| *From Subjects to Citizens*  **A Revolution of Words: The 250th Birthday of the Declaration of Independence and Its Impact on the Nation** |
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| **Indigenous Americans: The Declaration’s 199th Birthday in 1975** |

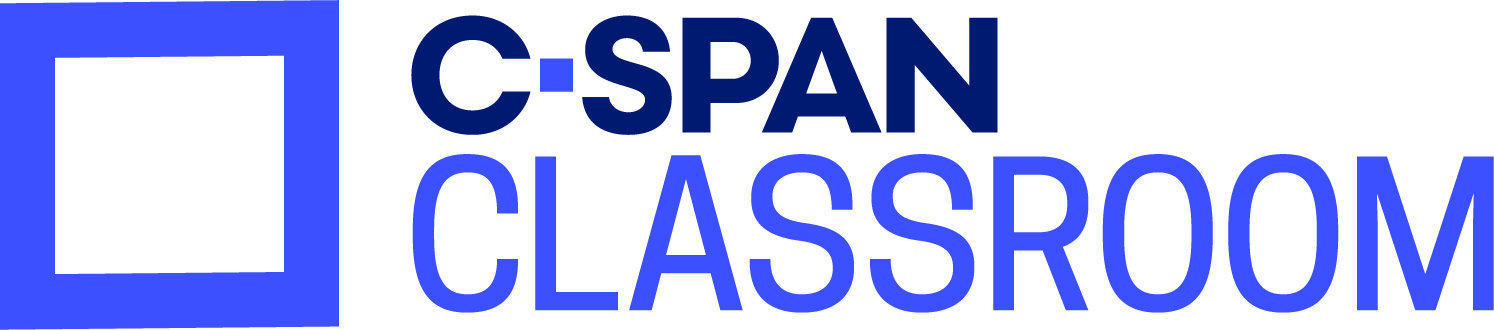
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## **LESSON OVERVIEW**

| **DESCRIPTION** |
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| In this lesson, students will examine the Declaration of Independence in its 199th year. The focus will be on the promises outlined in the Declaration and their connection to Indigenous Americans at the end of the 1970s. |
| **ESSENTIAL QUESTION** |
| How did the promises of the Declaration of Independence serve as an inspiration to Indigenous Americans in its 199th year? |
| **KEY PROMISES** |
| * Equality * Unalienable Rights * Consent of the Governed * Right to Revolution |
| **MATERIALS** |
| * Promises of the Declaration of Independence Handout * C-SPAN “Native American Governance” Video (external link) * Indigenous Americans Slides * Primary Source Digital Unwrapping Slides * 3,2,1 Video Reflection Worksheet |

## **TEACHER CONTENT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

*[Not intended for student use]*

**1. Key Promises in the Declaration of Independence**

1. **Equality**

The Declaration of Independence states that “all men are created equal”. This concept of equality focuses on equality as opportunity, where “all men” are created equal, although being created equal does not guarantee equal experiences. Enlightenment philosophers supported the concept of [individualism](https://centerforindividualism.org/individualism-founding-fathers-part-1-liberty-limited-government/). Individualism suggests that each person possesses an inherent worth that supports freedom, self-reliance, and individual skills, talents, and interests. Equal opportunity in the context of individualism means that being born equal does not lead to equal results or equal outcomes.

1. **Unalienable Rights**

According to the Declaration, unalienable rights (“natural rights”) are those rights with which people are born (given “by their Creator”). They include the unalienable rights of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”. These rights cannot be taken away by the government, and the government is also obligated to protect unalienable rights. These rights are associated with 17th to early 19th century European Enlightenment philosophers who supported unalienable rights as the means to challenge traditional authority that existed under monarchies.

1. **Consent of the Governed**

Consent of the governed includes that “governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,” as written in the Declaration. This promise focuses on self-government. The people rule themselves through governments that they establish. Because the people establish those governments and are not ruled by a government imposed on them (such as a monarchy), the people give their consent to how they are governed. Thus, self-rule is experienced when the people establish their own government to which the people give their consent.

1. **Right to Revolution**

The right to revolution recognizes that there may be times when the government abuses its power. The Founders wrote, “[T]hat 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...” This phrase suggests that when the people have determined that the government is not protecting their unalienable rights, they may change (“alter”) or replace (“abolish”) their government. The Declaration of Independence justified the colonists’ decision to separate from the British king. Since then, Americans have exercised their “right to revolution” by altering the government when the government has failed to live up to its promises through elections, interest groups, social movements, and political parties. Some of these changes have included broadening political power (who has it, what form it takes), defining citizenship, how the people experience self-government, and protecting individual rights.

**2. Connecting the Promises to Indigenous Americans**

1. **Consent of the Governed**

The Declaration of Independence asserts that unalienable rights are secured from the “consent of the governed”. The concept of “consent of the governed” means that the government secures its legitimacy and authority from the people. Consent is often granted to the government through elections.

Voter eligibility in the United States requires U.S. citizenship. Article I of the United States Constitution gives Congress the power to establish rules of naturalization. However, it was not until 1868 that the United States Constitution defined citizenship through the Fourteenth Amendment. Indigenous Americans had been denied citizenship and, among Indigenous American citizens, voting rights. This means that Indigenous Americans, especially those living on tribal lands, had been denied the opportunity to express their consent even though they were subject to federal and state oversight. This situation presented an apparent contradiction; Indigenous Americans who met the criteria for citizenship (“all persons born or naturalized in the United States”, per the Fourteenth Amendment) were not allowed to vote even though they were U.S. citizens and resided in the United States.

Federal responses to this apparent contradiction included the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 (also called the “Snyder Act”). This act granted U.S. citizenship to all Indigenous Americans born in the United States, including U.S. territories and tribal lands. U.S. citizenship did not guarantee Indigenous Americans voting rights because states continued to deny voting rights to Indigenous Americans. For example, after the Indian Citizenship Act was passed, the state of Utah determined that individuals living on tribal lands were not considered state residents and thus were not eligible to vote. Utah was the last state to outlaw state-level discrimination against Indigenous American voting in 1957.

It was not until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that Indigenous Americans' rights to express their “consent of the governed” through voting were guaranteed by the federal government. With this law, all Indigenous Americans were guaranteed the right to vote if they resided in the United States - and states could not deny that right.

**3. Brief Timeline of Indigenous Americans' Rights**

**In 1622,** the Jamestown Massacre marked the beginning of the Indian Wars, which would last until 1890 at Wounded Knee.

**In 1790,** the Naturalization Act provided guidelines for how one became a citizen of the U.S.; this specifically excluded non-whites from this process.

**In 1824,** the Bureau of Indian Affairs was established (originally named the Office of Indian Affairs).

**In 1830,** Congress ordered the removal of all Indigenous Americans in Southern states to be moved west of the Mississippi based on information from the Indian Removal Act. This was known as the Trail of Tears.

**In 1871,** the Appropriations Act was signed, and Congress became the sole governing power over Tribal governments and their citizens.

**In 1887,** Congress passed the Dawes Act as an effort to “Americanize” Indigenous Americans.

**In 1924,** the Indian Citizenship Act (Snyder Act) granted full citizenship to Indigenous Americans.

**In 1929,** Charles Curtis became the first Indigenous American to be vice president. He was also the first to be a U.S. Senator (R-KS) in 1907.

**In 1934,** the Indian Reorganization Act (Indian New Deal) established modern tribal governments.

**In 1946,** the Indian Claims Act was passed by Congress, which created a process for tribes to seek compensation for lands illegally seized by the U.S. government. Few were happy with the results, and only a few received monetary compensation.

**1953-1968,** is known as the Termination Era, when Congress sought to abolish tribes and relocate many Indigenous peoples. The policy did not apply to all tribes, but for some, it proved to be economically devastating in that they lost tribal lands to private interests and no longer received health care or law enforcement assistance from the federal government.

**In 1968,** the Indian Civil Rights Act was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, which afforded Indigenous Americans many of the benefits included in the Bill of Rights.

**1968 to 1971,** Indigenous peoples occupied Alcatraz Island, a former penitentiary in California, for 19 months to protest the Termination policy, return stolen land, and acknowledge the mistreatment of their people. This began many other movements and protests, like the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) building in D.C. in 1972.

**In 1975,** the Indian Self-Determination & Education Assistant Act provided funds and recognition to Indian tribes.

**In 1978,** the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed, acknowledging their freedom of religion.

**In 1994,** the Tribal Self-Governance Act was passed, which changed how the federal government and tribes conduct business.

**In 2020,** the Practical Reforms and Other Goals to Reinforce the Effectiveness of Self-Governance and Self-Determination (PROGRESS) for Indian Tribes Act.

**In 2021,** Rep. Deb Haaland (D-NM) was confirmed as the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, becoming the first Indigenous American to lead a cabinet agency.

**In 2023,** President Joe Biden signed an executive order to reform how the federal government funds and supports Tribal Nations. This order recognized the fundamental right of tribal self-governance to determine their own destiny and recognized Tribal governments as permanent, equal, and vital parts of America’s government.

Sources:

Fourteenth Amendment (1868), <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/14th-amendment>

Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/june-02/>

Voting Rights Act of 1965, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/voting-rights-act>

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## **ACTIVITY SEQUENCE**

| **HOOK** | 1. Begin class by displaying the [Promises of the Declaration of Independence Handout](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cGXoYgcgTQeaChJV1KZa_YzpZL49Er6M/view?usp=drive_link). Review the promises, specifically discussing why these concepts were viewed as foundational principles for starting a new nation/government. 2. Ask students to brainstorm some of the influences on the Founders and Framers in the formation of the United States and creation of a new government. (English Bill of Rights, *Common Sense*, Ancient Greece/Rome, Mayflower Compact, Magna Carta, Locke, Montesquieu, etc.) 3. Ask students if they can name any tribes or Indigenous Americans that may have influenced the Founders/Framers.   **Teacher Note:** It is okay that students may have a very limited scope of knowledge for this.   1. As a class, watch this video on [Native American Governance](https://www.c-span.org/classroom/document/?10650) from C-SPAN. 2. Ask students how their perceptions may have changed regarding the Founding based on what they learned from the short clip. 3. Project slide 1 of the [Indigenous Americans Slides](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/173IcJlJCXFzr8AkA_68_o-9tPB5Haim0jGaFYqM1cCo/edit?usp=sharing).   **Teacher Note:** The Speaker Notes of the slides have direct links to take a closer look at the maps if needed.   1. Lead a class discussion using the sources:    1. *How might Indigenous Americans have felt about the Declaration of Independence and its language, and why do you think this is?*    2. *How well do you think the promises of the Declaration applied to Indigenous Americans in 1776?*   **Teacher Note:** See the Teacher Background Information section above to help guide class discussion. |
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| **FEATURED PRIMARY SOURCE UNWRAPPING** | 1. Explain to students that it is time to ‘unwrap’ this month’s primary source document.   **Teacher Note:** As the theme of these lesson plans is America’s birthday, each month, you and your students will digitally unwrap a new primary source. This is an opportunity to drum up excitement as we lead up to the 250th celebration and draw our focus to a time when individuals were fighting for those promises outlined. Because November is Native American Heritage Month, the focus for this month will be on Indigenous Americans.   1. Use the [Primary Source Digital Unwrapping Slides](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/14hZMTcuhBcD_ZKyir5d8JfCbchNYRvyTBSL7iJsQZhU/edit?usp=drive_link) and reveal the primary source inside. 2. Examine the document together and ask students if anyone can identify it.   **Teacher Note:** This month’s primary source document is the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. Use the link provided in the Speaker Notes of the slide to go directly to the full source.   1. Together as a whole class, analyze the document by answering the following questions:    1. *What type of document is it?*    2. *When is the document from?*    3. *What are some key terms that stand out?*    4. *What is the document’s central idea?* |
| **LESSON ACTIVITY** | 1. Pass out the [3,2,1 Video Reflection Worksheet](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BKh057S8JWEMZ21n5jALjX7K6qYabPAblFFPWv4GB2A/edit?usp=sharing). 2. Have students watch the video on slide 2 of the Indigenous Americans Slides to learn more about the significance of the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act. They should work to complete their worksheets as they watch/listen. 3. After the video, generate a discussion around the items students noted.   **Teacher Note**: You can use the talking points provided in the Sample Answers section below to help guide the conversation. |
| **CONCLUSION** | 1. Place students in pairs. 2. Project slide 3 of the Indigenous Americans Slides. Explain to students that when commenting on the complicated relationship between Indigenous Americans and the United States, this was Dr. David Treuer’s response. Read his quote together. 3. In their pairs, have students craft a short response to the following prompt:   *How do groups like Indigenous Americans and others encourage the government to live up to the ideals promised in the Declaration of Independence? Why is this accountability important?* |

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## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND SAMPLE ANSWERS**

| **SAMPLE ANSWERS** |
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| * [Video Talking Points](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JyZYJuI13IcdqV9bHzKBhCjxjl8NcKfIqNLwPhAPrlQ/edit?usp=sharing) * [Written Response Rubric](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1a77bWZCqx_l1VMSHURwAGJryR35xixDl___3dNEodg8/edit?usp=drive_link) |

| **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES** |
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| [C-SPAN Classroom’s Native American History Featured Resources](https://sites.google.com/view/c-spanclassroom-featured/u-s-and-state-history/u-s-history#h.p_m3blxkwYvYzo)  [Lou Frey Institute Educator Resources](http://floridacitizen.org)  [National Archives Document Analysis Educator Resources](https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets)  [President Nixon Foundation](https://www.nixonfoundation.org/2016/09/president-nixon-champion-for-native-americans/) |