

03007

ERA 3: REVOLUTION AND THE NEW NATION (1754–1820S)

THEMES: AMERICAN IDENTITY, CULTURE

MAKING SENSE OF THE FOURTH OF JULY



The Spirit of '76 by A. M. Willard.

Guiding Questions

During the Revolutionary Era, what was the most important element of the Declaration of Independence?

How and why have individuals changed the interpretation of the Declaration of Independence?

Is the Fourth of July important?

Question Focus Examples for Task 24

Americans do not place enough importance on the Declaration of Independence.

Teacher-to-Teacher

Oftentimes, students of American History need clarification regarding the purpose and function of the Declaration of Independence. Specifically, the focus of the document and the manner in which its principles have been applied throughout the history of our country are oftentimes overlooked and distorted; the Declaration has proven to be a fluid document with a message of independence that was, at the time, more important than the declaration of natural rights and a message more important than the document itself. Maier offers students the opportunity to view the document from its correct historical context including the chance to hold in reverence the other writers of the document in addition to Thomas Jefferson. After reading Maier's article, students can continue the exploration of this topic by reading the document itself and learning of its non-binding status. Then, students should read the document alongside John Locke's Second Treatise of Government and the Virginia Declaration of Rights in order to identify how historically important the principles of independence and self-government were to the people of that time. Finally, students can then wrestle with the age-old idea that the principles to which President Lincoln made reference in the Gettysburg Address were not necessarily what Jefferson meant when he penned the now famous document. Consider including another modern interpretation, not in the public domain, by Dr. William Pencak, "The Declaration of Independence: Changing Interpretations and a New Hypothesis" found at <http://ojs.libraries.psu.edu/index.php/phj/article/view/24824/24593> as well as the discussion of founding documents found at <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/rebellion/text8/text8read.htmr>.

Contents

- ❖ **Making Sense of the Fourth of July** ARTICLE
- ❖ **Declaration of Independence** DOCUMENT
- ❖ **Ch. 2 Second Treatise of Government** DOCUMENT
- ❖ **The Virginia Declaration of Rights** DOCUMENT
- ❖ **The Gettysburg Address** DOCUMENT

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Recommended Instructional Tasks

Task 8

Analyze and Compare Author Purpose

Task 9

Close Reading: Rhetorical Devices

Task 19

Comparative Analysis

Task 23

Identifying Claim and Evidence

Task 24

QFT (Question Focus Technique)

Task 25

Document Sourcing