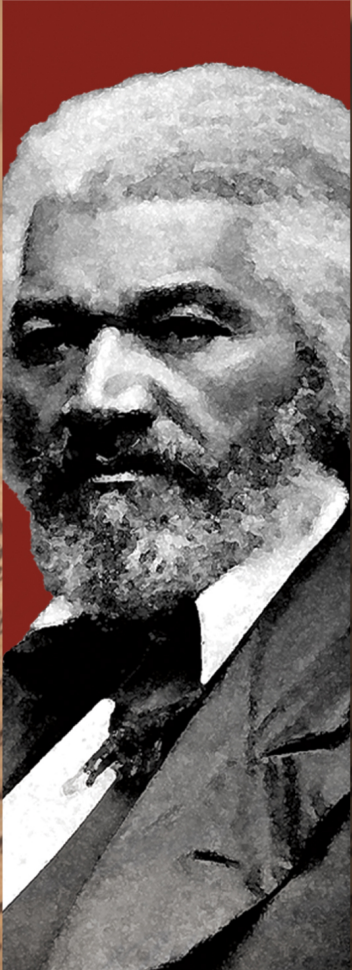


# Teacher's Guide

# Living Up to Our *Declaration of Independence*



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## Teacher's Guide

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# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Suggested Lesson Plan**

These materials may be used in a variety of ways. For maximum benefit, we suggest the following lesson plan:

### **Day One**

1. Prior to class, print copies of the Viewing Guide for your students.
2. Select a few of the Preview Questions to introduce the lesson.
3. Hand out copies of the Viewing Guide. (Decide ahead of time if you want to pause the video to discuss each question as it arrives, or if you want to use it as a way to measure attentiveness by making each student complete it independently.)
4. Begin the video (about 13 minutes). Take up the viewing guides when completed.
5. Use one or more [Discussion Questions](#) for either classroom discussion or journal entries (or possibly both). Some of the questions would be very appropriate for some self-reflection, so consider them for a homework assignment.

### **Day Two**

1. Depending on the ability of your class, select from either the Activities or the Enrichment Activities.
2. Administer and grade the [quiz](#) using the Answer Key as a guide, or use the online quiz version for immediate, autoscored feedback. (Students should log in to izzit.org as a STUDENT using your CLASS CODE - found on the MY ACCOUNT page - to take the online quiz.

# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Preview Questions**

*(These are meant to be read aloud by the teacher and discussed by the class prior to viewing the video)*

1. Why are goals, or ideals, useful? Are they useful even if we don't meet them as fully as we'd hoped? Why or why not?
2. What are the most famous parts of the Declaration of Independence?
3. How familiar are you with the ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence?
4. To what extent have we realized the goals stated in our Declaration?
5. Do you think the Declaration is still relevant today? Why or why not?

# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Key Terms**

**Abolitionism:** The movement to end slavery. Britain began an abolition movement in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the American colonies and later the United States, abolition societies began in the 1700s, but the most powerful efforts, led by William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and others, began in the 1830s.

**Consent:** Permission

**Democracy:** Generally held to mean “government by the people.” More specifically, a government in which the people have the power (“popular sovereignty”), generally expressed in free elections. A *direct democracy* has the people voting over all issues, while in a *representative democracy*, (or a *democratic republic*), representatives are selected to make decisions for the people. A republic is the American system under the Constitution.

**Enfranchisement:** Another term for the right to vote

**Grievances:** An official statement of complaint over something believed to be wrong or unfair

**Hypocrisy:** Claiming to have moral standards that one doesn’t actually practice. (Rules for thee, but not for ME.)

**Jim Crow:** A set of laws, practices, and customs in the American South from the end of the Civil War until the 1960s that supported racial segregation/discrimination and the denigration of people of color.

**March on Washington (1963):** The **March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom**, also known simply as the **March on Washington** or **The Great March on Washington**, was held in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1963. The purpose of the march was to advocate for the civil and economic rights of African Americans. At the march, the final speaker, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, delivered his historic "I Have a Dream" speech in which he called for an end to racism. (Wikipedia)

**Orator:** A skilled public speaker

**Promissory Note:** A written promise to pay a debt

**Revision:** The act of changing or correcting something

**Segregation:** To separate groups based on a characteristic, often race

**Self-evident:** Obvious

**Seneca Falls Convention (1848):** The first women’s rights convention, held in the Wesleyan Chapel of Seneca Falls, New York, July 19-20, 1848. It attracted widespread attention and led to many other women’s rights conventions (Wikipedia).

**Suffrage:** The right to vote

**Temperance:** The limitation (or absolute forbidding) of alcohol consumption. The *temperance movement* in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was a social reform that sought to improve the lives of women and children, in particular, by encouraging husbands and fathers to drink less and to become more sober, hardworking, and thrifty.

**Unalienable:** Cannot be taken away, nor given away by the holder

**Utopia:** Paradise, a perfect place

# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence Viewing Guide***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Judge Ginsburg has several people read the portion of the Declaration that says, “[W]hen a government becomes destructive of [the purpose for which it was founded], it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government...” What does Professor Allen say about this statement?

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2. True or False? The Declaration was written by Thomas Jefferson.

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3. According to Dr. Allen, why was it important that the Declaration was written by committee?

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4. How did people get their news, or information, in the 1770s? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. How many copies of *Common Sense* sold in the first few months? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Who was Prince Hall? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the importance of his effort? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. In what ways were women “second-class citizens” in early America? (Give several examples.)

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8. In 1848, a group of primarily women advocated for their right to the goals expressed in the Declaration in what city and state? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What led to the March on Washington in 1963? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What did Dr. King say he dreamt of? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Viewing Guide Answer Key**

1. She calls it “the whole of political philosophy” and “the most compact definition of democracy.”
2. False (written by committee)
3. (Possible answer) A committee allows for ‘push and pull’—allows for a variety of views to be included and to find the best answers to divisive questions.
4. Newspapers, posters, and pamphlets
5. Tens of thousands
6. A. A free black man who petitioned for the abolition of slavery using the words of the Declaration.  
B. This marked the beginning of groups using the words of the Declaration to advocate for their rights as well.
7. (Students should identify several of these) They were paid less than men and turned their salaries over to their husbands; they couldn’t buy land or sign contracts; they couldn’t vote.
8. Seneca Falls, NY
9. A bill for civil rights was stalled in Congress
10. A. A time when his children would be judged on the content of their character, not the color of their skin  
B. Possible answers: hopeful, admonishing

# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Discussion Questions**

(These can be used for discussion after the film. Or use them as essay questions and have students respond in writing.)

1. What description of the Declaration did you find most accurate or helpful? Why?
2. *“Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”* Why does it say that the pursuit of happiness is a right, not happiness itself?
3. What is a “promissory note?” What did Dr. King mean when he described the Declaration in that way?
4. In what ways has America moved closer to the ideals expressed in the Declaration? Where in the video can you see specific evidence of progress?
5. Where do we still need to make progress and how can we do that?
6. How might the history of our nation be different if our revolution had NOT included a statement of these ideals?
7. What rights are due to all Americans? Are there any goals or ideas expressed as “rights” that aren’t really rights? If so, what might those be?
8. Our nation is actually established as a republic (see our Pledge of Allegiance, for example: “and to the republic for which it stands.”) What is the difference between a democracy and a republic? Why do you think the Constitution established a republic and not a “direct democracy?”
9. We hear a lot about rights, but with those rights come responsibilities. What responsibilities do all American citizens have?
10. What does, “...be judged on the content of their character, not by the color of their skin” mean?

# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Comprehension Quiz**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which of these goals is NOT identified in the Declaration of Independence?
  - a. Life
  - b. Liberty
  - c. Security
  - d. The Pursuit of Happiness
  
2. What does Judge Ginsburg say was perhaps most critical in the people's move toward independence?
  - a. The dead Americans at Lexington and Concord
  - b. The publication of *Common Sense*
  - c. The publication of the Declaration
  - d. None of these
  
3. Who was Prince Hall?
  - a. A French aristocrat who helped fight the Revolution
  - b. An enslaved African who was the first to run away
  - c. A writer who spoke out for giving women the right to vote
  - d. A free black man who asked Massachusetts to abolish slavery
  
4. What was the first state to abolish slavery in 1780?
  - a. Massachusetts
  - b. New York
  - c. Pennsylvania
  - d. Rhode Island
  
5. Which of the following was NOT true of mid-nineteenth century America?
  - a. Women couldn't work outside the home.
  - b. Women couldn't sign contracts.
  - c. Women couldn't buy land.
  - d. Women couldn't vote.

# ***Question Everything - The Scientific Method***

6. Who was the only African-American to attend the Seneca Falls Convention?
  - a. Sojourner Truth
  - b. Frederick Douglass
  - c. Harriet Tubman
  - d. Nat Turner
  
7. Which statement best sums up the main idea of the video?
  - a. The Declaration is inherently flawed and must be updated.
  - b. The Declaration is incomplete.
  - c. The Declaration provides an ideal that Americans have made changes to live up to.
  - d. We have moved backward since the early days of our republic.
  
8. In what famous historical document do we find the words “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”?
  - a. The Declaration of Independence
  - b. *Common Sense*
  - c. The Emancipation Proclamation
  - d. The Gettysburg Address
  
9. Who or what was Jim Crow?
  - a. A name for a system of racial discrimination
  - b. A black man who was lynched, leading to calls for more rights
  - c. A black preacher who effectively convinced people to support black suffrage
  - d. A cartoon character that illustrated racial stereotypes
  
10. In what decade was the March on Washington in which Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his famous speech?
  - a. 1840s
  - b. 1950s
  - c. 1960s
  - d. 1970s

# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Quiz Answer Key**

1. c
2. b
3. d
4. c
5. a
6. b
7. c
8. d
9. a
10. c

# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Enrichment and Integration Activities**

- A. 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. That, 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.
1. Read the portion of the Declaration of Independence detailed above. Consider why the Founders believed governments were “instituted among men.” What was the government’s purpose? Why was “the consent of the governed” such a radical concept?
  2. Divide into groups of 3-5. Each group will take a portion of the Declaration’s initial comments (not including the list of grievances). As a group, produce a “translated” version of the ideas expressed so that a modern middle schooler would understand them.
  3. Challenge the students to memorize and recite this portion of the Declaration! Consider making it a contest with prizes. Depending on the age and ability of your class, you might want to add or subtract content.

## **B. Common Sense**

Paine’s pamphlet (approximately 47 pages) is an excellent example of persuasive writing, with much to consider. Some classes might benefit greatly from reading the entire argument. However, few classes can invest that much time in a document, and so we have provided a summary of some of Paine’s key points. Discuss as a class which arguments seem strongest and why. Consider what other arguments he might have made. Patrick Henry’s Speech to the Virginia Convention (March 1775) covers some of the same ground, but Paine’s argument came *after* blood had been shed at Lexington & Concord, Bunker Hill, and elsewhere.

1. The English Constitution (not a specific document like ours but a collection of legal precedent over centuries) was too convoluted to be able to protect liberty, with two-thirds of the government (the king and the aristocrats) having no real reason to protect the common

people (the final third);

2. Government by kings was a heathen invention, and when the Israelites demanded a king, they went against God's direction. After a lengthy discussion of the Jewish people as described in the books of the Old Testament (or Torah), Paine then illustrated the folly of hereditary succession, which facilitated allowing the weak or foolish to be put in positions of power over the people;
3. Those who hoped for reconciliation were fooling themselves, and if they would turn a blind eye to the injustices visited upon them by the British armies, they were unworthy of any esteem;
4. America had much to lose, and nothing to gain, by continuing to be linked to Great Britain. Independence would disentangle her from European wars and would open free trade to all ports;
5. The natural order would be for the larger continent to protect or to govern a smaller island; the situation between the British Isles and the American continent turned that "natural order" on its head;
6. The sacrifices paid already in blood and treasure would be minimized, or mocked, if the only gain were to be a repeal of harsh acts or a promise from the crown of better behavior; independence was a much better reward for the price already paid;
7. America was well situated in terms of the manpower needed for her armed forces, and the materials and manpower needed for a strong navy. Older nations, he argued, had more to lose and thus were less likely to throw off chains of oppression;
8. As long as they saw themselves as subjects of Great Britain, they were rebels and unable to secure mediators from among the other nations; as an independent nation, they would be able to appeal to others. "Under our present denomination of British subjects, we can neither be received nor heard abroad: The custom of all courts is against us, and will be so, until by an independence [sic], we take rank with other nations."

Again, this is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but it provides a starting point for discussing the power of the pamphlet.

Teachers who would like to understand Thomas Paine, or to share some of his style with classes, might consider the alternative of reading "The Crisis," written in the waning days of 1776 when the enlistment of many soldiers was ending, and they were considering abandoning the fight. This pamphlet has the virtue of being much shorter, but it still has his fiery style.

### C. “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”

Find a copy of this famous speech (easily found online. For example, see the PDF at [Frederick Douglass, What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July? \(americanclass.org\)](http://www.americanclass.org)). Read the text together and discuss. You may find the following questions helpful in guiding discussion.

1. Why does Douglass express gladness (paragraph 4) that the nation is so (relatively) young?
2. In paragraph 6, Douglass extols those who resisted the idea that government was infallible. What might be his purpose in highlighting those who resisted authority in 1776?
3. In paragraphs 15-17, Douglass compares the Declaration to something. Locate the metaphor, then discuss what he meant by it. What are the similarities he highlights between the object and the document?
4. What is Douglass’s attitude toward the Founders? Why might he stress this attitude in the early part of his speech?
5. In paragraph 30, Douglass quotes a Longfellow poem (“Psalm of Life”) and then says this: “We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the present and the future.” Do you agree with him? How can we use the past to make it ‘useful’ for the present and the future?
6. Paragraphs 31-36 are quite scathing in Douglass’s reminder to his audience that the promises of the Declaration had been unequally distributed. Do you find his tone upsetting? Appropriate? Persuasive? Why?
7. Immediately afterward, Douglass says he can already hear the critics: “You would be more persuasive if you argued more and denounced less, if you persuaded more and rebuked less.” How does Douglass answer such a challenge? When should one speak gently, and when should one speak with righteous anger?
8. How does Douglass deny the need for argument in his current topic?
9. Douglass ends his speech with extremely harsh words: “Go where you may, search where you will, roam through all the monarchies and despotisms of the world” and compare each to the United States, “and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival.” What do you think was the effect of his speech? Do you think he accomplished his aim?
10. Consider the film again; remember that Douglass gave this speech in 1852. If Douglass were alive today, do you think he would see progress? What might he say today?



## D. The Declaration of Sentiments (from the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848)

Read the opening paragraphs of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Declaration of Sentiments, clearly modeled after the Declaration of Independence. What changes are made? Do you think they were an improvement on the original? Explain.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these rights, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a 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.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed, but when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpation on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

Just as with the Declaration, the writer composed a list of grievances. Read through the list below. Are any of these still a concern? If so, which ones? What concerns might women list today?

- He has not ever permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.
- He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

- He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men—both natives and foreigners.
- Having deprived her of this first right as a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.
- He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.
- He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.
- He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master—the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.
- He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes of divorce, in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given; as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of the women—the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of a man, and giving all power into his hands.
- After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.
- He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration.
- He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction, which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.
- He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education—all colleges being closed against her.
- He allows her in church, as well as State, but a subordinate position, claiming Apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the Church.
- He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated but deemed of little account in man.
- He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and her God.
- He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Only 100 of the 300 or so attendees at the Seneca Falls Convention actually signed the document. Why do you suppose the majority chose not to sign it?

# ***Living Up to Our Declaration of Independence***

## **Extension: More Resources from izzit.org**

For another look at how America has moved closer to the ideals of the Declaration, see [\*Becoming Equal Under the Law\*](#) and/or [\*Personal Best\*](#).

To learn more about some of the historical events mentioned in this video, see the following:

[\*The Civil War: A Nation Divided\*](#)

Under **Teachable Moments**:

[\*“Lowell MA and the Industrial Revolution”\*](#)

[\*“Dred Scott Case”\*](#)

[\*“Plessy v. Ferguson Case”\*](#)

[\*“Brown v. Board of Education Case”\*](#)

[\*“Women’s Suffrage and the ERA”\*](#)

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