

4th Grade

# Discover America

Course 4 - Teacher Guide



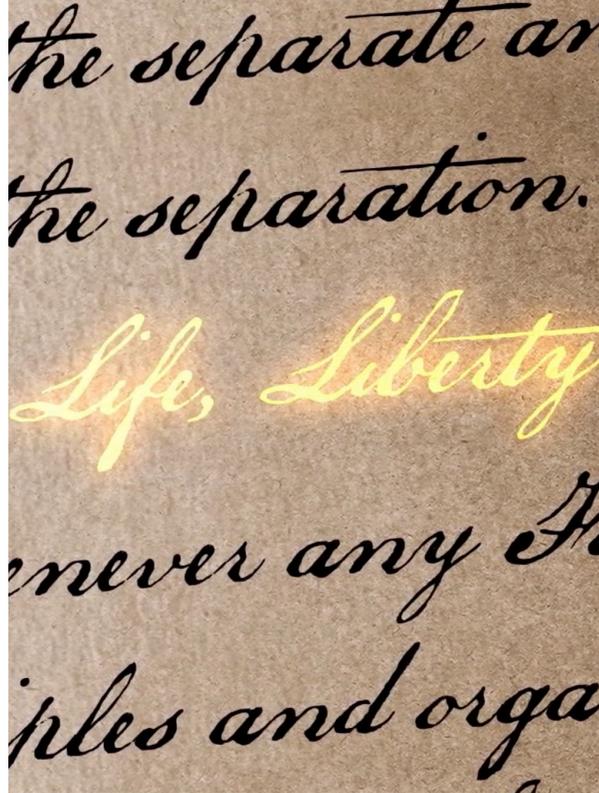
**COURSE 4: THE DECLARATION  
OF INDEPENDENCE**

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4th Grade

# Teacher Guide



## Key Themes

- Equity
- Freedom
- Independence
- Life

## Core Values

- Community
- Faith
- Life
- Liberty

# Learning Objectives

## Students will be able to:

- Identify the Committee of Five.
- List three facts about Thomas Jefferson.
- Summarize the events leading up to the American Revolution.
- Explain the meaning and origin of “all men are created equal.”



# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

## Key Terms

- 01 **American Revolution** - a struggle by the American colonies against British rule, leading to the formation of the United States of America as an independent nation.
- 02 **diplomat** - a person who helps people who have differing points of view find common ground.
- 03 **Founding Fathers (Founders)** - the individuals who played key roles in establishing the United States of America.
- 04 **religious freedom** - everyone has the right to practice their own religion or belief, or to choose not to practice any religion at all.
- 05 **Second Continental Congress** - a meeting where representatives from all the colonies came together to talk about and make important decisions.
- 06 **self-governing** - a place that is run by its own people rather than people from another region or organization.

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

# Introduction

## TELL Students

Alright, fourth graders, today we're going to learn about a very important document in American history called the Declaration of Independence. This document was created over 200 years ago, and it played a crucial role in shaping the United States as we know it today. We'll explore what it is, why it was written, and what it means for our country. Are you ready to dive into the Declaration of Independence? Let's get started!

America now has 50 states. But, this was not always the case. Originally, there were only 13 colonies. The colonies were ruled by the British king. The colonies were home to men, women, and children who left England and other places in search of a new home. Some came for religious freedom, while others were seeking better opportunities. Religious freedom means that the government cannot force people to follow a particular religion or prevent them from practicing their own beliefs.



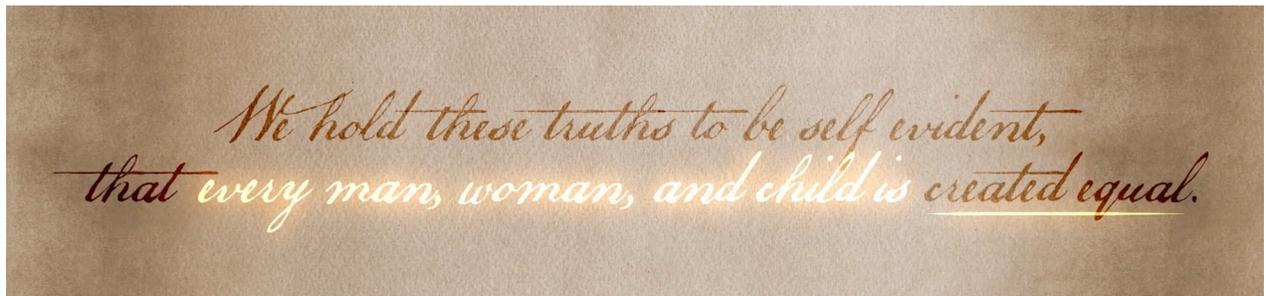
Map showing the distance from Great Britain to the American colonies.

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

# Introduction

## TELL Students

Our friend Liberty has some interesting things to say about how the idea of freedom was earned and then protected by the Declaration of Independence. As you study American independence, it is important to understand that the rights we enjoy today are rooted in the principles of religious freedom, self-governance, and life. Let's watch another episode of Star Spangled Adventures to learn more!



Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence, written in 1776.

## WATCH

**Star Spangled Adventures:**  
The Declaration of Independence



# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

# Lesson

## ASK Students

How did the 13 colonies gain their freedom?  
What role did the Founding Fathers play in gaining independence?

(allow students to respond)

## TELL Students

On June 7, 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a Committee of Five to create the Declaration of Independence. The Committee of Five included Founding Fathers John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Livingston, and Roger Sherman. John Adams was a lawyer, diplomat, and the second President of the United States. Thomas Jefferson was a diplomat, lawyer, architect, philosopher, and the third President of the United States. A diplomat is a person who helps people who have differing points of view find common ground. Benjamin Franklin was a writer, scientist, inventor, diplomat, publisher, and philosopher. Roger Livingston was a lawyer and politician, and Roger Sherman was a statesman and lawyer.

## ASK Students

How are the Founding Fathers similar? How are they different?

(allow students to respond)



Founding Fathers discussing the Declaration of Independence.

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

# Lesson

## TELL Students

Please read the following passage carefully to review the events leading up to the American Revolution. The American Revolution was a struggle by the American colonies against British rule, leading to the formation of the United States of America as an independent nation.



King George III

*Before 1775, the 13 colonies lived under British rule. However, tensions were rising between the colonists and King George III because the colonists felt they were being treated unfairly. The king was imposing taxes on them without giving them a say in the government, and he was ignoring their rights and freedoms.*



Paul Revere

*By 1775, things had reached a boiling point. King George III wanted to assert his authority over the colonists because he felt they were rebellious. He sent 700 British troops to seize weapons from the colonists. However, the colonists were warned by Paul Revere and other riders so they were ready for the British troops.*

*The first shots of the American Revolution were fired in the battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. These battles marked the beginning of the colonists' fight for independence.*

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

# Lesson

## **ASK** Students

What events led up to the American Revolution?

(allow students to answer)

## **TELL** Students

During the American Revolutionary War, representatives from the 13 colonies gathered for the Second Continental Congress. This was a meeting where representatives from all the colonies came together to talk about and make important decisions. The representatives decided it was time to officially declare independence from Britain.

A special group of Founding Fathers, including Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston, were asked to write a document explaining why independence was necessary and proclaiming America as a free nation, separate from British rule.

Thomas Jefferson, a 33-year-old from Virginia, was tasked with leading this important work. Jefferson was a remarkable individual known for his curiosity, creativity, and intelligence. He wore many hats throughout his life, serving as a lawyer, inventor, scientist, architect, politician, diplomat, writer, and farmer. Despite his young age, Jefferson played a pivotal role in drafting the Declaration of Independence, contributing significantly to its creation.

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

# Lesson

## **ASK** Students

What experiences did Thomas Jefferson have throughout his lifetime?

(allow students to respond)

## **TELL** Students

The Second Continental Congress worked hard to finalize a document that would declare the colonies' independence from Britain. This document became known as the Declaration of Independence. It wasn't an easy task – delegates spent days editing and debating the draft of the Declaration, making a total of 86 changes to the original text. Finally, on July 4, 1776, they reached an agreement on the final version.

One of the most important parts of the Declaration is its opening lines: "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." Here, the Founding Fathers, or Founders, emphasized the idea that everyone is equal and has rights given to them by God. These rights include the right to live freely, think independently, and pursue happiness in their lives.

## **ASK** Students

What does "all men are created equal" mean?

(allow students to respond)

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

# Lesson

## **TELL** Students

Please read the following passage to learn more about the Declaration of Independence and what it signifies for the United States.

*The Declaration also explains the role of the government in protecting these rights. It states that governments are created by the people to ensure their rights are secured. If a government fails to do so, the people have the right to change it or create a new one. This idea was crucial in shaping the American government system.*

*On August 2, 1776, the delegates began signing the Declaration of Independence, with 56 individuals putting their names to the historic document. This day, when the Declaration was agreed upon, is often called America's birthday and is celebrated every year on July 4th as Independence Day. People across the country come together for parades, fireworks, and barbecues to honor the bravery and determination of our Founders and the American colonists who fought for freedom.*

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

# Lesson

## **ASK** Students

Why do we celebrate the Fourth of July?

What does it mean to you?

(allow students to respond)

## **TELL** Students

The Fourth of July is a day of celebration because it is the day that our great country was born. The next time you celebrate July 4th, remember the bravery, vision, and determination of our Founders and the American colonists who brought the United States to life.



Fireworks are in full display on July 4th, the day we celebrate America's independence from British rule.

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

## Thomas Jefferson's Contributions

### *objective*

The objective of this activity is to engage fourth grade students in learning about Thomas Jefferson's life and his significant contributions to American history, particularly his role in drafting the Declaration of Independence.

### *materials*

1. poster boards or presentation software (such as PowerPoint or Google Slides)
2. markers, colored pencils, or digital drawing tools
3. access to school-approved books, articles, or online resources about Thomas Jefferson

### *introduction*

Begin the lesson by discussing the importance of Thomas Jefferson in American history. Introduce the goal of the activity: to create a poster or presentation highlighting Jefferson's life and contributions, particularly those that relate to the Declaration of Independence.

### *group formation*

Divide the students into small groups of 3-4.

### *research*

- Provide students with access to school-approved books, articles, or online resources about Thomas Jefferson. Guide students to research Jefferson's background, his role in drafting the Declaration of Independence, and his other accomplishments as a Founder and statesman.
- Encourage students to take notes and gather information to include in their posters or presentations.

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

## Thomas Jefferson's Contributions

### *poster or presentation creation*

- Distribute poster board and art supplies or assign each group a computer with presentation software.
- Instruct students to organize their research findings and create visually appealing posters or digital presentations that highlight key aspects of Thomas Jefferson's life and contributions.
- Encourage creativity in design and presentation layout, incorporating images, timelines, and quotes to enhance understanding.
- Remind students to include information about Jefferson's role in drafting the Declaration of Independence, his presidency, and other significant achievements.

### *practice and rehearsal*

Allow time for each group to practice presenting their posters or presentations to their peers within the small group. Encourage them to speak clearly, use engaging visuals, and explain their research findings effectively.

### *presentation*

- Invite each group to present their posters or presentations to the class. Encourage active listening and ask students to take notes on key points presented by their peers.
- After each presentation, facilitate a brief Q&A session where students can ask questions and provide feedback to their classmates.

### *reflection and discussion*

- Lead a class discussion about Thomas Jefferson's contributions to American history based on the information presented in the posters or presentations.
- Encourage students to reflect on what they learned about Jefferson and how his actions shaped the nation.
- Summarize key points and reinforce the importance of understanding historical figures like Thomas Jefferson.
- Provide constructive feedback to students and acknowledge their efforts in researching and presenting information about Thomas Jefferson.

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

## Fill in the Blank Review

*Instructions: Fill in the blanks with the correct words or phrases from the passage.*

1. On June 7, 1776, the Continental Congress appointed a Committee of Five to create the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Committee of Five included Founding Fathers John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Livingston, and Roger \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Thomas Jefferson was a diplomat, lawyer, architect, philosopher, and the \_\_\_\_\_ President of the United States.
4. Before 1775, the 13 colonies lived under British \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Tensions were rising between the colonists and \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ III because the colonists felt they were being treated unfairly.
6. The first shots of the American Revolution were fired in the battles of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ on April 19, 1775.
7. Representatives from the 13 colonies gathered for the \_\_\_\_\_ Continental Congress during the American Revolutionary War.
8. Thomas Jefferson was a remarkable individual known for his curiosity, creativity, and \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The Declaration of Independence states that governments are created by the people to ensure their \_\_\_\_\_ are secured.
10. On August 2, 1776, the delegates began signing the Declaration of Independence, which is often called America's \_\_\_\_\_.

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

## **Review Answer Key**

1. Declaration, Independence
2. Sherman
3. third
4. rule
5. King George
6. Lexington, Concord
7. Second
8. intelligence
9. rights
10. birthday

# The Declaration of Independence - 4th Grade

## Student Text

*Before 1775, the 13 colonies lived under British rule. However, tensions were rising between the colonists and King George III because the colonists felt they were being treated unfairly. The king was imposing taxes on them without giving them a say in the government, and he was ignoring their rights and freedoms.*

*By 1775, things had reached a boiling point. King George III wanted to assert his authority over the colonists because he felt they were rebellious. He sent 700 British troops to seize weapons from the colonists. However, the colonists were warned by Paul Revere and other riders so they were ready for the British troops.*

*The first shots of the American Revolution were fired in the battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. These battles marked the beginning of the colonists' fight for independence.*

*The Declaration also explains the role of the government in protecting these rights. It states that governments are created by the people to ensure their rights are secured. If a government fails to do so, the people have the right to change it or create a new one. This idea was crucial in shaping the American government system.*

*On August 2, 1776, the delegates began signing the Declaration of Independence, with 56 individuals putting their names to the historic document. This day, when the Declaration was agreed upon, is often called America's birthday and is celebrated every year on July 4th as Independence Day. People across the country come together for parades, fireworks, and barbecues to honor the bravery and determination of our Founders and the American colonists who fought for freedom.*

# The Declaration of Independence

# Resource List

- 01 <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/april-19/>
- 02 <https://www.nps.gov/mima/learn/historyculture/the-militia-and-minute-men-of-1775.htm>
- 03 <https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/battles-of-lexington-and-concord>
- 04 <https://www.nps.gov/inde/learn/historyculture/resources-declaration-secondcontinentalcongress.htm>
- 05 <https://www.history.com/news/thomas-paine-common-sense-revolution>
- 06 <https://www.nps.gov/inde/learn/historyculture/resources-declaration-secondcontinentalcongress.htm>
- 07 <https://www.monticello.org/thomas-jefferson/brief-biography-of-jefferson/>
- 08 Monticello: The Official Guide to Thomas Jefferson’s World
- 09 <https://www.nps.gov/inde/learn/education/classrooms/resources-declarationoverview.htm>
- 10 <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration/what-does-it-say>
- 11 <https://www.nps.gov/inde/learn/education/classrooms/resources-declarationoverview.htm>
- 12 <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
- 13 <https://www.monticello.org/slavery/paradox-of-liberty/thomas-jefferson-liberty-slavery/jefferson-and-the-enlightenment/the-declaration-of-independence/>
- 14 <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/interactives/declaration-of-independence/equal/index.html>
- 15 <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/signers-factsheet>

