

Classroom Activity Guide for

The Declaration of Independence from A to Z

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Overview

The Declaration of Independence was our nation's birth certificate. It boldly stated that the people of the Thirteen Colonies would no longer follow King George III. The Colonies were now free and independent states and would henceforth be known as the United States of America. This had not been an overnight decision. The Colonists had been loyal to their king, but after many years of oppressive rule, the people were driven to action to protect their rights and freedoms.

After you read *The Declaration of Independence from A to Z* aloud to your students, choose from the following activities to enhance the learning experience.

Geography

- Many ships sailed to the Colonies from Southampton, England to Boston, Massachusetts. Locate both these ports on a world map. The distance is about 3000 miles. It took at least one month for a ship to bring information from one side of the Atlantic Ocean to the other, and then several months for a ship to return with a response to that information.
- What were some factors that could cause a further delay in communication? (Examples: bad storms, indirect shipping routes, delays in departure, shipwrecks, etc.)
- How did this time delay cause problems between England and the Colonies?

Social Studies

- The Declaration listed 27 grievances or complaints against the king. Look at a copy of the Declaration and name some of these complaints.
- Discuss why the separation from England was a major step for the Colonies.
- If you had been a Colonist in 1776, would you have considered this separation a wise move or a foolish one? Discuss this from the viewpoint of a Loyalist (someone loyal to King George III) versus someone who wanted America to be independent from the king. You may even want to set up a debate with two teams taking opposing views.

- Why is the Declaration of Independence one of our nation's most valued documents?
- The 56 men who signed the Declaration took a huge risk. Their action meant they were committing treason or betrayal to the king. Look up information on several of the signers. What happened to some of them?

Language Arts

- For Younger Students: Create a birthday card for the United States of America.
- Discuss chronological order. Write out a timeline listing some of the events as described in the book that led to the creation of the Declaration.
- Pretend you are a Colonist in America. Write a letter to a friend telling him/her about the Declaration of Independence and what it means to you.
- The Declaration was printed as a broadside, or a single sheet of paper printed on one side, so it could be posted or handed out for easy reading. Create your own broadside by writing stories or poems about independence from England. Include simple pen and ink illustrations.

Art

- Illustrator Layne Johnson was inspired by the paintings of the following Colonial artists: Charles Willson Peale, John Singleton Copley, John Trumbull, and Gilbert Stuart. Study some of their artwork.
- Why do you think it was important for the illustrator of this book to refer to the artists from that time period?
- Pick one of the illustrations in *The Declaration of Independence from A to Z* and discuss why you liked or disliked it.

Physical Education

- The children in the days of Colonial America played games of tag. Create your own game with one team being the British and the other the Americans.
- Some of the Colonists played a game called Quoits which is similar to horseshoes. They took a ring of rope or metal (called a quoit) and tossed it from a distance to land over a stick or metal pin (known as a hob) for points. The first person to reach 21 points won the game.

Play your own version of Quoits by taking embroidery hoops (about 6 inches in diameter) or braided rings of rope and tossing them over a stick or short wooden dowel set up about 15 to 20 feet away (you can adjust this distance based on the ability of the players). Have two 8-player teams with

each team having two quoits. The first player of team A will compete with the first player of team B, taking two alternating tosses each. The score is determined by who gets closest to the hob. The person who makes a ringer (the quoit lands over the hob) gets 3 points. If there is no ringer, but a quoit is leaning on the hob, then that person gets 2 points for the team. If no one has a ringer or a leaner, then the quoit that is closest to the hob gets 1 point for that team. If both players make ringers, the quoit on the top receives the 3 points.

The quoits are then passed to the second player of both teams following the rules above. The game continues on down the line until all players have had their turns. The team with the most points wins.

Math

It took a ship at least one month to sail from Boston, Massachusetts to Southampton, England. The distance was about 3,000 miles.

- Find the average daily miles a ship would travel that distance in 30, 45, 60, and 75 days.
Answers: 100, 67, 50, and 40 miles per day.
- Discuss some of the reasons why one ship would take longer to travel than others.
Some possible answers: size of ship; number of sails; weather conditions; heaviness of cargo.
- Play "Race to the Colonies" Math Game.
 - Divide students into teams of 4 to 5 players. Have each team create a small sailing ship using construction paper and craft supplies. Let each team give their ship a name and write it on the ship.
 - Mount a bulletin board with a display of the Atlantic Ocean, and have America on the left and England on the right side of the board. Set up a number line of 3000 miles to represent the distance from Boston to Southampton.
 - Start all ships on the England side lined up vertically below the number line.
 - Give each team a math problem to solve. The teams that answer correctly move one space along the number line. The team that arrives in the Colonies first is the winner!

Word Search

B	R	I	J	U	W	N	A	E	K	C	O	C	N	A	H	N	H	O	J	B	P	I	F	P	R
J	O	Y	Z	S	O	E	T	C	K	P	X	G	M	C	C	Y	T	W	Q	R	U	Q	E	Z	S
H	F	S	F	I	R	G	I	Q	Y	C	V	R	E	R	K	M	B	P	D	B	R	B	V	B	S
D	B	F	T	Z	L	C	B	Z	L	K	A	C	A	A	L	E	M	O	F	K	S	X	Q	Y	E
Z	O	A	B	O	D	L	I	U	S	I	L	L	K	E	Y	N	O	T	E	B	U	T	Y	S	R
O	N	P	R	C	N	D	H	D	F	Q	U	V	T	P	H	E	W	Z	U	D	I	Y	K	W	G
A	O	G	F	I	H	T	X	O	S	U	A	R	Q	A	I	Y	C	L	E	N	T	T	H	S	N
Y	I	V	Z	B	W	O	E	E	H	F	B	I	D	R	M	T	A	W	X	H	O	I	O	G	O
T	T	Q	S	G	L	X	C	A	J	T	L	E	J	E	M	Y	P	C	J	N	F	R	N	Q	C
I	U	G	Y	J	X	N	A	Y	P	L	E	J	B	F	N	R	H	Z	B	V	H	O	H	K	L
W	L	N	X	D	A	O	U	G	R	A	M	E	R	I	C	A	G	T	E	D	A	J	Q	V	A
E	O	L	D	V	Q	I	J	K	O	V	R	U	H	L	F	D	P	K	O	F	P	A	P	Z	T
I	V	L	E	R	C	N	X	P	C	T	P	T	O	S	N	X	M	C	R	M	P	M	X	G	N
N	E	I	L	W	Y	E	A	R	L	Y	I	W	Y	T	R	E	B	I	L	D	I	V	G	L	E
S	R	U	E	M	N	S	A	V	A	V	X	O	M	J	E	H	S	M	T	U	N	T	A	L	N
G	B	Q	G	G	K	F	Z	S	I	G	N	A	T	U	R	E	S	O	R	I	E	C	H	U	I
G	O	Z	A	Y	N	U	S	W	M	K	E	M	L	A	Q	M	Y	A	T	K	S	U	W	S	T
D	A	H	T	Y	U	N	I	T	E	D	S	T	A	T	E	S	E	T	P	J	S	M	O	F	N
N	V	L	E	C	R	A	F	V	L	J	X	H	T	T	I	K	T	H	G	I	F	U	A	J	O
L	A	E	Z	M	D	T	H	O	M	A	S	J	E	F	F	E	R	S	O	N	U	A	W	T	C

Word List

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| America | Majority |
| Boston Tea Party | Nation |
| Continental Congress | Oath |
| Delegate | Proclaim |
| Enemy | Pursuit of Happiness |
| Exhibit | Quill |
| Fight | Revolution |
| Grievances | Signatures |
| John Hancock | Timothy Matlack |
| Independence | United States |
| Thomas Jefferson | Valuable |
| Keynote | World |
| Life | Yearly |
| Liberty | Zeal |

Word Search

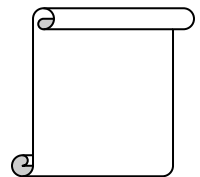
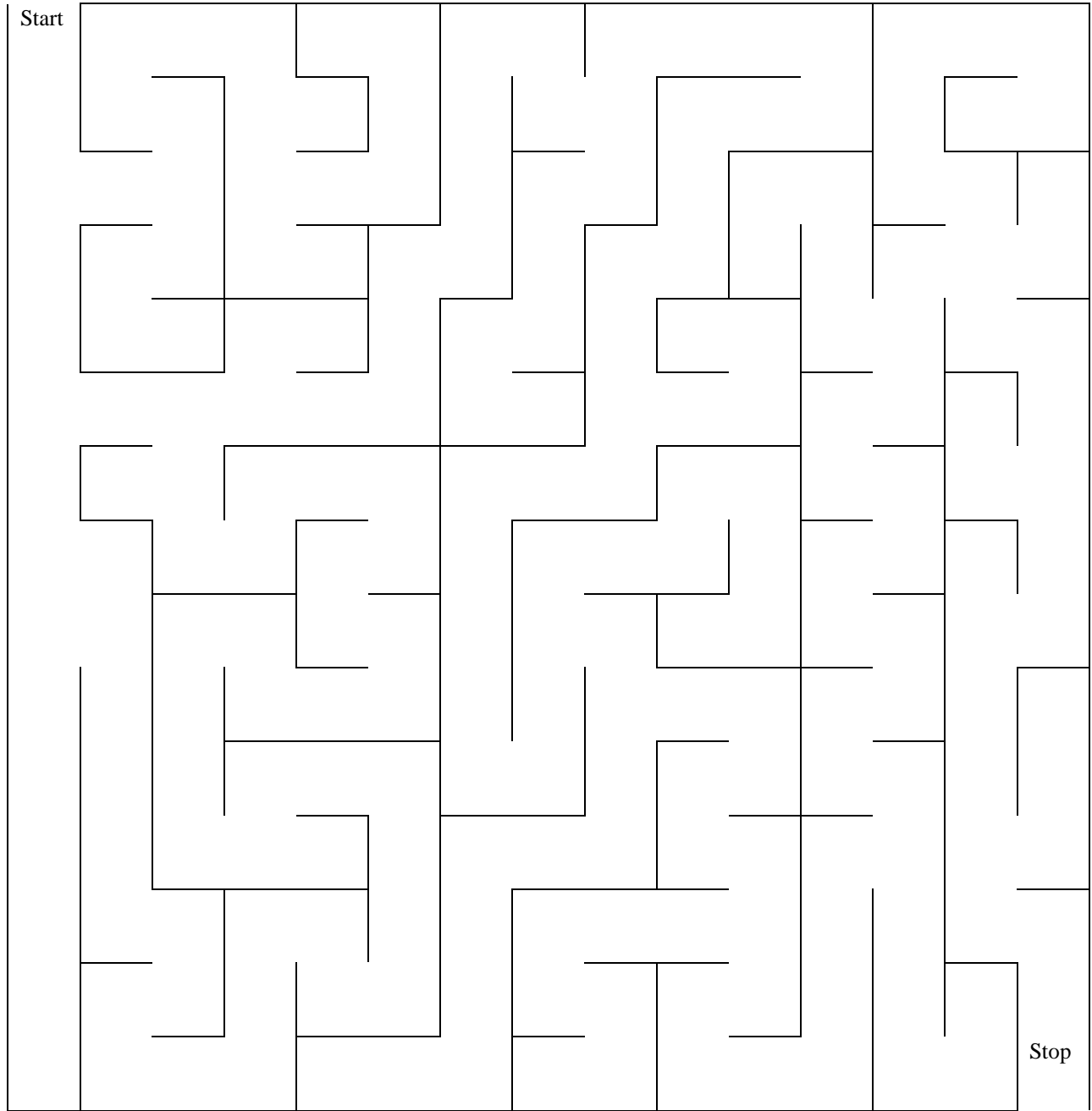
Answer Key

B	R	I	J	U	W	N	A	E	K	C	O	C	N	A	H	N	H	O	J	B	P	I	F	P	R
J	O	Y	Z	S	O	E	T	C	K	P	X	G	M	C	C	Y	T	W	Q	R	U	Q	E	Z	S
H	F	S	F	I	R	G	I	Q	Y	C	V	R	E	R	K	M	B	P	D	B	R	B	V	B	S
D	B	F	T	Z	L	C	B	Z	L	K	A	C	A	A	L	E	M	O	F	K	S	X	Q	Y	E
Z	O	A	B	O	D	L	I	U	S	I	L	L	K	E	Y	N	O	T	E	B	U	T	Y	S	R
O	N	P	R	C	N	D	H	D	F	Q	U	V	T	P	H	E	W	Z	U	D	I	Y	K	W	G
A	O	G	F	I	H	T	X	O	S	U	A	R	Q	A	I	Y	C	L	E	N	T	T	H	S	N
Y	I	V	Z	B	W	O	E	E	H	F	B	I	D	R	M	T	A	W	X	H	O	I	O	G	O
T	T	Q	S	G	L	X	C	A	J	T	L	E	J	E	M	Y	P	C	J	N	F	R	N	Q	C
I	U	G	Y	J	X	N	A	Y	P	L	E	J	B	F	N	R	H	Z	B	V	H	O	H	K	L
W	L	N	X	D	A	O	U	G	R	A	M	E	R	I	C	A	G	T	E	D	A	J	Q	V	A
E	O	L	D	V	Q	I	J	K	O	V	R	U	H	L	F	D	P	K	O	F	P	A	P	Z	T
I	V	L	E	R	C	N	X	P	C	T	P	T	O	S	N	X	M	C	R	M	P	M	X	G	N
N	E	I	L	W	Y	E	A	R	L	Y	I	W	Y	T	R	E	B	I	L	D	I	V	G	L	E
S	R	U	E	M	N	S	A	V	A	V	X	O	M	J	E	H	S	M	T	U	N	T	A	L	N
G	B	Q	G	G	K	F	Z	S	I	G	N	A	T	U	R	E	S	O	R	I	E	C	H	U	I
G	O	Z	A	Y	N	U	S	W	M	K	E	M	L	A	Q	M	Y	A	T	K	S	U	W	S	T
D	A	H	T	Y	U	N	I	T	E	D	S	T	A	T	E	S	E	T	P	J	S	M	O	F	N
N	V	L	E	C	R	A	F	V	L	J	X	H	T	T	I	K	T	H	G	I	F	U	A	J	O
L	A	E	Z	M	D	T	H	O	M	A	S	J	E	F	F	E	R	S	O	N	U	A	W	T	C

Maze



Help get the quill pen to the Declaration of Independence so the delegates can sign their names.



The First Reading of the Declaration of Independence

A Readers Theater

Cast:

Narrator

Young Boy

Widow Harper

Mr. Taylor -- Merchant

Mr. Hunts -- Farmer

Mrs. Galloway – Seamstress

Colonel John Nixon

Narrator: We are in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It is Monday, July 8th. The year is 1776. It is just before noon, and the day is sunny and warm.

Young Boy: Let's go, Mother. We are going to miss it.

Widow Harper: Don't rush so, son. We will make it in time.

Mr. Taylor: Where are you hurrying off to on such a fine day, Widow Harper?

Widow Harper: Oh, Mr. Taylor. Have you not heard? There's going to be a reading.

Mr. Taylor: A reading?

Young Boy: Yes, sir. The Continental Congress has ordered the reading of the Declaration of Independence today at noon. Hurry, Mother!

Widow Harper: I apologize, Mr. Taylor, but I did promise the lad.

Mr. Taylor: Where is the reading to be held?

Widow Harper: In front of the State House. We best be off. Good day, sir.

Mr. Taylor: Good day to you and the lad, Widow Harper.

Narrator: Mr. Taylor closes up his shop and hurries to the Pennsylvania State House. A large crowd has gathered. The bells of the city are ringing. Mr. Taylor sees Mr. Hunts, a local farmer and customer.

Mr. Taylor: Greetings, Mr. Hunts. I see you have come to town for the reading.

Mr. Hunts: I have been praying for our freedom from the king for a long time, Mr. Taylor. It would have been difficult to keep me away.

Mr. Taylor: Who is to read the Declaration?

Mr. Hunts: I do not know.

Mr. Taylor: There's Mrs. Galloway. Perhaps she knows. Good day, Mrs. Galloway.

Mrs. Galloway: Mr. Taylor. Mr. Hunts.

Mr. Hunts: Good day, Madam.

Mr. Taylor: Do you know who will be reading today?

Mrs. Galloway: Why, it's none other than our very own Colonel John Nixon.

Mr. Hunts: He is a worthy citizen for such an honor.

Narrator: In another part of the yard, Widow Harper and her son have found a place where they can listen to the reading.

(The First Reading of the Declaration of Independence - continued)

Widow Harper: I do not know if I have ever seen such a crowd!

Young Boy: Everyone from Philadelphia must be here. Isn't that James Forten standing over there? He is the lad who helps his father make sails for Mr. Robert Bridges.

Widow Harper: Yes, that is the lad. Oh, look. There is Colonel Nixon. Let's listen to him read the Declaration of Independence.

Narrator: Colonel John Nixon steps onto a platform and begins to read with a strong, clear voice.

Colonel Nixon: "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."

Narrator: Colonel Nixon continues to read the Declaration. The crowd is pleased, and declares "Huzzas" in approval. The Declaration finishes with these words:

Colonel Nixon: "...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."

Young Boy: Huzza! Huzza!

Widow Harper: What wonderful words!

Mr. Taylor: Freedom! We are finally free from England.

Mr. Hunts: We have a long fight ahead, but we will triumph.

Mrs. Galloway: Did you hear? We have a new name.

All: Huzza for the Declaration of Independence! Huzza for the United States of America!

End