

Declaration of Independence Activity

The Declaration of Independence activity involves three parts. First, participants examine each phrase and write a short description of what that phrase means. This is fundamentally an exercise focused on knowing precisely what the document says and means.

The second activity allows participants to identify areas where they feel the particular sections have been generally realized and where they have fallen short, where we have enjoyed success and where we have experienced failure and have not done a good job ensuring the rights in the Declaration have been extended to all.

Finally, participants will have the opportunity to translate the key concepts into contemporary language. Each phrase will be rewritten for a specific audience, usually youth but occasionally adults, depending on the need and opportunity.

By closely examining the key concepts, recognizing strengths and failures, and translating the document into personal language, participants will have the opportunity to explore the notion of universal rights and will examine certain rights in the Declaration of Independence and have the opportunity to express their own views as they incorporate their values into their translation.

This activity also creates the opportunity to address the concept of responsibility associated with rights.

The Declaration of Independence

What do these phrases mean?

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.

That to secure these rights,

governments are instituted among men,

deriving their just powers

from the consent of the governed.

The Declaration of Independence

| Statement | Translation |
|--|-------------|
| 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. | |
| That to secure these rights, | |
| governments are instituted among men, | |
| deriving their just powers | |
| from the consent of the governed. | |

The Declaration of Independence

| Statement | Strengths/Successes - Weaknesses/Failures |
|--|---|
| 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. | |
| That to secure these rights, | |
| governments are instituted among men, | |
| deriving their just powers | |
| from the consent of the governed. | |