

UNIT 1

The Declaration of Independence

40-50-minute classes | 12-15 classes

UNIT PREVIEW**Structure**

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Why Teach the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence was not merely a renunciation of dependence on Great Britain. It was, in fact, generative. It created an entity—a nation—that stood on its own, had its own existence, and was independent of other nations. Even today, it offers guiding principles that continue to shape our arguments about the nature and limits of political authority. In brief, the Declaration of Independence created and still defines the United States of America. Like an organizational mission statement, the Declaration is an indication of the Founders' intention, a guiding star for our political life, and a benchmark for measuring our public institutions. Americans should consider all questions concerning the public sphere in light of the truths asserted in the Declaration. The Declaration of Independence should be both the beginning and end for students' understanding of their country, their citizenship, and the benefits and responsibilities of being an American. In order to judge prudently in matters of public interest in the present day, students must learn about the philosophical principles upon which the American Founders created the United States of America. These include the assertion of self-evident, objective truths about natural rights, morality, and self-government, which find their best expression in the document that founded America.

What Teachers Should Consider

Americans in general—but especially American students—take a lot for granted about their way of life in this country. This is not surprising, given human nature and the wide achievements of American society. But it does indicate one of the primary roles of the teacher of American civics and history: to help students to understand the arguments and the actions, the sacrifices and accomplishments, that led to the way of life they enjoy today.

To that end, teachers themselves must not take life in America for granted and teach history backwards. That means recognizing what America shares with other countries, especially today, but then also looking back at history and comparing the development of United States to life and government in contemporary civilizations. This is a great feat of the imagination that takes great effort on the part of the teacher.

The key starting point for putting America in perspective is its very unique founding. As reflected in its government and institutions, the country was founded as a republic. The people themselves determine what their government will do by choosing from among their fellow citizens those who will represent their interest in government decisions. Compared to monarchies and tyrannies, aristocracies and oligarchies, establishing a republic was an extraordinary exception in the 1700s, especially given its poor historical record of success dating back to the ancient world.

But what was truly unprecedented about America is that it was founded based not merely on borders and not on ethnicity, but on an idea, namely that “all men are created equal,” a truth for all peoples at all times. To found a political community and government on an explicit idea about human beings was truly unheard of in history.

The sources of this truth were as old as the ancients, but their particular articulation in the Declaration of Independence and their assertion as the foundation of just government were altogether novel attempts in political history. “[T]he Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” served as the foundation for America, where nature indicated the truth of reality and of human nature. These truths stood outside of the will of any human being.

And so within the specific circumstances of the colonists’ struggle with the British government in the 18th century the founders posited in the Declaration of Independence the “abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times,” as Abraham Lincoln put it, that “all men are created equal” and that the purpose of government is to “secure these rights.”

These principles are what made the founding of America truly exceptional, and an exception in human history.

How Teachers Can Learn More

TEXTS

<i>The U.S. Constitution: A Reader</i> , ed. Hillsdale College Politics Faculty	Chapters 1–3
<i>We Still Hold These Truths</i> , Matthew Spalding	Chapters 1–4
<i>The Constitutional Convention</i> , James Madison	
<i>American Government and Politics</i> , Joseph Bessette and John Pitney	Chapters 1 and 4

ONLINE COURSES | [Online.Hillsdale.edu](https://online.hillsdale.edu)

Introduction to the Constitution
Constitution 101

Primary Sources Studied in This Unit

The Declaration of Independence
The Mayflower Compact
Thanksgiving Proclamation, George Washington
Letter to the Massachusetts Militia, John Adams
Farewell Address, George Washington
Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson & James Madison
First Annual Address to Congress, George Washington
The Northwest Ordinance, Article III
“Property,” James Madison
The Examination Number No. 7, Alexander Hamilton

LESSON PLANS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND FORMATIVE QUIZ

Lesson 1 — The Human Person

2-3 classes

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students learn the Founders' understanding and assertions about the human person and human nature, understandings that are the starting point for all considerations of political order and on which the United States is established.

ONLINE COURSES FOR TEACHERS | Online.Hillsdale.edu

Introduction to the Constitution
Constitution 101

Lectures 1, 2, 3, and 4
 Lectures 1 and 2

PRIMARY SOURCES

Students may read and annotate the following primary source(s), either at home or together in class. Using their annotations and the below questions, lead students through a seminar conversation on each text.

The Declaration of Independence

TERMS AND TOPICS

history
 polis
 politics
 power
 Laws of Nature and of Nature's God
 nature
 natural law
 objective truth
 self-evident

principles
 morality
 equality
 natural rights
 unalienable
 life
 liberty
 pursuit of happiness

QUESTIONS FOR THE AMERICAN MIND

- What is the "Course of human events"?
- What is politics?
- According to the text itself, why are the colonists issuing a Declaration of Independence?
- What are "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God"?
- What is a "self-evident" truth?
- What does human equality mean in the statement, "all men are created equal"?
- What are natural rights and why do human beings have them?
- According to the Declaration of Independence, from where do natural rights come?
- What does it mean to say that men are "endowed by their Creator" with the rights?

- What does “unalienable” mean?
- Questions from the U.S. Civics Test:
 - Question 8: Why is the Declaration of Independence important?
 - Question 9: What founding document said the American colonies were free from Britain?
 - Question 10: Name two important ideas from the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.
 - Question 11: The words “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” are in what founding document?
 - Question 78: Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
 - Question 79: When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?
 - Question 81: There were 13 original states. Name five.
 - Question 85: Benjamin Franklin is famous for many things. Name one.
 - Question 87: Thomas Jefferson is famous for many things. Name one.
 - Question 125: What is Independence Day?
 - Question 126: Name three national U.S. holidays.

KEYS TO THE LESSON

America is like other nations in that it has a people, a geographic location, and laws that govern it. But America is also very different. It was founded at a particular time on the basis of particular ideas. In the end, America is not bound by an ethnic character, a common religion, or even a shared history as much as by a set of principles held to true and universal and established as the basis for this particular nation. These principles bind America’s extraordinarily diverse people into one nation through a shared belief and commitment to these principles. Students must understand this unique quality about their country and know what these principles are, beginning with the Founders’ assertions about the human person: that there are self-evident truths, that all are equal and equally possess rights by nature, and that chief among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Teachers might best plan and teach the Human Person with emphasis on the following approaches:

- Teachers would benefit from familiarizing themselves with non-American thinkers who, while disagreeing in many ways, were at least united in conversation around what human nature is and what it means for the civic body. These would include those who contributed to the western philosophical tradition and experience in government up to and during the American founding, such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, and Adam Smith; those who more directly informed the Founders, such as John Locke, Algernon Sidney, William Blackstone, and Montesquieu; and the relevant political histories of ancient civilizations (e.g., Babylonians, Hebrews, Greeks, Romans), medieval society, the Enlightenment, England, and the British North American colonies. Being able to summarize and point students to these figures, ideas, and histories where appropriate may be helpful in teaching the first two units of this course.
- Outline with students (or if they have already studied early American history, review) the key historical circumstances in which the Founding occurred, especially the following:
 - The colonists who settled in British North America came from many nations (chiefly but not exclusively those of Europe) for many different reasons, but one thing they did not

bring with them were the class distinctions that defined the aristocratic and monarchical nations they left behind. These individuals (except for their British governors) were common people who immigrated to America seeking their freedom and to better their station in life.

- Religious faith strongly defined colonial culture, largely because so many came to America to escape the religious persecutions of the old world. From the pilgrims and the Puritans to Roman Catholics and Jews, a wide variety of denominations (mostly Christian) are found throughout colonial settlements. This diversity fostered religious liberty and toleration at the same time that it strengthened a common morality rooted in religious faith and practice, which was widespread and imbued colonial society.
- Colonial America was highly literate and the leading members of colonial society and government were educated in classical thought, ancient and contemporary history, and philosophy and politics (including thinkers of the moderate Enlightenment).
- Have students read and annotate the introduction and first part of the preamble to the Declaration of Independence.
- Begin by considering history (as in the “Course of human events”) and *politics*. Briefly sketch its origins in the ancient world and what virtues it demands of those who would practice it well, particularly that cardinal virtue of prudence.
- Help students to consider that the Founders were making assertions about the existence of objective truth by referencing “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” and by describing the truths as self-evident. This line of thinking adheres to the first law of logic, that of contradiction, which is the basis of all reasoning and of our capacity to make sense of reality: i.e., that something cannot both be and not be at the same time in the same way. The use of the words “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” ties truth to an external reality (nature) with fixed and reliable features (laws). “Self-evident” ties truth to fixed definitions—a “self-evident” claim is one that is true by definition of the idea in question, like the claim that a triangle has three sides. A “self-evident” truth is not merely a matter of perspective; it can be known and understood by anyone at any time.
- Note that for the Founders, the “Laws...of Nature’s God” implied that this understanding of nature was consistent with the Christian tradition within which the American founding occurred. Other references to divine sources of truth in the Declaration include that men are “endowed by their Creator” and its appeals to “the Supreme Judge of the world” and to “the protection of divine Providence.”
- Emphasize with students the importance of an understanding of “nature,” particularly human nature. “Nature” here means not *the physical world* but *the purpose of things*, that toward which a thing’s very existence aims: why something exists. The feature of human nature that distinguishes people from animals is man’s ability to think, communicate, and live together. This means that humans can speak, debate, and agree on certain things. Since man has the ability to deliberate and choose, he is responsible morally for his actions and is also capable of liberty. When we consider human beings living with other human beings, the ends of politics are determined by human nature. That is, the justness of one’s actions or the actions of a people depend on what it means to be human, and should comport with truth.
- Ask students what the Declaration means by “all men are created equal.” The meaning of *equality* in the Declaration refers to universal human dignity and to the equal possession by each person of

natural rights, freedoms that are simply part of being human. Individuals are obviously different by almost any measure. Yet, by nature, human beings are all the same in that they are human, have a human nature, and therefore have the same natural rights.

- Have students consider whether women and slaves were included in this understanding of equality. For one thing, in traditional usage, man, or in this case men, used without an article itself refers to the species or to humanity (mankind) as a whole, not male as opposed to female. Based on the totality of their writings available, the Founders meant that men and women share equally in human dignity and in possession of natural rights or freedoms that are simply part of being human. A consistent application of equality would make slavery impossible.
- Consider with students how many have understood the principle of equality as the enduring object or goal of American political life, with each generation seeking further to expand the conditions of political equality. This was the view of many Founders, as well as of Abraham Lincoln, abolitionists like Frederick Douglass, and civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., who called the Declaration a “promissory note to which every American was to fall heir” in his 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech. The Declaration’s principle of equality—and the persistence and bravery of Americans of all origins to sacrifice and even die insisting that the nation should live up to the principle—has led to unprecedented achievements of human equality and the protection of equal rights.
- Spend time with the rights to life, to liberty, and to the pursuit of happiness. While not exhaustive, these natural rights are the most important and comprehensive freedoms that each human person possesses by nature. All are necessary for each person to fulfill his or her purpose as a human being.

STRENGTHENING UNDERSTANDING: POST-LESSON ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: Based on the Declaration of Independence, what was the Founders’ understanding of the human person? Why is this view, and founding a country based on this belief, so extraordinary? (1–2 paragraphs)

Lesson 2 — Government

2-3 classes

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students learn what the Founders understood to be the purpose and composition of government based on the nature of the human person asserted in the Declaration of Independence.

ONLINE COURSES FOR TEACHERS | Online.Hillsdale.edu

Introduction to the Constitution
Constitution 101

Lectures 1, 2, 3, and 4
 Lectures 1 and 2

PRIMARY SOURCES

Students may read and annotate the following primary source(s), either at home or together in class. Using their annotations and the below questions, lead students through a seminar conversation on each text.

The Declaration of Independence
 The Mayflower Compact

TERMS AND TOPICS

natural rights
 power
 consent of the governed
 sovereignty
 self-government
 equality
 justice

rule of law
 limited government
 state of nature
 social contract
 liberalism
 tyranny
 revolution

QUESTIONS FOR THE AMERICAN MIND

- What is the purpose of government and its powers?
- How do natural rights limit the government?
- What is meant by “limited government”?
- From where does government derive its just powers?
- Who are the governed?
- What does consent mean?
- What is self-government?
- What is the connection between consent, equality, and justice?
- What is the relationship between the state of nature, the social contract, and consent of the governed?

- What are the people free—and even obligated—to do if the government fails or violates its purpose?
- Ought it to be easy or frequent for a people to overthrow and replace its government? If not, under which circumstances may they do so?
- What is tyranny?
- How does the fact that America was founded with the words of the Declaration of Independence make America the exception in the history of nations, even exceptional?
- America is a country whose existence and purpose for existing rests on belief in and commitment to certain ideas its Founders asserted to be objectively true. What are these truths?
- Questions from the U.S. Civics Test:
 - Question 8: Why is the Declaration of Independence important?
 - Question 9: What founding document said the American colonies were free from Britain?
 - Question 10: Name two important ideas from the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.
 - Question 13: What is the rule of law?
 - Question 77: Name one reason why the Americans declared independence from Britain.
 - Question 78: Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
 - Question 79: When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?
 - Question 85: Benjamin Franklin is famous for many things. Name one.
 - Question 87: Thomas Jefferson is famous for many things. Name one.
 - Question 125: What is Independence Day?
 - Question 126: Name three national U.S. holidays.

KEYS TO THE LESSON

Having established the understanding of the human person that the Founders' held, the unit may progress through the Declaration of Independence to consider the nature of government power based on this understanding of human beings. The reason people join together to form a government is to secure their rights and preserve their safety and happiness. Students should know this purpose to their government and consider the ways in which we determine whether the government is just, through both consent and the extent to which it fulfills its purpose. Students should also learn about what ought to be done when a government becomes an unjust tyranny and under what circumstances the people should take such actions. The list of grievances in the remainder of the Declaration of Independence offers a case study in such tyrannical circumstances.

Teachers might best plan and teach Government with emphasis on the following approaches:

- Ask students what the Declaration states to be the purpose of government. Students should be able to see in the Declaration that the purpose of government is to secure the natural rights of each person.
- Ask students about the source of a government's legitimate power. The basis of rule in the American regime is the sovereignty of the people: since all are equal by nature, no one is born to rule or to be ruled. Legitimate government can only arise out of the consent of those governed. The powers of government are defined when they are delegated by agreement of those who possess rights. Thus, the principle of natural rights both empowers government at the same time that it limits it to these specific purposes.

- Consider with students that, according to the Declaration, rights do not come from government. Rights are inherent in nature, that is, they come with being a human person. Likewise, individuals do not give up their rights by forming government. People *may* give to government their individual power to secure those rights in certain circumstances in order that the government might use that power to protect the rights of all. But the natural rights possessed by each individual cannot be given up, or taken away unless one has violated the rights of another. This is what is meant by “unalienable.”
- Ask students how the establishment and recognition of equal natural rights guards against discrimination based on class, religion, or race, and against the factions and civil divisions that often result from such unjust distinctions. Upholding equal natural rights preserves the humanity of each person, encourages all to recognize that humanity in others despite differences, and reminds all to be mindful that one’s own dignity is protected insofar as others also hold to the belief in natural rights.
- Help students to understand what is meant by self-government in the political body, i.e., that government derives its “just powers from the consent of the governed,” that is, from the people themselves. Consent requires the people, directly or indirectly, to be involved in making the laws. It also implies participation in the activities of governing (office holding, voting, serving as jurors, etc.). As a result, and by design, the people have the liberty to govern themselves in most aspects of their daily lives.
- Connect these parts of the Declaration of Independence to the Mayflower Compact. Read the list of grievances and ask students to connect each grievance to the historical events they studied in the previous lesson. Then ask students to explain how those events violate the statements made in the first two paragraphs of the Declaration.
- Consider with students the colonists’ “appeal to heaven.” King George III was neither securing the rights of the colonists nor providing for the protection. In fact, he and the British Parliament were doing many things that denied the colonists’ rights. When a government fails to protect fundamental rights, the people may alter or abolish the current government and form a new one to assure their safety and happiness. This is called the right of revolution.

STRENGTHENING UNDERSTANDING: POST-LESSON ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: According to the Declaration of Independence, how and why do a people form a government? What are the people to do should that government become ineffective or hostile to the purpose for which the people created it? Using the list of grievances, what are some examples of government abandoning or violating its purpose? (2–3 paragraphs).

Name_____

Date_____

Unit 1 — Formative Quiz

Covering Lessons 1-2
10-15 minutes

DIRECTIONS: Answer each question in at least one complete sentence.

1. According to the text itself, why are the colonists issuing a Declaration of Independence?

2. What does human equality mean in the statement, “all men are created equal”?

3. What are natural rights and why do human beings have them?

4. What is the purpose of government and its powers?

5. What are the people free—and even obligated—to do if the government fails or violates its purpose?

Lesson 3 — The Citizen and Self-Government

3-4 classes

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students learn about the conditions necessary, both in society and in the characters of most citizens, for the flourishing and perpetuation of freedom and self-government.

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Introduction to the Constitution
Constitution 101

Lectures 7 and 9
 Lectures 3 and 5

PRIMARY SOURCES

The following primary sources are potential readings for students. Teachers should use their discretion based on grade level ability in deciding which texts to share with students. The texts may be assigned for homework, read together in class, or simply read aloud by the teacher. Some texts include guiding reading questions to assist students in the event that the text is assigned for homework. Students should annotate the texts either in preparation for or during a seminar conversation. Teachers should not feel it necessary to assign all of the texts, especially in light of grade level considerations.

Thanksgiving Proclamation, George Washington
 Letter to the Massachusetts Militia, John Adams
 Farewell Address, George Washington
 Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson & James Madison
 First Annual Address to Congress, George Washington
 The Northwest Ordinance, Article III
 “Property,” James Madison
 The Examination Number No. 7, Alexander Hamilton

TERMS AND TOPICS

self-government
 morality
 virtue
 liberal education
 property
 commercial republic
 religion
 free exercise of religion

freedom of speech
 public policy
 economics
 taxation
 property rights
 immigration
 marriage and family law

QUESTIONS FOR THE AMERICAN MIND

- What are the virtues and character necessary for freedom and self-government?
- How did the Founders promote morality?
- Why is self-reliance important for a free people?
- How is liberal education necessary for freedom and self-government?
- How does religion help promote morality and freedom?
- What is the free exercise of religion and why is it important?
- What is freedom of speech and why is it so crucial to freedom and self-government?
- What is the significance of property rights and work?
- What is the commercial republic and how does it shape character?
- How did the Founders think about the following:
 - economics
 - war and diplomacy
 - taxation
 - immigration
 - the protection of property
 - marriage and family
- Why were the Founders worried about partisanship? How did they attempt to overcome it?
- How did partisanship nonetheless arise?
- Questions from the U.S. Civics Test:
 - Question 6: What does the Bill of Rights protect?
 - Question 12: What is the economic system of the United States?
 - Question 13: What is the rule of law?
 - Question 65: What are three rights of everyone living in the United States?
 - Question 67: Name two promises that new citizens make in the Oath of Allegiance.
 - Question 69: What are two examples of civic participation in the United States?
 - Question 70: What is one way Americans can serve their country?

KEYS TO THE LESSON

Benjamin Franklin, on departing the Constitutional Convention, was asked what the convention's delegates had proposed. Franklin responded, "A republic, if you can keep it." The American system of self-government rests ultimately on the capacity of Americans to govern themselves in political terms and to exercise personal self-government (good character) in their own lives. American students ought to understand thoroughly this necessity to life in the American republic. The key facets to preserving free government involve citizens being knowledgeable, morally upright, spirited, and free to use their minds, voices, and possessions to maintain liberty and the rule of law. Schools, religion, civic organizations, and the family are the key institutions by which citizens are formed to be able to govern themselves. The public and private contributions of the vast majority of citizens who govern their own lives as such is the determining factor in the health of the American republic and in the experiment in free self-government. Should these falter or fail in the individual lives of citizens, the preservation of liberty and equal human dignity will not long last.

Teachers might best plan and teach the Citizen and Self-Government with emphasis on the following approaches:

- Read with students George Washington's Thanksgiving Proclamation, his Farewell Address, and John Adams' letter to the Massachusetts militia. Have students consider the Founders' arguments

for the necessity of religion in fostering morality, virtue, and character. While opinions varied on religious belief and the extent to which government should endorse a single church, specifically at the state-level, there was general consensus that the instruction in moral conduct, duty, and charity in religion warranted at least the encouragement of religious practice by governments. They should see that the free exercise of religion was simultaneously of utmost importance.

- Read the University of Virginia’s Board of Commissioners report and George Washington’s First Annual Address and highlight the important and broad role education would play in the formation of a free citizenry.
- Teach students about the two major achievements of Congress under the Articles of Confederation: the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Students should understand the historic emphasis the Founders placed on public education and private land ownership as evident in these laws. The Northwest Ordinance in particular articulates principles that would later be reflected in the Constitution, namely, consent of the governed, private property, and the liberty of individuals. Each of these, the Founders argued, would be indispensable if freedom and self-government were to succeed in the United States.
- Consider with students George Washington’s observation in his First Inaugural that “the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable principles of private morality” and in his Farewell Address that “Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports” and that “let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion.”
- Emphasize with students the most famous line from Article III of the Northwest Ordinance: “Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.” Make clear for students the significance of knowledge and character as fostered by education. Public (meaning taxpayer-funded) support for education, both secular and religious, was present in colonial Massachusetts for decades prior to the founding and would continue through the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance. The township system portioned out land reserved for education explicitly. America was a trailblazer in allocating so many resources exclusively for education. In addition to instruction in knowledge, character-building and the development of patriotic and dutiful citizens were chief purposes of these public schools.
- Read with students James Madison’s “Property.” Rights to hold and preserve property are intimately tied to one’s right to defend oneself and to better one’s condition. The “pursuit of happiness” aims at and recognizes goods higher than mere material prosperity. The right to property, if not sufficient to human happiness, is most certainly necessary to the individual liberty to pursue such happiness. Moreover, the free allocation of scarce resources through commerce ensures that all can have what they most need at the times in which they most need it while contributing to ideas and positive activity conducive to the general improvement of human life.
- Talk with students about how the Founders saw the economic role of government as being to uphold the rule of law, enforce contracts, protect property, and permit economic activity that did not violate natural rights. This ensured broad latitude to the liberty of private individuals to trade with one another freely with only minimal regulation. Taxation at the federal level was limited largely to matters of national defense.
- Read aloud with students in class Alexander Hamilton’s Examination No. 7 on the need for a citizenry that holds certain principles and habits of conduct conducive to respecting the rights of fellow citizens. In a nation as diverse as the United States and that is not bound by blood, understanding of, adherence to, and practice in these principles of self-government become all the

more important. Immigration policy for Hamilton, therefore, sought to encourage as much immigration as was possible while still achieving these prerequisites to maintaining free government. In brief, an immigrant had to understand and be willing and able to practice the responsibilities of self-government.

- Consider with students the Founders' positions on the preservation of morality and the role of the family. While freedom of speech was given broad interpretation, the public utterance and promotion of obscenity was understood to undermine the moral habits of the citizenry, especially the young, and government thus had an interest in restricting such speech to private quarters. The primacy of the family was also significant, as the security, material support, education, sense of duty, and work ethic cultivated first in the family were all equally important to a self-governing citizenry.
- Explain to students how strongly the Founders sought to resist the rise of factions and partisanship. It should be made clear, however, that the Founders' resistance to partisanship was not in some general idea of bipartisanship for bipartisanship's sake. Instead, the Founders believed that if all Americans held to the ideas of the American founding, then there were few disagreements so fundamental as to justify separate and permanent parties. The Founders had no qualms, however, with resisting movements and ideas that rejected the principles of the founding, mainly because such a rejection was, in their view, a rejection of objective truth and justice themselves. Such a rejection of these founding principles was thought irrational and almost certainly to lead to tyranny.

STRENGTHENING UNDERSTANDING: POST-LESSON ASSIGNMENT

Assignment: Why did the American Founders argue that education, religion, and private property were necessary in a citizenry in order for freedom and self-government to exist? (1–2 paragraphs)

APPENDIX A

Study Guide

Test

Writing Assignment

Study Guide — The Declaration of Independence Test

Unit 1

Test on _____

TERMS AND TOPICS

Explain each of the following and the context in which it was discussed during this unit's lessons.

politics	liberty	virtue
power	pursuit of happiness	liberal education
Laws of Nature and of	consent of the governed	property
Nature's God	self-government	property rights
nature	justice	commercial republic
self-evident	rule of law	free exercise of religion
principles	limited government	freedom of speech
morality	state of nature	economics
equality	social contract	taxation
natural rights	liberalism	immigration
unalienable	tyranny	family
life	revolution	

PRIMARY SOURCES

Explain the main arguments in each of the following sources and their significance to our understanding of the Declaration of Independence and the necessities for self-government.

The Declaration of Independence
 The Mayflower Compact
 Farewell Address, George Washington
 The Northwest Ordinance, Article III
 "Property," James Madison

QUESTIONS FOR THE AMERICAN MIND

Based on notes from lessons and seminar conversations, answer each of the following.

Lesson 1 | The Human Person

- ☐ What is the "Course of human events"?
- ☐ What is politics?
- ☐ According to the text itself, why are the colonists issuing a Declaration of Independence?
- ☐ What are "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God"?
- ☐ What is a "self-evident" truth?
- ☐ What does human equality mean in the statement, "all men are created equal"?
- ☐ What are natural rights and why do human beings have them?

- ☐ According to the Declaration of Independence, from where do natural rights come?
- ☐ What does it mean to say that men are “endowed by their Creator” with the rights?
- ☐ What does “unalienable” mean?

Lesson 2 | The Government

- ☐ What is the purpose of government and its powers?
- ☐ How do natural rights limit the government?
- ☐ What is meant by “limited government”?
- ☐ From where does government derive its just powers?
- ☐ Who are the governed?
- ☐ What does consent mean?
- ☐ What is self-government?
- ☐ What is the connection between consent, equality, and justice?
- ☐ What is the relationship between the state of nature, the social contract, and consent of the governed?
- ☐ What are the people free—and even obligated—to do if the government fails or violates its purpose?
- ☐ Ought it to be easy or frequent for a people to overthrow and replace its government? If not, under which circumstances may they do so?
- ☐ What is tyranny?
- ☐ How does the fact that America was founded with the words of the Declaration of Independence make America the exception in the history of nations, even exceptional?
- ☐ America is a country whose existence and purpose for existing rests on belief in and commitment to certain ideas its Founders asserted to be objectively true. What are these truths?

Lesson 3 | The Citizen and Self-Government

- ☐ What are the virtues and character necessary for freedom and self-government?
- ☐ How did the Founders promote morality?
- ☐ Why is self-reliance important for a free people?
- ☐ How is liberal education necessary for freedom and self-government?
- ☐ How does religion help promote morality and freedom?
- ☐ What is the free exercise of religion and why is it important?
- ☐ What is freedom of speech and why is it so crucial to freedom and self-government?
- ☐ What is the significance of property rights and work?
- ☐ What is the commercial republic and how does it shape character?
- ☐ How did the Founders think about the following:
 - economics
 - war and diplomacy
 - taxation
 - immigration
 - the protection of property
 - marriage and family
- ☐ Why were the Founders worried about partisanship? How did they attempt to overcome it?
- ☐ How did partisanship nonetheless arise?

Name_____

Date_____

Test — The Declaration of Independence

Unit 1

TERMS AND TOPICS

Explain each of the following and the context in which it was discussed during this unit's lessons.

1. Laws of Nature and of Nature's God

2. self-evident

3. morality

4. unalienable

5. self-government

6. rule of law

7. tyranny

8. freedom of speech

PRIMARY SOURCES

Explain the main arguments in each of the following sources and their significance to our understanding of the Declaration of Independence and the necessities for self-government.

9. Farewell Address, George Washington

10. The Northwest Ordinance

QUESTIONS FOR THE AMERICAN MIND

Answer each of the following. Complete sentences are not necessary, but correct spelling and writing should be employed, and responses must fully answer each question.

11. What does human equality mean in the statement, “all men are created equal”?

12. What are natural rights and why do human beings have them?

13. According to the Declaration of Independence, from where do natural rights come?
14. What does it mean to say that men are “endowed by their Creator” with the rights?
15. What is the purpose of government and its powers?
16. From where does government derive its just powers?
17. What are the people free—and even obligated—to do if the government fails or violates its purpose?
18. How does the fact that America was founded with the words of the Declaration of Independence make America the exception in the history of nations, even exceptional?
19. What is the free exercise of religion and why is it important?
20. What is the significance of property rights and work?

Writing Assignment — The Declaration of Independence

Unit 1

Due on _____

DIRECTIONS

Citing primary sources and conversations from class in your argument, write a 4–5 paragraph essay answering the question:

According to the Founders, what do people need to understand about themselves, about government, and about the kind of people they need to be in order to freely govern themselves?

APPENDIX B

Primary Sources

The Second Continental Congress

The Pilgrims

George Washington

John Adams

Thomas Jefferson

James Madison

The United States Congress

Alexander Hamilton

THE THIRTEEN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

The Unanimous Declaration

A DECLARATION

July 4, 1776

Pennsylvania State House | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Declaration of Independence

BACKGROUND

The delegates from each colony at the Second Continental Congress announced their votes to form a new country separate from Great Britain in this statement to mankind that expounds both the principles on which this new country would be founded and the reasons they judged themselves justified to separate.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Why do the United States believe they need to release a statement about their decision to form a country separate from Great Britain?
2. What do they consider about the truths they posit?
3. How are all men equal?
4. From where comes their rights?
5. What is the reason why people create governments?
6. From where comes a government's powers?
7. What may a people do if a government does not fulfill its ends?

"The Declaration of Independence," in *The U.S. Constitution: A Reader*, ed. Hillsdale College Politics Faculty (Hillsdale, MI: Hillsdale College Press, 2012), 5-9.

8. Although governments should not be changed for small reasons, when should the people change them?
9. Against which person does the Declaration of Independence level its charges?
10. What actions involving the military has this person carried out against the colonists?
11. What legal practices has this person violated?
12. What efforts have the colonists made to seek redress and reconciliation with Great Britain?
13. To whom do the representatives appeal for the justness of their intentions?
14. By whose authority do the representatives declare independence?
15. What do each of the representatives pledge to one another?

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station 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
5 declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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
10 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. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long estab-
15 lished 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 right, it is their duty, to throw off such
20 Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a
25 candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, un-
30 less suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

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He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

- 5 He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

- 10 He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

- 15 He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

- 20 He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

- He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

- 25 He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

- 30 He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

5

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

10

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

15 For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offenses:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

20

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

25

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

30

ANNOTATIONS

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He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

5 He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

10 He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

15 He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

20 In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured
25 them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

30

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We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Georgia

Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton

North Carolina

William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

South Carolina

Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton

Maryland

Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia

George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

Pennsylvania

Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

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Delaware

Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean

New York

5 William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris

New Jersey

Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark

10 New Hampshire

Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton

Massachusetts

John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry

15

Rhode Island

Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery

Connecticut

20 Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott

THE UNDERSIGNED SUBJECTS OF KING JAMES

Agreement Between
the Settlers of New Plymouth

LAW

November 11, 1620

Mayflower | Off the Coast of Cape Cod

The Mayflower Compact

BACKGROUND

The settlers who traveled to the British possession of Virginia on the *Mayflower* drafted and signed this agreement pertaining to their governance before disembarking in the New World.

ANNOTATIONS

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IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN. We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage

5 to plant the first Colony in the northern Parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Further-

10 ance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience.

IN WITNESS whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape-Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Domini; 1620.

"The Mayflower Compact," in *History of Plymouth Plantation* by William Bradford, ed. Charles Deane (Boston, 1856), 89-90.

PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON

Thanksgiving Proclamation

PROCLAMATION

October 3, 1789

Federal Hall | New York City, New York

BACKGROUND

President George Washington established a day of thanksgiving to God for peaceably establishing a new form of government, to be observed around the one-year anniversary of the new Constitution.

ANNOTATIONS**NOTES & QUESTIONS**

By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor—and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me

5 “to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.”

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be

10 devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be—That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks—for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation—for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his Providence which we experienced

15 in the course and conclusion of the late war—for the great degree of tranquillity,

George Washington, “Thanksgiving Proclamation,” 3 October 1789, in *The Papers of George Washington*, “Presidential Series,” Vol. 4, 8 September 1789–15 January 1790, ed. Dorothy Twohig (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 131–32.

Thanksgiving Proclamation
George Washington

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union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed—for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted—for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed; and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing
5 useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions—to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our sev-
10 eral and relative duties properly and punctually—to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed—to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shewn kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord—To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion
15 and virtue, and the encrease of science among them and us—and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New-York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

George Washington

PRESIDENT JOHN ADAMS (FEDERALIST)

To the Officers of the Militia of Massachusetts

LETTER

October 11, 1798
Quincy, Massachusetts

BACKGROUND

President John Adams responds to a message sent to him from the militia of his home state of Massachusetts.

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To the Officers of the first Brigade of the third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts

Quincy October 11. 1798

Gentlemen

I have received from Major General Hull and Brigadier General Walker your unanimous

- 5 Address from Lexington, animated with a martial Spirit and expressed with a military Dignity, becoming your Characters and the memorable Plains, in which it was adopted.

- While our Country remains untainted with the Principles and manners, which are now producing desolation in so many Parts of the World: while she continues Sincere and incapable of insidious and impious Policy: We shall have the Strongest Reason to rejoice in
- 10 the local destination assigned Us by Providence. But should the People of America, once become capable of that deep simulation towards one another and towards foreign nations, which assumes the Language of Justice and moderation while it is practicing Iniquity and Extravagance; and displays in the most captivating manner the charming Pictures of Candour frankness & sincerity while it is rioting in rapine and Insolence: this Country will be

John Adams, "From John Adams to Massachusetts Militia," 11 October 1798, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-3102>.

ANNOTATIONS

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the most miserable Habitation in the World. Because We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by morality and Religion. Avarice, Ambition Revenge or Galantry, would break the strongest Cords of our Constitution as a Whale goes through a Net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other

5

An Address so unanimous and firm from the officers commanding two thousand Eight hundred Men, consisting of such substantial Citizens as are able and willing at their own Expence, compleatly to arm, And cloath themselves in handsome Uniforms does honor to that Division of the Militia which has done so much honor to their Country. Oaths, in this Country, are as yet universally considered as Sacred Obligations. That which you have taken and so solemnly repeated on that venerable Spot is an ample Pledge of your sincerity, and devotion to your Country and its Government.

10

John Adams

PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON**To the People of America****LETTER EXCERPTS**

September 19, 1796

American Daily Advertiser | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Farewell Address

BACKGROUND

George Washington wrote this letter to the American people announcing his retirement from the Presidency after his second term. At the time, there were no term limits on the presidency.

ANNOTATIONS**NOTES & QUESTIONS**

...For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of American, which belongs to You, in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of Patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight
5 shades of difference, you have the same Religion, Manners, Habits and political Principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils, and joint efforts; of common dangers, sufferings and successes....

...[Y]ou have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a Constitution of Government, better calculated than your former for an intimate Union, and for the efficacious
10 management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of our own choice uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your
15 confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its Laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true Liberty. The

George Washington, "Farewell Address," 19 September 1796, in *George Washington: A Collection*, ed. W. B. Allen (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1988), 512–17.

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basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their Constitutions of Government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, 'til changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole People, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the People to establish Government presupposes the duty of every Individual to obey the established Government....

I have already intimated to you the danger of Parties in the State, with particular reference to the founding of them on Geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the Spirit of Party, generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human Mind. It exists under different shapes in all Governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed; but, in those of the popular form, it is seen in its greatest rankness and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge natural to party dissention, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries, which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an Individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of Public Liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight) the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of Party are sufficient to make it the interest and the duty of a wise People to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the Public Councils and enfeeble the Public administration. It agitates the Community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms, kindles the animosity of one part against another, foment occasionally riot and insurrection. It opens the door

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to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the government itself through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country, are subjected to the policy and will of another.

5 There is an opinion that parties in free countries are useful checks upon the Administration of the government and serve to keep alive the spirit of Liberty. This within certain limits is probably true, and in Governments of a Monarchical cast Patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in Governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And
10 there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion to mitigate and assuage it. A fire not to be quenched; it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest instead of warming, it should consume.

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking in a free Country should inspire caution in those entrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective
15 Constitutional spheres; avoiding in the exercise of the powers of one department to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create whatever the form of government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power, and proneness to abuse it, which predominates in the human heart is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power; by dividing and distributing it into different
20 depositories, and constituting each the Guardian of the Public Weal against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments ancient and modern, some of them in our country and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If in the opinion of the People, the distribution or modification of the Constitutional
25 powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance in permanent evil any partial or transient benefit which the use can at any time yield.

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Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and citizens. The mere Politician, equally with the pious man ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths, which are the instruments of investigation in Courts of Justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that National morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

'Tis substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule indeed extends with more or less force to every species of free Government. Who that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric.

Promote then as an object of primary importance, Institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened....

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Report of the Board of Commissioners

REPORT EXCERPTS

August 4, 1818
Rockfish Gap, Virginia

BACKGROUND

Thomas Jefferson and James Madison had a role in forming these ideas on education and the public support thereof as members of the Board of Commissioners for the University of Virginia.

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...The objects of this primary education determine its character and limits. These objects would be,

5 To give to every citizen the information he needs for the transaction of his own business;

To enable him to calculate for himself, and to express and preserve his ideas, his contracts and accounts, in writing;

To improve, by reading, his morals and faculties;

10 To understand his duties to his neighbors and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either;

To know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence, with candor, and judgment;

"Report of the Board of Commissioners for the University of Virginia to the Virginia General Assembly," 4 August 1818," in *The Papers of James Madison*, "Retirement Series," Vol. 1, 4 March 1817–31 January 1820, ed. David B. Mattern, J. C. A. Stagg, Mary Parke Johnson, and Anne Mandeville Colony (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 326–40.

And, in general, to observe with intelligence and faithfulness all the social relations under which he shall be placed.

To instruct the mass of our citizens in these, their rights, interests and duties, as men and citizens, being then the objects of education in the primary schools, whether private or public, in them should be taught reading, writing and numerical arithmetic, the elements of mensuration, (useful in so many callings,) and the outlines of geography and history.

And this brings us to the point at which are to commence the higher branches of education, of which the Legislature require the development; those, for example, which are,

To form the statesmen, legislators and judges, on whom public prosperity and individual happiness are so much to depend;

To expound the principles and structure of government, the laws which regulate the intercourse of nations, those formed municipally for our own government, and a sound spirit of legislation, which, banishing all arbitrary and unnecessary restraint on individual action, shall leave us free to do whatever does not violate the equal rights of another;

To harmonize and promote the interests of agriculture, manufactures and commerce, and by well informed views of political economy to give a free scope to the public industry;

To develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals, and instill into them the precepts of virtue and order;

To enlighten them with mathematical and physical sciences, which advance the arts, and administer to the health, the subsistence, and comforts of human life;

And, generally, to form them to habits of reflection and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others, and of happiness within themselves.

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These are the objects of that higher grade of education, the benefits and blessings of which the Legislature now propose to provide for the good and ornament of their country, the gratification and happiness of their fellow-citizens, of the parent especially, and his progeny, on which all his affections are concentrated.

PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON

Annual Message to Congress

SPEECH EXCERPTS

January 8, 1790

Senate Chamber, Federal Hall | New York City, New York

BACKGROUND

President George Washington gave this address as the first annual message to Congress on the state of the Union, as required per the Constitution.

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Fellow Citizens of the Senate, and House of Representatives...

Among the many interesting objects which will engage your attention, that of providing for the common defence will merit particular regard. To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace....

- 5 Nor am I less persuaded, that you will agree with me in opinion, that there is nothing which can better deserve your patronage, than the promotion of Science and Literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of publick happiness. In one, in which the measures of government receive their impression so immediately from the sense of the community, as in our's, it is proportionately essential. To the security of a free Constitu-
- 10 tion it contributes in various ways: By convincing those who are entrusted with the publick administration, that every valuable end of government is best answered by the enlightened confidence of the people: And by teaching the people themselves to know, and to value their own rights; to discern and provide against invasions of them; to distinguish between oppression and the necessary exercise of lawful authority; between burthens proceeding

George Washington, "First Annual Address," 8 January 1790, in *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents: Section 1 (of 4) of Volume 1: George Washington*, ed. James D. Richardson (New York : Bureau of National Literature, Inc., 1897; Project Gutenberg, 2004), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/11314/11314.txt>.

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from a disregard to their convenience, and those resulting from the inevitable exigencies of society; to discriminate the spirit of liberty from that of licentiousness, cherishing the first, avoiding the last, and uniting a speedy, but temperate vigilance against encroachments, with an inviolable respect to the laws.

- 5 Whether this desirable object will be best promoted by affording aids to seminaries of learning already established, by the institution of a national university, or by any other expedients, will be well worthy of a place in the deliberations of the Legislature....

THE U.S. CONGRESS OF THE CONFEDERATION

An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States Northwest of the River Ohio

LAW EXCERPT

July 13, 1787

Federal Hall | New York City, New York

BACKGROUND

Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance to provide the governing structure for all of the territories of the young United States, lands that would later become the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

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Article III

Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged. The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their lands and property shall
5 never be taken from them without their consent; and in their property, rights, and liberty they never shall be invaded or disturbed unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress; but laws founded in justice and humanity shall, from time to time, be made, for preventing wrongs being done to them, and for preserving peace and friendship with them....

"The Northwest Ordinance," in *The U.S. Constitution: A Reader*, ed. Hillsdale College Politics Faculty (Hillsdale, MI: Hillsdale College Press, 2012), 121-27.

REP. JAMES MADISON (VA)

“Property”

ESSAY

March 27, 1792

The National Gazette | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

BACKGROUND

James Madison included this essay as part of a series of articles he wrote for *The National Gazette* in the early years of American government under the Constitution.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What are the two senses of the word "property" according to Madison?
2. In what way can man's rights, opinions, and the use of his faculties be his property?
3. According to Madison, what must a government do to secure the various senses of property?

James Madison, “Property,” 27 March 1792, in *The Papers of James Madison*, Vol. 14, ed. William T. Hutchinson, et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 266–68.

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This term in its particular application means “that dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in exclusion of every other individual.”

In its larger and juster meaning, it embraces every thing to which a man may attach a value and have a right; and which leaves to every one else the like advantage.

- 5 In the former sense, a man’s land, or merchandise, or money is called his property.

In the latter sense, a man has a property in his opinions and the free communication of them.

He has a property of peculiar value in his religious opinions, and in the profession and practice dictated by them.

- 10 He has a property very dear to him in the safety and liberty of his person.

He has an equal property in the free use of his faculties and free choice of the objects on which to employ them.

In a word, as a man is said to have a right to his property, he may be equally said to have a property in his rights.

- 15 Where an excess of power prevails, property of no sort is duly respected. No man is safe in his opinions, his person, his faculties, or his possessions.

Where there is an excess of liberty, the effect is the same, though from an opposite cause.

- 20 Government is instituted to protect property of every sort; as well that which lies in the various rights of individuals, as that which the term particularly expresses. This being the end of government, that alone is a just government, which impartially secures to every man, whatever is his own.

According to this standard of merit, the praise of affording a just securing to property, should be sparingly bestowed on a government which, however scrupulously guarding the possessions of individuals, does not protect them in the enjoyment and communication of

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their opinions, in which they have an equal, and in the estimation of some, a more valuable property.

More sparingly should this praise be allowed to a government, where a man’s religious rights are violated by penalties, or fettered by tests, or taxed by a hierarchy. Conscience is the most sacred of all property; other property depending in part on positive law, the exercise of that, being a natural and unalienable right. To guard a man’s house as his castle, to pay public and enforce private debts with the most exact faith, can give no title to invade a man’s conscience which is more sacred than his castle, or to withhold from it that debt of protection, for which the public faith is pledged, by the very nature and original conditions of the social pact.

That is not a just government, nor is property secure under it, where the property which a man has in his personal safety and personal liberty, is violated by arbitrary seizures of one class of citizens for the service of the rest. A magistrate issuing his warrants to a press gang, would be in his proper functions in Turkey or Indostan, under appellations proverbial of the most complete despotism.

That is not a just government, nor is property secure under it, where arbitrary restrictions, exemptions, and monopolies deny to part of its citizens that free use of their faculties, and free choice of their occupations, which not only constitute their property in the general sense of the word; but are the means of acquiring property strictly so called. What must be the spirit of legislation where a manufacturer of linen cloth is forbidden to bury his own child in a linen shroud, in order to favor his neighbour who manufactures woolen cloth; where the manufacturer and wearer of woolen cloth are again forbidden the economical use of buttons of that material, in favor of the manufacturer of buttons of other materials!

A just security to property is not afforded by that government, under which unequal taxes oppress one species of property and reward another species: where arbitrary taxes invade the domestic sanctuaries of the rich, and excessive taxes grind the faces of the poor; where the keenness and competitions of want are deemed an insufficient spur to labor, and taxes

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are again applied, by an unfeeling policy, as another spur; in violation of that sacred property, which Heaven, in decreeing man to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, kindly reserved to him, in the small repose that could be spared from the supply of his necessities.

5 If there be a government then which prides itself in maintaining the inviolability of property; which provides that none shall be taken directly even for public use without indemnification to the owner, and yet directly violates the property which individuals have in their opinions, their religion, their persons, and their faculties; nay more, which indirectly violates their property, in their actual possessions, in the labor that acquires their daily subsistence, and in the hallowed remnant of time which ought to relieve their fatigues and
10 soothe their cares, the influence will have been anticipated, that such a government is not a pattern for the United States.

If the United States mean to obtain or deserve the full praise due to wise and just governments, they will equally respect the rights of property, and the property in rights: they will rival the government that most sacredly guards the former; and by repelling its example in
15 violating the latter, will make themselves a pattern to that and all other governments.

LUCIUS CRASSUS (ALEXANDER HAMILTON)

The Examination Number VII

ARTICLE

January 7, 1802

New-York Evening Post | New York City, New York

BACKGROUND

Alexander Hamilton wrote this article examining President Thomas Jefferson's message to Congress at the beginning of his presidency.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. According to Hamilton, what are the several principles that ought to govern immigration?

Alexander Hamilton, "The Examination Number VII," 7 January 1802, in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, Vol. 25, July 1800–April 1802, ed. Harold C. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 491–95.

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The next exceptionable feature in the Message, is the proposal to abolish all restriction on naturalization, arising from a previous residence. In this the President is not more at variance with the concurrent maxims of all commentators on popular governments, than he is with himself. The Notes on Virginia are in direct contradiction to the Message, and furnish
5 us with strong reasons against the policy now recommended. The passage alluded to is here presented: Speaking of the *population* of America, Mr. Jefferson there says, "Here I will beg leave to propose a doubt. The present desire of America, is to produce rapid population, by as great *importations of foreigners* as possible. *But is this founded in good policy?*" "Are there
10 no inconveniences to be thrown into the scale, against the advantage expected from a multiplication of numbers, by the *importation of foreigners*? It is for the happiness of those united in society, to harmonize as much as possible, in matters which they must of necessity transact together. Civil government being the sole object of forming societies, its administration must be conducted by common consent. Every species of government has its specific principles: Ours, perhaps, are more peculiar than those of any other in the universe. *It*
15 *is a composition of the freest principles of the English Constitution*, with others, derived from natural right and reason. To these, nothing can be more opposed than the maxims of absolute monarchies. Yet from such, we are to expect the *greatest number of emigrants*. *They will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, imbibed in their early youth; or if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness,*
20 *passing as is usual, from one extreme to another. It would be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty. Their principles with their language, they will transmit to their children.* In proportion to their numbers, *they will share with us in the legislation.* They will infuse into it *their spirit, warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass.* I may appeal to experience, during the present
25 contest, for a verification of these conjectures: but if they be not certain in event, are they not possible, are they not probable? *Is it not safer to wait with patience for the attainment of any degree of population desired or expected?* May not our government be more homogeneous, *more peaceable, more durable?* Suppose 20 millions of republican Americans, thrown all of a sudden into France, what would be the condition of that kingdom? If it
30 would be more turbulent, less happy, less strong, we may believe that the addition of half a

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million of foreigners, to our present numbers, would produce a similar effect here.” Thus wrote Mr. Jefferson in 1781....

...The impolicy of admitting foreigners to an immediate and unreserved participation in the right of suffrage, or in the sovereignty of a Republic, is as much a received axiom as any
5 thing in the science of politics, and is verified by the experience of all ages. Among other instances, it is known, that hardly any thing contributed more to the downfall of Rome, than her precipitate communication of the privileges of citizenship to the inhabitants of Italy at large. And how terribly was Syracuse scourged by perpetual seditions, when, after the overthrow of the tyrants, a great number of foreigners were suddenly admitted to the
10 rights of citizenship? Not only does ancient but modern, and even domestic history furnish evidence of what may be expected from the dispositions of foreigners, when they get too early footing in a country. Who wields the sceptre of France, and has erected a Despotism on the ruins of a Republic? A foreigner. Who rules the councils of our own ill-fated, unhappy country? And who stimulates persecution on the heads of its citizens, for daring to
15 maintain an opinion, and for exercising the rights of suffrage? *A foreigner!* Where is the virtuous pride that once distinguished Americans? Where the indignant spirit which in defence of principle, hazarded a revolution to attain that independence now *insidiously* attacked?

LUCIUS CRASSUS

