



Drafting the Declaration of Independence

Activity: Drafting the Declaration of Independence

Category: Writing Activity

Series: Examining Primary Sources (12 Questions About the Declaration of Independence)

Supplies

- *12 Questions About the Declaration of Independence*
- The book's 12StoryLibrary.com page: <http://www.12storylibrary.com/non-fiction/examining-primary-sources/12-questions-about-the-declaration-of-independence/>
 - "A Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence" web resource
- The 12StoryLibrary.com Primary Sources page: <http://www.12storylibrary.com/primary/>

Prep

Read *12 Questions About the Declaration of Independence* to the students, or assign it to them to read before class. Also have the students use the "Primary Source" web resource to read the Declaration of Independence.

Directions

Chapter 5 ("Who Wrote the Declaration of Independence") tells the process of how the Declaration of Independence was written. Thomas Jefferson wrote a draft of the document in 1776. John Adams and Benjamin Franklin made edits to his draft. The Continental Congress later made even more changes before its members signed the Declaration on August 2, 1776.

This last version is what most people read today, and it's the version the students read before class. However, we still have records of earlier versions, such as the web resource "A Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence." The words in italics show the parts of the rough draft that do not appear in the final version. They were edited out. The words in brackets show words that are in the final version but not the rough draft. They were added to the rough draft.

Have the students read through the rough draft of the Declaration of Independence and answer the following questions:

1. What is one place where a word in the rough draft was replaced with a different word in the final draft? How does this change the sentence's meaning or connotations? Why do you think the writers made this change?
2. What is one place where a word or phrase was removed from the rough draft? How does this change that section's meaning or connotations? Why do you think the writers made this change?
3. What is one place where a word or phrase was added to the rough draft? How does this change that section's meaning or connotations? Why do you think the writers made this change?

Evaluation

Give the students up to three points for answering each question: one point for finding the change, one for explaining its effect, and one for explaining why the writers might have made this change. RI 6.4, RI 6.5

Purpose

To help students practice determining the meanings and connotations of words and phrases as they are used in a text and analyzing how particular sentences, paragraphs, and sections contribute to the development of the ideas in a text.