaration of Independence: How Did it Happen?](#)

The Revolution Begins

In the early 1770s, more and more colonists became convinced that Parliament intended to take away their freedom. In fact, the Americans saw a pattern of increasing oppression and corruption happening all around the world. Parliament was determined to bring its unruly American subjects to heel. Britain began to prepare for war in early 1775. The first fighting broke out in April in Massachusetts. In August, the King declared the colonists “in a state of open and avowed rebellion.” For the first time, many colonists began to seriously consider cutting ties with Britain. The publication of Thomas Paine’s stirring pamphlet *Common Sense* in early 1776 lit a fire under this previously unthinkable idea. The movement for independence was now in full swing.

Choosing Independence

The colonists elected delegates to attend a Continental Congress that eventually became the governing body of the union during the Revolution. Its second meeting convened in Philadelphia in 1775. The delegates to Congress adopted strict rules of secrecy to protect the cause of American liberty and their own lives. In less than a year, most of the delegates abandoned hope of reconciliation with Britain. On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee introduced a resolution “that these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states.” They appointed a Committee of Five to write an announcement explaining the reasons for independence. Thomas Jefferson, who chaired the committee and had established himself as a bold and talented political writer, wrote the first draft.

Writing the Declaration

On June 11, 1776, Jefferson holed up in his Philadelphia boarding house and began to write. He borrowed freely from existing documents like the Virginia Declaration of Rights and incorporated accepted ideals of the Enlightenment. Jefferson later explained that “he was not striving for originality of principal or sentiment.” Instead, he hoped his words served as an “expression of the American mind.” Less than three weeks after he’d begun, he presented his draft to Congress. He was not pleased when Congress “mangled” his composition by cutting and changing much of his carefully chosen wording. He was especially sorry they removed the part blaming King George III for the slave trade, although he knew the time wasn’t right to deal with the issue.

Pre-program Activity Instructions

Note: The pre-program activity supports student learning about the Declaration. This activity includes important ideas that the program itself builds upon and that must be covered in advance to ensure that students have a successful virtual program experience.

Voices of Independence:

Estimated time: 40 minutes

Objectives: After completing the Voices of Independence pre-program activity, students will be able to:

- Analyze historical documents
- Define the concept of fairness
- Explain why the Declaration of Independence was created

Activity Outline:

- **Introduction:** Display the image, [The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor](#), on [p. 5](#). Notice that initially, the image is cropped to reveal only a small group of people.
 - Ask students to record as many observations as possible from the image. Encourage students to pay attention to specific details in the image (such as the flag on the ship). Remind students to look at the whole visible area for context clues; even the smallest details may reveal the answer.
 - Ask students to record observations according to the following:
 - What I see
 - What I think
 - Questions I have
 - Once students have recorded their observations, display the entire image, [The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor](#) on [p.6](#), and have students complete the same questions again:
 - What I see
 - What I think
 - Questions I have
 - Engage students in a whole-class discussion about the inferences they made while observing the image.
 - **Ask students:** What does this image make you wonder about? What questions do you have?
 - Some possible questions include:
 - What is in the crates on the British ships?
 - Why would people throw these crates overboard?
 - Why are crowds gathered to watch?
- **Main Activity:**
 - In 1773, the King of Britain made a new rule. The rule said that only one tea company could sell tea in America and this company did not have to pay taxes like everyone else.
 - **Ask students:** Based on our observations of the image, how do you think the colonists (the people living in America) felt about this new rule?

- Ask students to consider the following scenarios to help them understand how the colonists might have felt about this new rule:
 - Scenario 1: A group of children wants to choose the game they play, but one person always decides.
 - Scenario 2: Someone keeps making rules for the class, but students do not get to share their ideas.
 - Scenario 3: A group of children is playing a game. One person keeps changing the rules without asking anyone else.
 - **For each scenario, ask students:**
 - How do you think the people feel?
 - Is this fair or unfair?
 - What could they do? How could they tell someone they want change?
- **Program Connection:**
 - We had a chance to think about how people might feel in each of these scenarios. People might feel frustrated, upset, or like their voice was not being heard. Many colonists had some of these same feelings. They felt that the King of Britain was making rules and decisions for them, but they did not have a say in those decisions. Some colonists thought this was unfair. They tried different ways to make their voices heard.
 - Sometimes people write an important message to explain what they believe, what they want to change, and why. They create a **declaration**.
 - Tell students that the word **declare** means to say something clearly and publicly so other people know it.
 - Put a large sheet of paper at the front labeled: **Our Class Declaration**
 - **Ask students:** What is something we think is important for everyone in our classroom?
 - Students might suggest:
 - Everyone should get a turn
 - Everyone should be treated kindly
 - Everyone should be able to learn
 - Everyone should be listened to
 - Everyone should feel safe
 - Choose 2-3 ideas and write them as a simple declaration:
 - We believe everyone in our classroom should be treated fairly. We believe everyone should have a chance to play, learn, and share their ideas.
 - Then let each child “sign” the declaration with their name.
 - The leaders of the colonies came together and used their voices to stand for what they believed. They worked together and shared their ideas to create our country. During our program at the National Archives, you are going to discover what they declared, why, and how we celebrate it.

Pre-program Activity Documents





LITH. & PUB. BY SARDNY & MAJOR,

Enacted according to Act of Congress, A. D. 1786, by Sarony & Major, in the Office of the Dist. Court of the South District of N. York.

39 NASSAU AVE. FULTON ST. N.Y.

THE DESTRUCTION OF TEA AT BOSTON HARBOR.

How to Prepare Students for the *Meet the Declaration* Virtual Program

Guiding Questions

- What is the Declaration of Independence?
- Why do we celebrate the 4th of July?

Program Overview

During this interactive program, students will learn about the Declaration of Independence and why it is important. By analyzing primary sources from the National Archives, students will explore the concepts of fairness and using your voice.

Guidance for Virtual Program

Note: The following outlines keys for success for the Meet the Declaration virtual program.

Before Attending the Meet the Declaration Virtual Program

1. Please complete the required pre-program activity to prepare students for the virtual program.
2. Please print or provide students with digital access to the program documents (see [page 8](#)).
 - [President Ronald Reagan, Nancy Reagan, and others Watching Fireworks at July 4th Independence Day Picnic on South Lawn](#)
 - [Print of the Declaration of Independence](#)
 - [The Declaration: Mural by Barry Faulkner](#)

During the Meet the Declaration Virtual Program

1. Please plan to connect to your scheduled program a minimum of **5 minutes** before the scheduled start time. Please note: The NARA Education Team facilitates multiple student programs every day. To ensure every student receives the best program possible, the NARA education team will reschedule student programs for groups that connect more than 15 minutes late.
2. We require that the requesting educator or another educator from your institution be present during the program to observe the session and support classroom management.
3. Meet the Declaration is an interactive virtual program. The NARA Educator facilitating the program may request the classroom teacher's help to call on students to share their responses.
4. Students will interact with National Archives documents during this program through whole group and small group activities. Please have students seated for the program in a way that enables them to have small group discussions (3-4 students per group).

Program documents - p. 8-11.

Note: Please ensure that students have access to the following documents during the Meet the Declaration virtual program. During this program, students will gather information from these documents, so it is important that students are able to clearly view them.



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. — 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. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. 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To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world. — He has refused his assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. — He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. — He has refused to assent to Laws for the accommodation of large districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only. — He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of obscuring them from the view of the People. — He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the People. — He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within. — He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Strangers; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. — He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers. — He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. — He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance. — He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our Legislature. — He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power. — He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving his assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: — For quarantining large bodies of armed troops among us: — For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: — For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: — For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: — For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury: — For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences: — For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its borders so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies: — For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: — For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. — He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our People. — He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Rapidity, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation. — He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands. — He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered by repeated injury. Alas! whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, it is unfit to be the ruler of a free People. — Nor have We been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their Legislatures to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends. — We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Barton Gwinnett
Lymon Hall
Geo. Walton.

John Hancock
Joseph Hewes
John Penn

Edward Rutledge

Thos. Mifflin
Thomas Lynch
Arthur Middleton

Samuel Chase
Wm. Paton
Thos. Stone
Giles Cordell

George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Th. Jefferson
Wm. Harrison
Th. Nelson
Francis Lightfoot Lee
Carver Braxton

Robt Morris
Benjamin Rush
Benjamin Franklin

John Morton
Geo. Clymer
Thos. Smith

James Wilson
Gt. Mifflin
Cass Munn

Thos. Mifflin
Thos. Mifflin
Thos. Mifflin

John Jay
John Jay
John Jay

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John Jay

John Jay
John Jay
John Jay

Joshua Bartlett
Wm. Whipple
Sam. Adams

John Adams
Robt. Treat Paine
Abridg. Gerry

Step. Hopkins

William Ellery
Roger Sherman
John Huntington
M^r Williams
Oliver Wood
M^r McArthur





Meet the Declaration

Name: _____

Date: _____



**What is one thing that should be fair
for everyone?**

What can you do to make that fair?

Get Creative!

Draw an image that represents your idea

Additional Educational Resources

Note: The following educational activities and resources are designed to support student learning. These activities are not required. Feel free to facilitate only the activities that you think would be most helpful for your students.

Resources on the Declaration from the National Archives

- [The Declaration of Independence](#)
- [The Declaration of Independence: What Does it Say?](#)
- [The Declaration of Independence: A History](#)
- [Join the Signers of America's Founding Documents](#)

DocsTeach Educational Activities

- [Finding American Symbols](#)
- [National Holidays Matching](#)