

As the Framers drafted different versions of our founding documents, their ideas of what it meant to be a republic also changed. In this unit, four lessons based on the drafts of the Articles of Confederation, Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution, held at the collection at HSP, allow students to explore the language and ideas behind these pivotal documents. Starting with the Declaration of Independence, students will discover how language and words can represent larger ideas while trying to figure out how Jefferson wanted this masterpiece to be heard aloud. Moving into the Articles of Confederation, students will compare and contrast a draft with the final version to identify not only the strengths and weakness of this document but also the evolving perception the Framers had of themselves and the Republic's identity during the Age of Revolution. Finally, the students will encounter two lessons concerning the United States Constitution. The first lesson will introduce them to the overarching ideas of the Seven Principles, and the second will build upon some of those principles by examining the Preamble in both a draft form and its final version.

Topics

18th century
Colonial period
Government and civics

Plans in this Unit

[Declaration of Independence](#)
[Articles of Confederation](#)
[The Seven Principles of the Constitution](#)
[Preamble to the U.S. Constitution](#)

Grade Level

High School

Standards/Eligible Content

5.1.12.D
5.1.9.C
5.1.12.D
5.1.12.B

PA Core Standards

CC.8.5.11-12.E
CC.8.5.9-10.D
CC.8.5.11-12.D

About the Author

This lesson was created by Brendon Floyd, Education Intern at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

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American Revolution
Pennsylvania
Philadelphia
Politics

Big Ideas

US History

Essential Questions

What document or artifact best summarizes the United States and why?

What role does analysis have in historical construction?

Background Material for Teacher

- [Preserving American Freedom](#) – Historical Society of Pennsylvania website with Founding documents
- [Early Drafts of the U.S. Constitution](#) – William Ewald, and Lorianne Updike Toler. "Early Drafts of the U.S. Constitution." The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 135, no. 3 (2011): 227-38. doi:10.5215/pennmaghistbio.135.3.0227.
- [Defending the Articles of Confederation: A Response to Sobel](#) – Dougherty, Keith L. "Defending the Articles of Confederation: A Response to Sobel." Public Choice 109, no. 1/2 (2001): 141-48. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30026480>.
- [The Legacy of the Articles of Confederation](#) – Rakove, Jack. "The Legacy of the Articles of Confederation." Publius 12, no. 4 (1982): 45-66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3329662>.
- [The Declaration of Independence: How Did it Happen?](#) - Website by the National Archives

End of Unit Assessment

Each Lesson has its own Assessment:

Declaration of Independence

Part A - To wrap-up this section of the activity, students "Give the Declaration of Independence a Tweet":

- no more than 140 characters
- tweet @someone (maybe the King of England)
- Use one #hashtag for the whole document
- Create a twitter 'handle' the Founders would have

Part B - Wrap-up this activity by having the students write a paragraph reflecting on why they think the Declaration of Independence has endured this long and is one of the most influential documents in modern world history.

Articles of Confederation

Have students use materials created during the lesson, to write an essay, using examples from the text, explaining the weakness of the Articles of Confederation, how this document distributes

power between the state and national governments, and why they think the framers distributed power in this way instead of centralizing it in a big Federal government.

Seven Principles

As an Exit Ticket, students will write down their favorite principle), what that principle means, and why it is their favorite.

Preamble

As an Exit Tickets, students will write answers to these prompts:

- What is the single most important change the Founders made to the Preamble and why?
- What is the purpose of the Preamble to the United States Constitution?

Links

[Preserving American Freedom](#)