

COLONIAL CONCERNS AND THE WRITING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

SS.7.CG.1.5 Describe how British policies and responses to colonial concerns led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.

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2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.7.C.1.3
 - Changed from “Describe how ~~English~~ policies and responses to colonial concerns led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.” to “Describe how British policies and responses to colonial concerns led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
 - No changes
- Benchmark Clarification Changes
 - Changed from “Students will trace the causal relationships between ~~English~~/British policies, ~~English~~ responses to colonial grievances, and the writing of the Declaration of Independence.” to “Students will trace the causal relationships between British policies, British responses to colonial grievances and the writing of the Declaration of Independence (e.g., Stamp Act, Quartering Act, Declaratory Act, Townshend Acts, Tea Act, Intolerable Acts).”
- Vocabulary Changes
 - Changed from “English” to “British”

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

This section addresses the following topics:

1. Core Themes in the Declaration of Independence Reflecting Colonial Concerns
2. Reasons for Drafting the Declaration of Independence
3. Declaration of Independence Timeline

1. Core Themes in the Declaration of Independence Reflecting Colonial Concerns

There are three core themes, and multiple subthemes, found in the Declaration of Independence. It is a common misunderstanding that the Declaration of Independence formed a government which it did not. This concept is important because the Declaration of Independence focuses on what the colonists found to be unacceptable governance. These unacceptable governance practices fell into three broad categories:

- A. Power was concentrated in one place (unitary government). The concentration of power contributed to the abuse of power. The form of government that created this concentration of power was going to be avoided for this reason. Generally speaking, the new government that would be created would do its best to avoid the abuse of power.

For example, the preamble includes the following phrase:

“....whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

- B. The colonists were denied acceptable representation in the legislature (“He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.”). Accordingly, the new government would guarantee representation in the legislature. Many historians and political scientists argue that the colonists identified representation in the legislature to be of key importance because the legislative power is the greatest among the three powers of government (legislative, executive, judicial). The legislative power is the greatest among the three powers of government because only laws can be enforced or adjudicated. The absence of laws means no adjudication or enforcement.
- C. States’ rights were denied. King George III denied the states a voice in governance (“He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people.”). This meant that the new government would respect states’ rights for, among other reasons, states are closest to the people, and would more likely garner the people’s consent.

Together, the Declaration of Independence outlined the colonists’ concerns about how King George III treated them. While the Declaration does not itself form a government, it does indicate what the colonists would avoid (abuse of power, or tyranny) or pursue (representation in the legislature, states’ rights) when they

did form governments in the future. The two governments that were eventually formed were organized under the Articles of Confederation (1781-1789) and the U.S. Constitution (1789-present).

2. Reasons for Drafting the Declaration of Independence

The colonists' decision to draft the Declaration of Independence followed several years of conflict between the British crown and the colonists. Historians argue that this relationship started to deteriorate in 1763 following the end of the Seven Years War. The Seven Years War resulted in significant debt for the British government. As a way to emerge from this debt, the British Parliament passed several laws that taxed the colonists including the Stamp Act (1765) and the Townshend Acts (1767). In 1774, the Parliament passed the Coercive Acts as a way to punish the colonists living in Massachusetts for the Boston Tea Party. The Coercive Acts compelled the First Continental Congress to meet in Philadelphia to agree on a response, which included a boycott of British goods and petitioning the king for a repeal of these acts. King George III did not respond to the colonists' requests for relief on the principle that the colonists did not have the right to make such requests. The colonists generated a second petition in 1775 which was rejected by the king, and Common Sense was published in early 1776.

Between 1763 and 1776, the relationship between the colonists and the king deteriorated. The deterioration of this relationship was tied to taxes enacted by the British Parliament, and the king's refusal to redress the colonists' grievances.

3. Declaration of Independence Timeline

March 1765- British Parliament required colonial authorities to provide food, drink, quarters, fuel, and transportation to British forces stationed in their towns or villages.

May 1775 - The Second Continental Congress convenes in Philadelphia. A "petition for redress of grievances," sent to King George III of England by the First Continental Congress in 1774, remains unanswered.

June - July 1775 - Congress establishes the Continental Army, a first national monetary currency and a post office to serve the "United Colonies."

August 1775 - King George declares his American subjects to be "engaged in open and avowed rebellion" against the Crown. The British Parliament passes the American Prohibitory Act, declaring all American sea-going vessels and their cargo the property of England.

January 1776 - Colonists by the thousands buy copies of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense," stating the cause of American independence.

March 1776 - Congress passes the Privateering Resolution, allowing colonists to arm vessels in order to "cruise [sic] on the enemies of these United Colonies."

April 6, 1776 - American seaports were opened to trade and cargo from other nations for the first time.

May 1776 - Germany, through a treaty negotiated with King George, agrees to hire mercenary soldiers to help put down any potential uprising by American colonists.

May 10, 1776 - Congress passes the "Resolution for the Formation of Local Governments," allowing colonists to establish their own local governments. Eight colonies agreed to support American independence.

May 15, 1776 - The Virginia Convention passes a resolution that "the delegates appointed to represent this colony in General Congress be instructed to propose to that respectable body to declare the United Colonies free and independent states."

June 7, 1776 - Richard Henry Lee, Virginia's delegate to the Continental Congress, presents the Lee Resolution reading in part: "Resolved: That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

June 11, 1776 - Congress postpones consideration of the Lee Resolution and appoints the "Committee of Five" to draft a final statement declaring the case for America's independence. The Committee of Five is composed of: John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Robert R. Livingston of New York and Thomas Jefferson of Virginia.

July 2, 1776 - By the votes of 12 of the 13 colonies, with New York not voting, Congress adopts the Lee Resolution and begins consideration of the Declaration of Independence, written by the Committee of Five.

July 4, 1776 - Late in the afternoon, church bells ring out over Philadelphia heralding the final adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

August 2, 1776 - The delegates of the Continental Congress sign the clearly printed or "engrossed" version of the Declaration.

Source: [Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention Timeline](#), Library of Congress

Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
What events led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence?		
BENCHMARK		
SS.7.CG.1.5 Describe how British policies and responses to colonial concerns led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.		
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY		
N/A		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will understand how the relationship between the British and the colonists led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will trace the causal relationships between British policies, British responses to colonial grievances and the writing of the Declaration of Independence (e.g., Stamp Act, Quartering Act, Declaratory Act, Townshend Acts, Tea Act, Intolerable Acts). Students will recognize the underlying themes of British colonial policies concerning taxation, representation and individual rights that formed the basis of the American colonists' desire for independence. 		
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS		
N/A		
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> duty, export, goods, import, individual rights, legislature, levy, oppression, Parliament, representation, tax, taxation without representation 		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Close reading of complex text	Collaborative learning	Video as text
MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighters Too Late to Apologize Viewing Guide Boston Massacre engraving (external link) Too Late to Apologize: A Declaration video (external link) Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs! reading 13 Colonies map 		

- 1754 -1776: The Road to the Declaration of Independence activity sheet
- The Road to the Declaration of Independence reading

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

- ELA.7.R.2.1- Explain how individual text sections and/or features convey a purpose in texts.
- ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
- ELA.V.1.3- Apply knowledge of context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words and phrases, appropriate to grade level.
- ELA.K12.EE.1.1- Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> To begin this lesson, pass out the “Too Late to Apologize Viewing Guide”. Project this “Boston Massacre” engraving from the Library of Congress. Ask students to answer the following questions in complete sentences on their viewing guide: What do you think is going on in this engraving? What is the issue on which it is focusing? How do you know? Teacher Note: The bloody massacre was perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt. Engraving by Paul Revere. Share with students that this is a depiction of the Boston Massacre in 1770. The Boston Massacre occurred when a large crowd of colonists crowded around and harassed British soldiers. In response, the soldiers fired their guns into the crowd killing five people and injuring six. Show students the “Too Late To Apologize: A Declaration” video from Soomo Publishing, about the events leading up to the Declaration of Independence based on One Republic’s song, ‘Too Late To Apologize’. Discuss with students that the video depicts the relationship between the British government and the colonies leading up to the Declaration of Independence. Pose the following questions to the students: The final image in the video is of the Declaration of Independence, do we understand what led up to the writing of this document? What do we think we know? What else do we need to know? Lead students to the understanding that the essential question of this lesson is: What led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence? Pass out the “Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs!” reading from iCivics. Explain to students that the reading will provide some background information on the relationship between England and the colonists. Instruct students to mark the text that provides them with an understanding of the relationship between England and the colonists. Read the passage aloud to the class. Have students share some of the evidence they marked that helped them understand the relationship.

DAY 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Project this “13 Colonies” map to review with students. Review the thirteen colonies with the students so that they have an idea of the geography of the colonies and cities that appear in the lesson. Key places to point out: Boston, Massachusetts, New England, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Philadelphia and Virginia. Pass out the “1754 -1776: The Road to the Declaration of Independence” activity sheet. Instruct students to write a summary statement for the “Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs!” reading in the box marked: Background Information. Pass out the “The Road to the Declaration of Independence” reading. Ask students to survey the reading and pose the following questions for discussion: How is this text organized? How do you know? What is the time period that is being covered? (timeline, 1754-1776)
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Read the directions on the activity sheet. Explain to students that they will understand the relationship between England and the colonies by looking at a timeline and identifying British policies or acts and the colonial perspectives or reactions for each time period. 8. Complete the 1754-1763 section as a whole class. Teacher Note: Use the answer key provided below to guide completion. 9. Place students into pairs. 10. Instruct the pairs to complete the 1764 and 1765 sections. 11. Have students share out.
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DAY 3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Place students back into pairs from the previous day. 2. Instruct the pairs to complete the rest of the reading and activity sheet. 3. Have students share their answers for the third column on the activity sheet: Colonial Concern(s). Instruct students to explain the evidence from their text that helped them determine their answer. 4. Lead students to the understanding that the colonial concerns can be grouped into three main concerns: taxation, representation, and individual rights. 5. Return student attention back to the ‘Colonial Concern(s)’ section and provide them with time to adjust their answers to reflect the three main concerns of taxation, representation, and individual rights. 6. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment): Instruct students to write a well-crafted informative response using one of the following prompts: <u>Prompt 1</u> Using what you have learned during this lesson and citing specific examples from the reading, explain the main concerns of the colonists that led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence. <u>Prompt 2</u> In 1963 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote the following statement as part of his Letter in Birmingham Jail: <i>We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.</i> Based on what you have learned and citing specific examples from the reading and activity sheet, how does this statement relate to the events leading up to the writing of the Declaration of Independence?
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Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
duty	a tax
export	goods sent to another country
goods	merchandise or objects for sale or trade
import	goods brought into the country
individual rights	rights guaranteed or belonging to a person
legislature	governing body responsible for making laws
levy	to collect by legal authority
oppression	the use of authority or power in a cruel or unjust manner
Parliament	the British legislature
representation	a person or group acting on behalf of another person or group
tax	money charged by a government for specific facilities or services
taxation without representation	the idea that it is unfair to tax someone without giving them a voice in government

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Civics 360 Resources](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- *The Rights of the Colonists* by Samuel Adams

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Too Late to Apologize Viewing Guide

Sample Answers: Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs! reading

Sample Answers: 1754 -1776: The Road to the Declaration of Independence

Written Response: Sample Scoring Rubric

SOURCES

The bloody massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt.

Engraving by Paul Revere: <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661777/> and

<http://www.earlyamerica.com/review/winter96/enlargement.html>

Too Late To Apologize: A Declaration:

<https://www.nps.gov/media/video/view.htm?id=3DCD0772-155D-451F-67246B82830C8851>

Hey, King: Get Off Our Backs! from iCivics:

<http://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/hey-king-get-our-backs>

Thirteen Colonies map from Britannica:

<https://kids.britannica.com/students/article/13-colonies/338325/media?assemblyId=192317>

Letter from Birmingham Jail:

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/letter-from-birmingham-city-jail-excerpts/>

The Road to the Declaration of Independence, Adapted from:

<http://www.crfcelebrateamerica.org/index.php/story/69-timeline-for-american-independence>, Accessed April

2013, <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/revolution/rev-col.htm> and

<http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/americanrevolution/a/amrevcauses.htm>

Quartering Act: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Quartering-Act>