



# ACTIVITY OVERVIEW



## Q1 • Declaration of Independence • High School

### Researching Global Perspectives: The Declaration in a World of Empires

**Theme:** Histories of Independence

**Time Required:** 3–5 class periods + independent research time

#### Materials Needed:

- Copies of the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights
- Excerpts or summaries of Spanish colonial documents (1700s New Mexico)
- Access to library, databases, or online research tools
- Journals, notebooks, and presentation materials

#### Activity Overview

In this activity, students analyze the Declaration of Independence within a global and comparative context, considering how ideas about liberty, taxation, and justice appeared across different empires. Students review the American Revolution alongside the Spanish Empire's presence in New Mexico, exploring how these parallel systems of power shaped ideas about freedom and control. They will connect the experiences of the thirteen colonies and Spanish New Mexico, analyze founding documents, and conduct independent research projects that compare perspectives on independence, sovereignty, and justice.

This lesson aligns with New Mexico's statewide recognition of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and encourages students to situate U.S. independence within broader global movements for freedom.



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## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze how the Declaration of Independence reflected global ideas about liberty and sovereignty.
- Compare political, social, and economic systems in the British and Spanish Empires.
- Evaluate historical sources and arguments related to justice and taxation.
- Conduct independent research using primary and secondary sources.
- Present findings in written or multimedia form.

## Essential Questions

- How did the American Revolution influence — and reflect — global movements for independence?
- What did liberty, justice, and taxation mean in 18th-century New Mexico compared to the thirteen colonies?
- How do empires shape ideas about independence and citizenship?
- Why is it important to view the American Revolution through multiple perspectives?

## Classroom Implementation Ideas

### Mini-Lessons & Discussion:

- Review the American Revolution and French and Indian War as context.
- Examine how the Spanish Empire governed New Mexico during the same period.
- Discuss how empire, control, and freedom were understood across different regions.

### Primary Text Review:

- Read excerpts from:
  - The Declaration of Independence
  - The Constitution
  - The Bill of Rights
- Compare to colonial Spanish laws or trials (justice and taxation themes).



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## Research Activities:

- New Mexico criminal trials in the 1700s: How did Spanish law define justice?
- The Spanish Patriotic Contribution: What does taxation reveal about power and participation?
- Global independence movements: How did ideas from the American Revolution influence or echo in other regions?

## Essay Assignment Options:

- Compare the treatment of liberty or justice under British and Spanish rule.
- Analyze how geography shaped independence movements.
- Explore how indigenous or enslaved peoples experienced the idea of “freedom.”

## Enrichment:

- Integrate cross-cultural study with art, literature, or music from the era.
- Host a student symposium or “World of Empires” gallery walk on Constitution Day.

## Connection to Statewide Theme

This activity supports the American Revolution: 250 Years since the Declaration of Independence initiative, encouraging high school students to connect New Mexico's history to global struggles for freedom and justice.