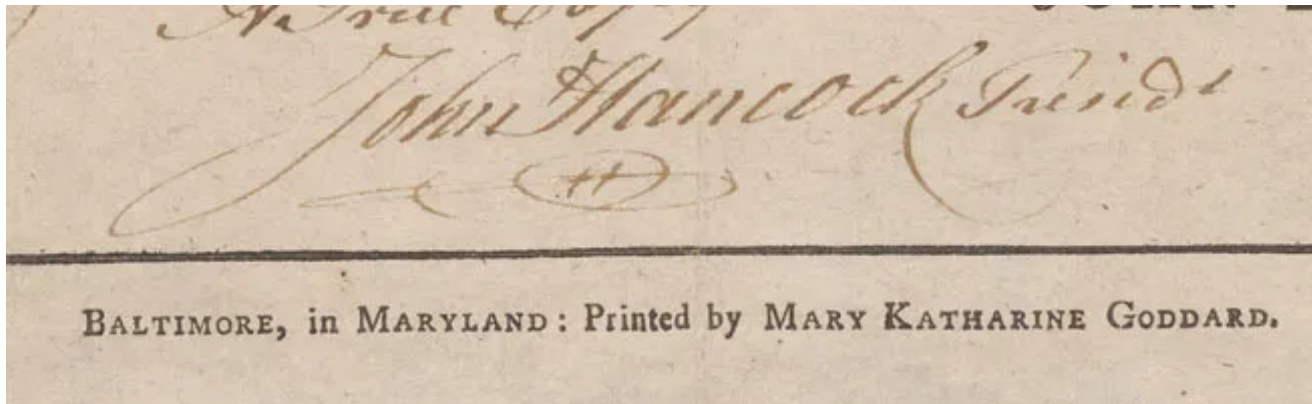




Decisions and Choices

A Brave Printer During the American Revolution: Mary Katharine Goddard

Historical Context

During the American Revolution, the colonies were fighting for independence from Great Britain. In January 1777, Mary Katharine Goddard printed the first official copy of the Declaration of Independence that included the names of the signers. Printing this document was dangerous because the British considered it an act of treason. Mary Katharine Goddard was also the postmaster of Baltimore, one of the first women to hold a government position in America. In 1789, she was removed from her job, even though she had done it well. Many people believed she was removed because she was a woman. She wrote a letter to President George Washington asking for her job back.

Why This Story Matters

- Goddard made a brave decision to not only print the document, but she also chose to put her full name on the document.
- The Declaration of Independence helped create the United States.
- Her choices show that women played important roles during the Revolution.
- She stood up for herself when she felt she was treated unfairly.
- Her story helps us understand how individual choices can shape history.

Connection to Habit

Mary Katharine Goddard had important decisions to make. She chose to print the Declaration of Independence even though it was risky. She chose to put her full name on it, knowing it could bring danger. Later, she chose to speak up and write to President Washington when she lost her job. Her story shows that people's decisions, big or small, can make a difference. Some choices bring change right away, and others plant seeds for the future. By studying her decisions, we learn how individuals help shape history.

Discussion Questions

- Why was it risky for Mary Katharine Goddard to print the Declaration of Independence?
- Why do you think she decided to print her full name instead of just her initials?
- What choice did she make when she wrote to George Washington?
- How do you think she felt when she lost her job?
- Have you ever had to make a brave choice? What happened?

Vocabulary

- Declaration: A formal statement.
- Independence: Freedom from control by another country.
- Broadside : A large printed sheet of paper.
- Postmaster: A person in charge of a post office.
- Petition: A written request signed by many people.
- Treason: Acting against your country.
- Signers: People who write their names on a document to show agreement.
- Courage: Being brave even when something feels scary.
- Consequences: What happens as a result of a choice.

Suggested Activity

Materials Needed:

- Signs: “Safe Choice” and “Brave Choice”
- White Board or Chart Paper
- Dry erase markers or Markers
- Sticky Notes
- Printed or Digital copies of Goddard Broadside and one of the prompts
- Pencil/Pen

Step 1: Decision Line [5–10 mins]

Place signs on opposite sides of the room:

“Safe Choice”

“Brave Choice”

Ask students: Did Mary Katharine Goddard make a safe choice or a brave choice?

Students stand where they think her decision belongs and discuss why with their peers.

Suggested Activity Cont.

Step 2: Think–Write–Share [15–20 mins]

Provide students with the image of the Declaration printed by Goddard.

Have students complete one of the following prompts. Note: scaffold based on grade/student needs:

- Prompt 1: Write 3–5 sentences explaining why Mary’s decision was brave. *[Suggested for grades 3rd–5th]*
- Prompt 2: Write a short diary entry pretending you are Mary deciding whether or not to print your name. *[Suggested for grades 4th–5th]*
- Prompt 3: Write a letter giving Mary advice about what she should do. *[Suggested for grades 5th]*

Step 3: Reflection [5 mins]

Ask and have students respond on sticky notes to post or write their responses directly on the chart paper/white board.

- What might have happened if she chose not to print her name?
- How can one person’s decision inspire others?

Interdisciplinary Connections

ELA:

- Write a persuasive paragraph: Should Mary have printed her name? Why or why not?
- Vocabulary practice using context clues from the document.

Civics/Government:

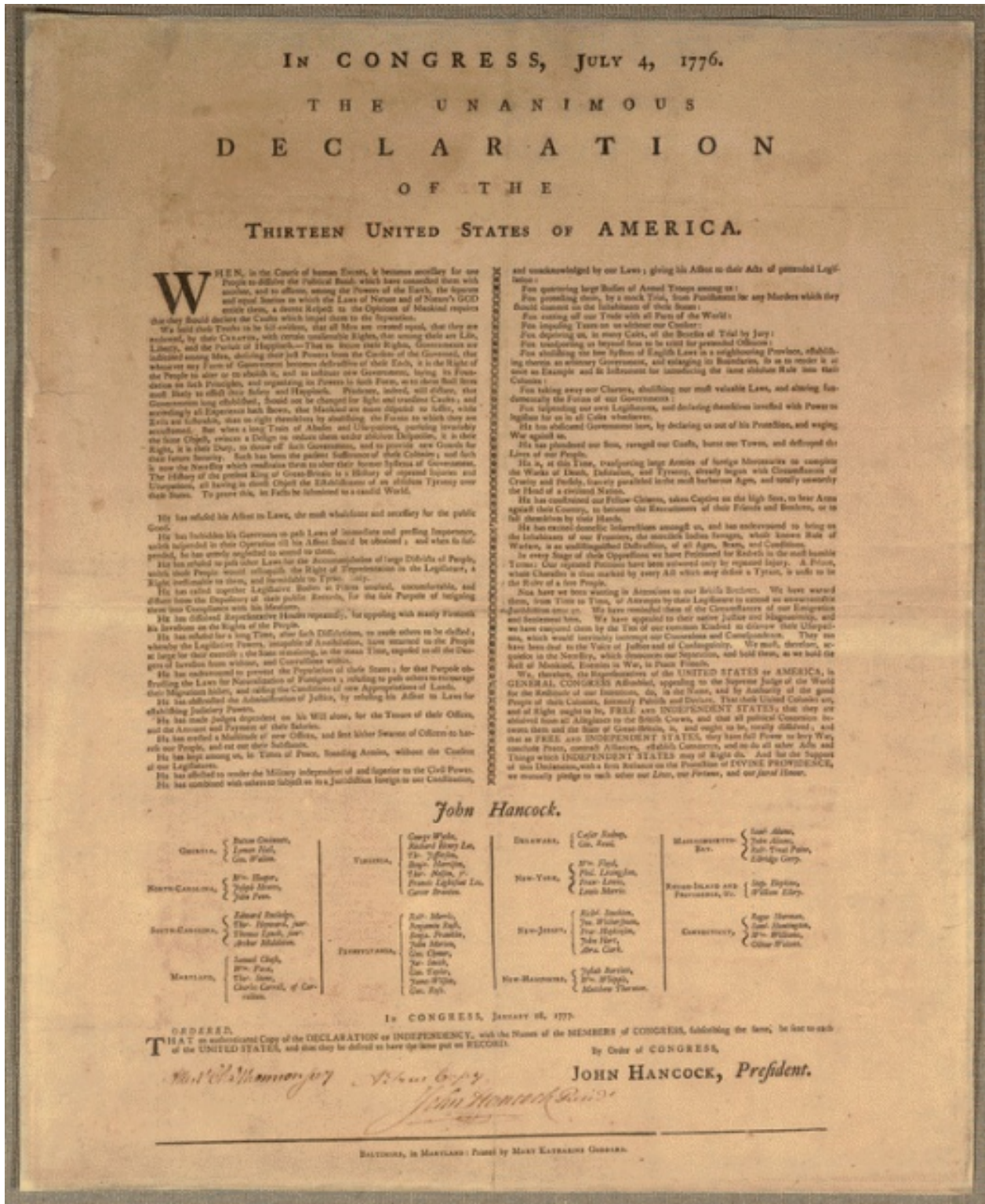
- Discuss fairness and equal rights in jobs.
- Compare Mary’s experience to modern workplace fairness.

Art:

- Create a “bravery broadside” poster celebrating someone who made a courageous choice.

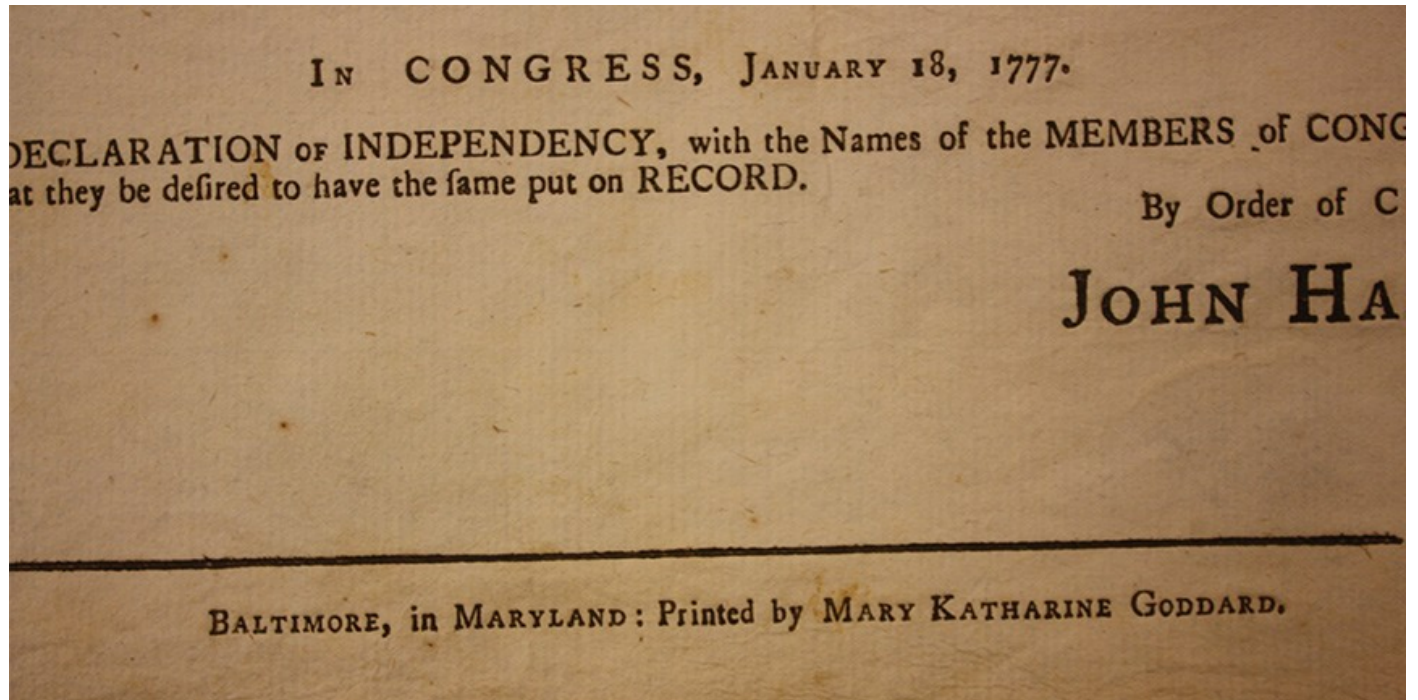
SEL (Social Emotional Learning):

- Discuss standing up for yourself respectfully.
- Talk about how to make responsible decisions.



Primary Source

[zoomed in] **The Declaration of Independence, printed in Baltimore by Mary Katharine Goddard, Library of Congress (January 1777)**



Source: United States & Continental Congress Broadside Collection. (1777) In Congress, July 4, . The unanimous declaration of the thirteen United States of America. [Baltimore, in Maryland: Printed by Mary Katharine Goddard]. [Online Text]. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/90898037/>.

Vocabulary

Declaration: A formal statement.

Independence: Freedom from control by another country.

Broadside : A large printed sheet of paper.

Postmaster: A person in charge of a post office.

Petition: A written request signed by many people.

Treason: Acting against your country.

Signers: People who write their names on a document to show agreement.

Courage: Being brave even when something feels scary.

Consequences: What happens as a result of a choice.



Prompt 1:

Write 3–5 sentences explaining why Mary's decision was brave.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal black ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Prompt 2:

Write a short diary entry pretending you are Mary deciding whether or not to print your name.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

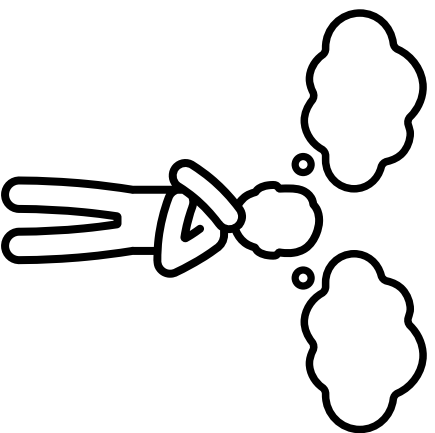
Prompt 3:

Write a letter giving Mary advice about what she should do.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal black ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SAFE

CHOICE



BRAVE

CHOICE

