



## PREDICTING THE MEANING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

**Learning Objectives:** The students will...

1. Make predictions on statements about the Declaration of Independence.
2. Analyze the impact of key statement on future events.

**TEKS:** 8.4C, 8.15C, 8.19A

**Materials Needed:** Copies of the Predicting the Meaning worksheet and the Declaration of Independence for each student.

### Teaching Strategy:

1. Preview the Declaration of Independence by asking the students what they know about the document. Record these ideas on the overhead or the board for reference.
2. Pass out the worksheet to each student and have them complete Part One individually. When everyone has completed Part One, go over each statement having them raise their hand if they agree that this is part of the document.
3. Refer students to the copy of the Declaration of Independence. To complete Part Two, have the students read the document and as they find the correct answer to the statements, write whether it is actually true or false and quote the part of the Declaration that validates their final answer. If there is no citation, they should write "no evidence to validate." This part of the exercise can be done with a partner.
4. Go over their answers, asking the students to paraphrase the citations they used for validation in their own words. This will make sure they understand the intent of the document.
5. Finally, have the students work with a partner to complete Part Three to see how some of the grievances of the Declaration have been corrected in the U.S. Constitution. If necessary, give them the citation in the Constitution and see if they are able to see how the grievance was corrected.
6. Conclude the exercise by asking the students individually answer the following debriefing questions:
  - a. What is something you previously knew that was validated about the Declaration of Independence? What is something you learned about the Declaration that you previously did not know?
  - b. What connections between the Declaration of Independence and the later movement to end slavery (abolition) and the women's rights movement do you see?
  - c. What are some key ideas in the Declaration of Independence that make it one of the most influential documents in the history of the world?

## Predicting the Meaning of the Declaration of Independence Teacher Key

**Part Two:** Read the Declaration of Independence and as you come to the answer for each of the ten statements, write whether it is true or false, and the citation that validates your final answer.

True or False	Statement	Validation
True	The Declaration states the power to govern comes from the people.	"Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."
False	The Declaration declares that all people are equal.	"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal..."
True	Jefferson believes that all men were born with the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.	"...that they are endowed by the Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."
False	Jefferson blames the king alone for all of the problems between England and the colonies.	""He has combined with others (Parliament) to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution..."
False	Jefferson believes that the people have the right to overthrow the government anytime they want.	"...any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it..." AND "Prudence, indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes..."
True	One of the reasons that Jefferson gives for independence dealt with the fact the British had tried to get the Indians stirred up against the colonists.	"He has excited domestic insurrections among use, 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."
True	Jefferson blames England for passing taxes without the consent of the colonists.	"For imposing taxes on us without our consent."
True	Jefferson says the colonists have repeated warned the British of the problems but were ignored.	"In every state of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms;; our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury." AND "We have warned them, from time to time, of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us."
True (but no evidence in the document)	Jefferson blames the king for the beginning the slave trade in the New World.	There is no evidence in the document to validate this answer. However, the original draft by Jefferson did include an indictment of the king in the slave trade. It was removed to assure that the Southern colonies would support independence.
True	The signers of the Declaration agree to give their life, money, and their honor if necessary in order to achieve independence.	"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."

**Part Three:** Read the following grievances from the Declaration and underneath, paraphrase their meaning. Next identify how they have been corrected in the U.S. Constitution:

1. Declaration: "For imposing taxes on us without our consent."

**Constitution: Article 1, Section 7, Clause 1—All bills raising revenue must originate in the House of Representatives.**

**Article 1, Section 2, Clause 1—The members of the House of Representatives are chosen by the people in the States every two years.**

2. Declaration: "...For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us."

**Constitution: Amendment Three—This amendment provides for no quartering of soldiers in private homes.**

3. Declaration: "...For depriving us, in many Cases, of the Benefits of Trial by Jury."

**Constitution: Amendment 6—Provides the right of a speedy trial with an impartial jury. Amendment 7—Provides a trial by jury in a civil case.**

4. Declaration: "...For cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World"

**Constitution: Article I, Section 8, Clause 1—States that Congress (the law making body) has the power to regulate trade with foreign nations and the Indians.**

5. Declaration: "He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions (of Representatives Houses) to cause others to be elected..."

**Constitution: Article I, Section 2, Clause 1—Provides that the House of Representatives is to be chose every two years by the people of the states.**

## Predicting the Meaning of the Declaration of Independence

**Part One:** Read the following statements and decide if you think the statement is true or false by marking the appropriate blank.

True

False

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1. The Declaration of Independence states that the power to govern comes from the people.

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2. The Declaration of Independence declares that all people are equal.

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3. Jefferson believes that all men were born with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

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4. Jefferson blames the king alone for all of the problems between England and the colonies.

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5. Jefferson believes that the people have the right to overthrow the government anytime they want.

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6. One of the reasons Jefferson gives for wanting independence dealt with the fact the British had tried to get the Indians stirred up against the colonists.

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7. Jefferson blames England for passing tax laws with the consent of the colonies.

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8. Jefferson states that the colonists have repeatedly tried to warn the British of the problems and were ignored.

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9. Jefferson blames the king of England for beginning the slave trade in the New World.

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10. The signers of the Declaration agree to give their life, money, and their honor if necessary in order to achieve independence.

**Part Two:** Read the Declaration of Independence and as you come to the answer for each of the ten statements, write whether it is true or false, and the citation that validates your final answer.

True or False	Statement	Validation
	The Declaration states the power to govern comes from the people.	
	The Declaration declares that all people are equal.	
	Jefferson believes that all men were born with the right to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.	
	Jefferson blames the king alone for all of the problems between England and the colonies.	
	Jefferson believes that the people have the right to overthrow the government anytime they want.	
	One of the reasons that Jefferson gives for independence dealt with the fact the British had tried to get the Indians stirred up against the colonists.	
	Jefferson blames England for passing taxes without the consent of the colonists.	
	Jefferson says the colonists have repeatedly warned the British of the problems but were ignored.	
	Jefferson blames the king for the beginning the slave trade in the New World.	
	The signers of the Declaration agree to give their life, money, and their honor if necessary in order to achieve independence.	

**Part Three:** Read the following grievances from the Declaration and underneath, paraphrase their meaning. Next identify how they have been corrected in the U.S. Constitution:

1. Declaration: "For imposing taxes on us without our consent."

Constitution:

2. Declaration: "...For quartering large Bodies of Armed Troops among us."

Constitution:

3. Declaration: "...For depriving us, in many Cases, of the Benefits of Trial by Jury."

Constitution:

4. Declaration: "...For cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World"

Constitution:

5. Declaration: "He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions (of Representatives Houses) to cause others to be elected..."

Constitution: