



# Historic Preservationist: Declaration of Independence

## Adventure Description:

In this adventure, you will think like a historic preservationist and create a replica of the Declaration of the Independence and a storage and evacuation plan to showcase in a new museum exhibit to teach people about the importance of preserving the Declaration of Independence.

## Activity

Teacher note: this activity is long and can be completed across multiple days.

### Step 1: Background Information on Historic Preservationists and Declaration of Independence (5-10 min)

- Show [Video: Declaration of Independence](#).
- As a class, review the significance of the Declaration of Independence. Show [Handout: Learning about the Declaration of Independence](#). Review as a class.
- Next, explain to students that historic preservationists are in charge of making sure important historic documents don't get damaged. Old documents can get damaged by sunlight, bugs, and even the oils on people's hands.
- Historic documents can also become damaged if there is a problem with the building they are kept in! The Declaration of Independence is kept in the National Archives Museum in Washington, DC. If there was a flood or a fire, it could get ruined!

### Step 2: Activity Set Up (5 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will imagine that they are creating a new exhibit at a history museum. Show [Handout: New Museum Exhibit](#). As a class, read the top of the first page. Discuss how the new exhibit will have a replica of the Declaration of Independence, a case to store the Declaration, and a sign to explain the importance of preserving the Declaration.
- Students will use [Handout: Learning about the Declaration of Independence](#) to make their exhibit.
- Next, provide students with [Handout: Steps to Create Your Exhibit](#). Review Step 1.
- Divide students into pairs or small groups. Provide each pair with the following materials:
  - Cup of water, tea bag, paint brush, coffee grinds, 1 piece of paper or card stock, tinfoil or wax paper.

### Step 3: Creating a Replica Declaration of Independence (15 minutes)

- Have students complete Step 1 on the handout.
- Students will also need [Handout: What the Declaration of Independence Looks Like](#).
- Have students look carefully at the image of the Declaration of Independence and recreate the document on a sheet of printer paper. Students do NOT need to write out all of the words. Instead, they should include major elements (header at top, words in middle, signatures at bottom).
- Remind students that they should use a pen. If they want to use a pencil first, they will need to write over the words with pen before moving to the next step.

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- As students are working, ask the following questions:
  - How did you make the document look realistic? For example, what style of handwriting did you use?
  - How did you make sure that your document is laid out in the same way as the real document? For example, did you have signatures at the bottom of the page?
- When students are finished designing their Declaration, they will stain the paper to make it look old.
- Afterwards, explain to students that they will now let their replicas dry over night.

## **Step 4: Creating a Sign for the Exhibit (15 minutes)**

- Explain to students that they will now complete Step 2 on the handout. Review this step as a class.
- Provide students with [Handout: Learning about the Declaration of Independence](#). Explain that this handout has information and images that students can use to create their sign. Students can cut out the images and use them on their sign if they would like.
- Have students brainstorm their ideas under Step 2.
- Once students have brainstormed ideas, they can create their final sign. Provide students with poster board or large sheets of paper.

## **Step 5: Creating a Storage System (15+ minutes)**

- Explain to students that they will now create their storage system for their replica of the Declaration of Independence. Have students complete Step 3 on the handout.
- Teacher note: Students will need their replicas. The documents must be dry before students complete this step. In addition, students will need the following materials:
  - Water-proof materials (tin foil, styrofoam bowls and plates, plastic wrap)
  - Other building and art supplies (popsicle sticks, cardboard)
  - Tape and scissors
- Explain to students that they will now create their storage system.

## **Step 6: Class Gallery (10 minutes)**

- Have half of the class set up their storage system with their replicas in side. They should set up their sign next to their storage systems. This group of students will be the "presenters."
- Have the other half of the class walk around and stop to read the signs and learn about students' storage systems. These students will be the "listeners."
- As listeners are walking around, have presenters explain how their storage system works and give a demonstration.
- Have presenters and listeners switch roles if time permits.

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## Materials List

### Provided online:

- Video: Declaration of Independence
- Handout: Learning about the Declaration of Independence
- Handout: New Museum Exhibit
- Handout: Steps to Create Your Exhibit
- Handout: What the Declaration of Independence Looks Like

### Not provided:

- Paper
- Wax paper or tinfoil
- Tea
- Paint brush
- Cups and water
- Coffee grinds
- Tape
- Scissors
- Assortment of recycled materials (cardboard pieces, egg cartons, etc)
- Assortment of art supplies (pipe cleaners, pom pom balls, construction paper)
- Water-proof materials (tinfoil, styrofoam bowls and plates, plastic wrap)

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