



Grade 5

Standard:

Understand the people and events associated with the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Independence and the document's significance, including the key political concepts it embodies, the origins of those concepts, and its role in severing ties with Great Britain.

“Search the California Content Standards.” *CA Content Standards (CA Dept of Education)*, California Department of Education, www2.cde.ca.gov/cacs/history?order=0&page=0&perpage=100&mingrade=5&maxgrade=5&dl=0.

Write a Play: The Creation of the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence is one of the most famous documents in history, but much thought and frustration went into writing it. This is not surprising, as it couldn't have been an easy or quick task to write a document intended to declare the beginning of a new nation. Let's put ourselves in the nation's founders' shoes. Write a short play (five to ten minutes should do) about the writing of the Declaration of Independence using at least the five authors of the Declaration as the central characters. If you need a quick history lesson or a refresher on the writing of the Declaration of Independence, take six minutes to watch this video [here](#), or read up about it in your history textbook if you have access to it. Then complete the following steps:

- 1) Watch [this three-minute video](#) on little known facts about the writing of the Declaration of Independence.
- 2) Grab some paper, and begin writing down the important elements of your play:
 - a. Who are the characters involved in drafting the Declaration?
 - b. What are the steps and events leading up to the actual writing and completion of the Declaration? Begin drafting your plot.
 - c. What will happen at the beginning of your play? What will happen in the middle? How will you end your play?

Note: this is your play, so you get to do what you want with it! If you would like your play to take place somewhere besides Pennsylvania (say, on the moon?), you may do so. What is your reason for wanting it to take place somewhere else? How do you want your characters to speak? Do you want them to wear funny or specific costume pieces? If so, why?

- 3) Write your play's script. Be sure to script the following discussions between characters in your play:
 - a. The colonies' need to officially claim themselves a unified nation independent of British rule
 - b. Deciding who will write the document
 - c. Deciding what should be written in the document
 - d. The Congress removing the mention of slavery from the document

When writing your script, think about what characters are feeling. Are they angry or irritated? Proud and excited? Afraid or anxious? Reflect those feelings in their dialogue. Also think about your **stage directions, which are the instructions to the actors that tell them where they should go on stage and when, what they should do on stage and when, what **props** (objects actors use, such as pens and paper for writing) they should use and when, etc.*
- 4) OPTIONAL: Act your play out over Zoom with friends or with people at home! If you don't have enough people for your **cast**, get creative. For example, one person can play multiple characters, or one person can play characters of a different gender than his or her own.