

TOOLKIT OVERVIEW:

Declaration of Independence

Level: Classroom

Grades: High School (9-12)

School Quarter: 1

Related School Level Activities:

[The American Revolution: 250 Years since the Declaration of Independence](#)

Activity: Researching Global Perspectives: The Declaration in a World of Empires

Theme Alignment: Histories of Independence

Toolkit Overview (In this toolkit):

- Background
- How to implement this activity
- Resources: Official versions of each of the founding documents

Background:

In 1776, both the 13 Colonies and New Mexico were part of European empires: The colonies belonged to Great Britain, while New Mexico was claimed by the Spanish Empire. While the technologies that connected people across the world were ships and parchment instead of airplanes and the Internet, distant places still strongly influenced each other. As colonists on the Eastern Seaboard experienced rising tensions with Great Britain and prepared to declare independence, the Spanish Empire was consolidating, and in 1776 began implementing plans to put New Mexico in more direct control of the Spanish Crown. Eventually, Spain became directly involved in the war, which had impacts in Europe as well as Spain's holdings in the Americas.

This toolkit includes reviewing the American Revolution with particular attention to the founding documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. It also reviews the French and Indian War and how it contributed to the American Revolution. After learning about The Spanish Empire and New Mexico in the 1700s, students will consider how concepts like justice, taxation, and liberty were addressed in both the thirteen colonies and New Mexico. Finally, students will conduct original research and write an essay on a suggested topic. These topics are intended to encourage students to connect the American Revolution with the wider global context and to consider other perspectives on liberty and sovereignty than those traditionally discussed while studying the American Revolution.

How To:

Link to Implementation / How to

- Review vocabulary
- Mini-lesson: Review the American Revolution and French and Indian War

- Read the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and the Bill of Rights
- Lesson: The Spanish Empire and New Mexico in the 1700s
- Reading Assignments:
 - Choose one of the following to research
 - NM criminal trials in the 1700s.
 - Spanish Patriotic Contribution
 - In class, ask students to discuss these two aspects of life in New Mexico in the Spanish Empire
 - How did they reflect ideas about justice and taxation?
 - How did these practices support or undermine New Mexico's independence?
- [Essay Assignment: Suggested topics](#)

Resources:

- [Haudenosaunee Guide for Educators](#)
- [The Declaration of Independence](#)
- [The Constitution](#)
- [Bill of Rights](#)
- [Common Sense by Thomas Paine](#)
- [American Battlefield Trust Declaration of Independence Lesson Plan](#)
- [The Spanish Archives of New Mexico 1779](#)
- [A Forgotten Kingdom: The Spanish Frontier in Colorado and New Mexico, 1540-1821](#)
- [Pleading for Justice: Mum Bett \(Elizabeth Freeman\) and Massachusetts' First Freedom Suit](#)
- [Declaration of Independence Vocabulary Virtual Flashcards](#)
- [Harvard's Declaration of Independence Wordsearch](#) No key provided. Includes explanations of words that were or were not included in the Declaration.
- Bonus Vocabulary challenge: NYT [Declaration of Independence Crossword](#) and [Answer Sheet](#)
(Challenging! Teachers may wish to offer a word bank. Consider teamwork of 2-3 students)

Books:

- [Declaration: The Nine Tumultuous Weeks When America Became Independent, May 1-July 4, 1776](#)
- [Rise to Rebellion: A Novel of the American Revolution \(The American Revolutionary War\)](#)
- [Redcoats and Rebels: The American Revolution Through British Eyes](#)
- [More Books for advanced high schoolers](#)
- [Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence](#)
- [A Peacemaker for Warring Nations: The Founding of the Iroquois League](#)