

Lesson 5: The Guiding Star of Equality: The Declaration of Independence in American History

Answer Key

Graphic Organizer: The Declaration of Independence and Equality in U.S. History

Part 1:

1. How does the Declaration state that all humans are equal?

It states that humans are given rights by their Creator, implying that they are born with these rights.

2. Where do unalienable rights come from?

the Creator

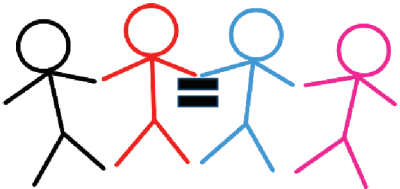
3. What is the purpose of government?

to ensure that natural rights are protected

4. From where does government get its power?

the consent of the governed, or the people

Part 2:

Document Title and Date	Historical Context	Influence of the Declaration of Independence	Image or Memory Aid
Preamble to the Declaration of Independence, 1776	<i>American colonists broke with Great Britain because it did not respect the colonists' natural rights.</i>		
Document 1: Petition to the Massachusetts Legislature, 1777	Black American men petitioned Massachusetts for an end to slavery.	Says all men have a natural right to freedom from the "Great Parent of the Universe".	Accept reasonable answers in this column.

Document Title and Date	Historical Context	Influence of the Declaration of Independence	Image or Memory Aid
Document 2: Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, 1848	300 women and men met at the Seneca Falls Convention for women's rights.	Copies the language of the Declaration, adding that women live under the tyranny of men instead of the colonists living under the tyranny of Great Britain .	
Document 3: Gettysburg Address, 1863	In the middle of the Civil War, after a great loss of life at the Battle of Gettysburg, President Abraham Lincoln gave a speech to dedicate a graveyard for Union soldiers.	Says the United States was created for the protection of liberty and dedicated to the idea of equality; restates Founding principle of equality.	
Document 4: The Atlantic Charter, 1941	The United States and Great Britain released a document that expressed their common ideals in contrast to the ideals of the Nazi Party.	Says people have a right to choose the form of government under which they live and that governments should get their power from the people.	
Document 5: "I Have a Dream" speech, 1963	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made a speech on the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation at the end of a large protest for civil rights in Washington, DC.	Says that Founding documents say all men (Black and white) are created equal and have natural rights; eventually the nation will fulfill this promise.	

Concluding Analysis

1. Based on the documents you have examined, how has the Declaration of Independence inspired Americans throughout history to help the country live up to its Founding principles?

The documents show that the Declaration's promise of equality for all was taken seriously by Americans as soon as the document was issued. Men and women cited this promise as they worked to end slavery and ensure equal rights for all across history.

2. Where do you see debates over freedom and equality continuing today? How might the ideas outlined in the Declaration of Independence influence these debates? *Accept reasoned student responses.*

Example: The concept that all are equal and have a right to freedom and opportunity can be used in debates over housing, income inequality, criminal justice, education, and many other topics. The Declaration of Independence asserts that all are created equal. Examples of inequality within our society invite us to investigate why those inequalities arise and to what extent societal or governmental means can be used to fix them.