

# LESSON PLAN

## Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence

**Level:** Literacy, Low Beginning

**Suggested Length:** 2 class periods, depending on class time and level

### Civics Test Questions

- #8—What did the Declaration of Independence do?
- #9—What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?
- #61—Why did the colonists fight the British?
- #62—Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
- #63—When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?
- #64—There were 13 original states. Name three.

Related Test Items:

71. What territory did the United States buy from France in 1803?

### Reading Test Vocabulary

George Washington  
 American flag, government, right, states  
 United States, U.S.  
 Independence Day  
 What, When, Where, Who, Why  
 do/does, has, is/are/was/be, lived, name  
 a, for, in, of, on, the, to, we  
 colors, many, one

96. Why does the flag have 13 stripes?

97. Why does the flag have 50 stars?

### Writing Test Vocabulary

Washington  
 flag, free, President, states  
 Delaware, United States  
 July  
 Independence Day  
 lived, want, was  
 and, during, for, in, of, on, the, to  
 blue, fifty/50, one, red, taxes, white

99. When do we celebrate Independence Day?

100. Name two national U.S. holidays.

## Objectives:

Students will:

- learn about Thomas Jefferson and the importance of Jefferson's role in U.S. history
- identify problems leading to the War of Independence
- identify the purpose, rights defined, author, and date of adoption of the Declaration of Independence
- identify Independence Day as a national U.S. holiday and the date of the holiday
- identify that the Louisiana Territory was purchased from France in 1803
- explain the reason for symbols on the American flag and identify the colors of the flag

## Materials:

U.S. nickels, world and U.S. maps, U.S. flag

Crayons, colored pencils or markers

Handouts: **Thomas Jefferson**, **Declaration of Independence**, **War of Independence**, **The 13 Original States**, **U.S. Symbols—Stars and Stripes**, and **Listen, Repeat, Circle**

Optional handout (Literacy Level Writing Practice): **Independence Day**

**Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence Lesson Answer Key**



## Lesson Overview and Notes to Teacher:

In addition to teaching about Thomas Jefferson, this lesson covers background on the War of Independence and the Declaration of Independence. We recommend that you teach the unit on George Washington before introducing this lesson. The readings and pictures should help the students understand the new vocabulary. As with the other history lessons, the goal for the students is to comprehend and answer the Civics Test items correctly, not memorize details about Thomas Jefferson's life and the War of Independence. There is a word search to help

reinforce the new words in this lesson. In addition, there is a listening comprehension exercise focusing on the exact wording of eight Civics Test items. In a discussion of the U.S. flag, you will teach the word **represent** to explain flag symbols. As an extension activity about flags, the students can draw flags from their home country and identify the symbols and colors on them. Lastly, the Literacy Level Writing Practice handout **Independence Day** helps beginners practice spelling and handwriting.

**Introduction:** Review the information from the lesson on George Washington. Say **We talked about George Washington. What can you tell me about Washington?** Write key words on the board from their responses. Hopefully, someone will mention independence. Write **independence** on the board and ask the class what it means (**freedom, liberty, separation from Great Britain, etc.**) Tell them **Today we are going to talk about American independence.** Ask the class **Did your country fight for independence? (when?, from what**

**country?, etc.)** Have students list the countries and years of independence. Ask students **What are some reasons a country wants independence? (religion, economy, politics, leaders, land, borders).** On the board, list the reasons. Ask **America fought for independence from which country?** Have a student come to the world map and show where Great Britain (or England) is located. Tell the class you will talk about the reasons that America fought for independence and an important leader in that fight.

**Guided Practice:** Have the students take out some nickels or distribute ones you bring to class. Ask them to look at the image and words on a nickel. Ask **Who's this?, What's his name?, What does liberty mean?** Distribute the handout **Thomas Jefferson.** Discuss the picture of Thomas Jefferson on the handout. Read through the sentences for the students to hear and explain any new vocabulary. Then model each sentence for students to repeat line by line. Explain that they will not need to remember details about Thomas Jefferson's life for the Civics Test but point out that **Who wrote the Declaration**

**of Independence? and What territory did the United States buy from France in 1803?** are items on the Civics Test. Continue with the readings in handouts **Declaration of Independence** and **War of Independence** in the same manner. Review the following Civics Test items: **What did the Declaration of Independence do?, What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?, Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?, When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?, and Why did the colonists fight the British?**

**Practice:** In the handout **The 13 Original States**, the students fill in the names of the states in the blanks. Have them refer to a wall map, if needed. Note that, during colonial times, the area now known as Maine was part of Massachusetts. Point out that on the Civics Test, they will need to name only three of the original 13 states, not all 13. The test item reads **There were 13 original states. Name three.** On the handout **U.S. Symbols—Stars and Stripes**, there is a section on flag symbols. Ask **What's a symbol?** Ask for some examples of symbols around the school (**restroom signs, handicap sign, etc.**) and draw some on the board. Explain that a symbol **represents** something; you can use an equals sign (=) to show the

word **represent.** Ask **What are the symbols on the American flag? (stars, stripes)** Have the students look at the two different flags and compare the number of stars and stripes on each. Ask **Why are there 50 stars and 13 stripes on the flag today?** Point out that **Why does the flag have 13 stripes?** and **Why does the flag have 50 stars?** are items on the Civics Test. (See the Extension Activity for more on flags.) At the bottom of the handout, have the students solve a word search activity using vocabulary from the lesson. Review the words in the Word Bank and have the students find and circle the words.

**Evaluation:** Tell the students you will practice some Civics Test questions together. Explain that you will say a question and they will repeat it several times. After they have repeated after you several times, the students will circle the correct answer. (The point is for them to be sure what they heard by repeating each item several times before circling the answer.) Give this example—write **New York, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia** on the board. Ask the question **What is the capital of the United States?** Have the students repeat the question. Model it

again and have them repeat. Point to the choices and ask **Which is the correct answer? (Washington, DC)** as you circle it on the board. Distribute the handout **Listen, Repeat, Circle**. Make sure they understand the instructions. Read the script of questions provided in the **Answer Key**. Go over the answers when you finish. At the bottom, there is a dictation exercise highlighting words from the Reading and Writing Vocabulary lists. Say the words several times with the students repeating after you. Then have them write the words.

**Follow-Up Extensions:** Distribute crayons and colored pencils and have the students draw the flag from their native country. Point out that on a U.S. flag, the symbols

are stars and stripes. As the students draw their flag, circulate and help the students identify the symbols on their flags.

### **Writing Practice for Literacy/Low Beginning**

**Students:** The handout **Independence Day** is included for optional copy work. Take the opportunity to discuss how

and when the holiday is celebrated, and point out that **When do we celebrate Independence Day?** and **Name two national U.S. holidays** are items on the test.