



ACTIVITY CHECKLIST



Q1 • Declaration of Independence • High School

Researching Global Perspectives: The Declaration in a World of Empires

Before the Activity

- ☐ Review the Activity Overview for this activity.
- ☐ Prepare the Context Lesson materials (Enlightenment ideas, colonial protests, structure of revolutionary arguments).
- ☐ Gather the Declaration excerpts, grievance analysis worksheet, and research/essay instructions.
- ☐ Bookmark the National Archives digital Declaration for primary source analysis:
- ☐ Set up space for small-group analysis and whole-class discussion.

During the Activity

1. Context Lesson

- ☐ Introduce the political and philosophical foundations of the Declaration (natural rights, social contract, consent of the governed).
- ☐ Examine key influences: Locke, Iroquois Confederacy, colonial assemblies.
- ☐ Ask: *“What conditions justify breaking political ties with a government?”*

2. Reading & Structural Analysis

- ☐ Read selected excerpts or the full Declaration with the class.
- ☐ Identify and annotate the document’s structure: Preamble,
 - Theory of Government
 - List of Grievances
 - Attempts at Redress
 - Conclusion
- ☐ Pause to clarify meaning, rhetorical strategies, and purpose.



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3. Grievance Analysis

- ☐ Assign each student or group a grievance to interpret in modern language.
- ☐ Students analyze:
 - What was the colonists' complaint?
 - Why was it significant?
 - Which Enlightenment principles it connects to
- ☐ Each group presents a short explanation to the class.

4. Rhetorical & Language Study

- ☐ Identify rhetorical devices: parallelism, repetition, appeals to reason/emotion, charged diction.
- ☐ Ask: *How does Jefferson build a persuasive argument? Which techniques strengthen the case for independence?*
- ☐ Students annotate examples directly on copies or digital documents.

5. Discussion Questions

- ☐ Lead a class discussion using questions from the Activity Overview:
 - Is the Declaration more a philosophical argument or a political action?
 - Who was included or excluded in its vision of rights?
 - How do power, representation, and justice appear in the document?
 - Which parts of the Declaration still resonate today, and which do not?

6. Primary Source Analysis

- ☐ Students examine the high-resolution National Archives image of the Declaration.
- ☐ Assign a brief written analysis addressing document form, signatures, context clues, and historical significance.
- ☐ Students use evidence from the text to support observations.



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7. Essay Assignment

- ☐ ☐ Introduce the culminating writing task:
“Write a 4–5 paragraph essay evaluating whether the philosophical and political arguments in the Declaration justify the colonies’ decision to separate from Great Britain. Use textual evidence from the Declaration, historical context lessons, and grievance analysis.”
- ☐ Review expectations: thesis, evidence, reasoning, historical context, conclusion.
- ☐ Provide time for drafting, peer review, and revision.

After the Activity

- ☐ Facilitate closing reflections:
 - *Which ideas from the Declaration most shaped modern democracy?*
 - *How should we interpret its claims today?*
- ☐ Collect student essays and analysis work.
- ☐ (Optional) Display annotated documents, rhetorical posters, or grievance summaries.