

The Language of Freedom

Independence Hall

Educators Guide and Lesson Plan created by Sidney Sisemore, Early ISD



Grade Level

11th Grade English III

Time Required

45 minutes

Supplies/Materials Needed

- *The Declaration of Independence*
- Highlighters
- Pens
- *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine

Standards

English III TEKS
4(A), 4(B), 4(C), 4(F),
4(G), 5(B), 5(C), 5(E),
5(F)

Key Vocabulary

Rhetorical appeals—persuasive strategies used in writing or speech to convince an audience. First conceptualized by Aristotle, they are divided into three classical modes: ethos (credibility/ethics), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic).

Pathos (Emotion & Empathy)-- an appeal to the audience's

Essential Question(s)

- What was the rhetorical purpose of the drafting of “The Declaration of Independence”?
- What rhetorical techniques did Jefferson utilize in “The Declaration of Independence”?

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze “The Declaration of Independence” for its rhetorical devices—pathos, logos, and ethos.
- Determine the rhetorical nature of “The Declaration of Independence”—persuasive or informative

Pre-Visit

Take time to **review** key vocabulary, notably **pathos, logos, ethos, and rhetorical appeals**.

As a whole class, model the annotation process and identification of rhetorical appeals by reading and annotating excerpts of Thomas Paine’s “Common Sense” ([full text](#)-courtesy Bill of Rights Institute) **Students should mark up texts as teacher models evidence of pathos, logos, and ethos in the text.**

Upon completion of annotation, ask students to determine

- **the exigence** of the text.
- Which **rhetorical appeals** are most prevalent
- The impact of the appeals
- Why Paine would lean heavily into these appeals

Together, answer the short-constructed response: “How is Paine’s language in ‘Common Sense’ meant to impact the reader? Consider the exigence of the text as you construct your response.”

Museum Visit

Tour Independence Hall

emotions, values, imagination, or sympathies. By evoking feelings such as fear, pride, hope, pity, or urgency, a communicator moves the audience to care deeply about the subject.

Logos (Logic & Reasoning)-- an appeal to logic, evidence, and rational thought. It relies on clear arguments, factual data, statistics, expert testimony, and sound deductive or inductive reasoning.

Ethos (Authority & Character)-- an appeal to the speaker's credibility, moral character, or authority. An audience is far more likely to be persuaded by someone they perceive as trustworthy, knowledgeable, and well-intentioned.

Rhetoric--the art of effective or persuasive speaking and writing, especially through the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques.

Exigence--the specific issue, problem, constraint, or urgent occasion that prompts

Take a few minutes to experience the recreation of Independence Hall where the drafting and signing of "The Declaration of Independence" took place.

In groups of 2-4, instruct students to read the transcript of "[The Declaration of Independence](#)." As they read, instruct students to highlight evidence of pathos, logos, and ethos in the text--selecting a separate color for each rhetorical appeal. Students should be allotted about 20 minutes for the activity.

When annotations are complete, instruct students to discuss within their groups whether the evidence (rhetorical appeals) indicates that the document is **informative** or **persuasive**.

Students should respond to the following short constructed response prompt:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed..."

What is the author's primary rhetorical purpose in this excerpt from the Declaration of Independence? Support your answer with text evidence from the selection."

Post-Visit

Conduct a debate on the following prompt:

Who was "The Declaration of Independence" really written for:

- The British government (to set forth a logical reasoning for their revolution)
- The American people (to rally support for the Patriot cause)
- The people of the world (to avoid alienating other countries and the support they will likely need from them)

a speaker or writer to create a message at that exact moment. It answers the question: "What happened to make this communication necessary right now?"

Encourage students to use their annotations to support their stances. When debating is concluded, instruct students to come to a consensus on who the declaration was likely *most* intended for.

Variations and Extensions

Debate:

If students disagree on the nature of the document (persuasive versus informative), conduct a debate where students may discuss the evidence and come to a unified conclusion.

Comparing the drafts:

Have students compare “The Declaration of Independence” to Jefferson’s original draft. Students should note differences between the drafts, then discuss why these edits might have been made and the way that it modified the meaning of the text.

Advanced Placement Option:

Ask students to use annotations to complete a rhetorical analysis of the text, responding to the prompt: “Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Jefferson and the Continental Congress make to convey their message that American independence is necessary and justified. **Look beyond the use of pathos, logos, and ethos.**”

Research opportunity:

Have students select a signer of “The Declaration of Independence” and complete a research paper over their lives, careers, and political achievements. Some things students may choose to include are:

- Biography
- Political accomplishments
- How they become a candidate to attend the drafting of “The Declaration of Independence”
- What happened to them after the drafting and signing of the declaration

What legacy did the person leave? Is this person still highly celebrated?

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[illegible]

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Opening Statement:

Supporting Idea 1	Supporting Idea 2	Supporting Idea 3
SPECIFIC Evidence	SPECIFIC Evidence	SPECIFIC Evidence

During the Debate: Opposing Teams Main Points

Point They Made	Evidence They Used	Is it strong? Why or why not?

Questions for the Other Team

1	
2	
3	

After the Debate: Reflection

Which argument was most convincing today?	Did your opinion change at all? Why or why not?

