

The Declaration of Independence: An Emoji Lesson

Independence Hall

Educators Guide and Lesson Plan created by Katie Vernon, Early ISD



Grade Level

8th Grade

Time Required

½ day museum visit

Supplies/Materials Needed

- Appendix A: Declaration in Modern Day Language
- Appendix B: Emoji Codes
- Appendix C: Student Chart
- Clipboards
- Writing Utensils

Standards

TEKS – 8th Grade SS
8.1(A), 8.4(C), 8.15

Key Vocabulary

Self-evident
Instituted
Deriving
Abolish
Usurpations
Candid
Popular Sovereignty

Essential Question(s)

- Why did the American colonists declare independence?
- How can symbols, modern language, and primary sources help us better understand historical documents?
- How did the Declaration of Independence explain the colonists' reasons for independence and establish principles that continue to shape the United States today?

Lesson Objectives

Student Success Criteria:

- I can explain key ideas from the Declaration of Independence in my own words.
- I can connect emojis, modern language, and the original Declaration text.
- I can identify complaints colonists had against King George III.
- I can explain how the Declaration reflects ideas like natural rights and popular sovereignty.

Pre-Visit

Emoji Bell Ringer

Project a few emoji sequences and ask students to decode.

Examples:

👑💰😡 → *The king is taxing people.*

🚫🗣️ → *No freedom of speech.*

🗳️👥 → *People should have a voice in government.*

Ask the following questions:

- What message do you think these emojis are communicating?
- How did you figure it out?
- Can symbols communicate ideas without words?

Museum Visit

Independence Hall – Museum docent will give a tour and point out the significant things of Independence Hall. Next, begin by downloading all the Appendix materials.

Appendix C is the Emoji Code. This is where the assignment begins. You will need a copy of it for every student in all of your classes.

Appendix A is excerpts of the Declaration of Independence in everyday language. You will make one copy of this document and hide them all over the room. (under tables, under chairs, on tables, on walls, in the hallway - wherever you want). The students will work together to find them throughout the lesson.

Divide students into small groups. Each group will receive one emoji code. Students should work together to decode the meaning of their emojis. Once students have decoded their emoji message, they must check their thinking with the teacher. If their answer is correct or shows strong reasoning, they will receive permission to search the room for the matching everyday language document.

Once they find the correct Appendix B that matches their emoji code, they will fill in their chart.

Allow students around 15 - 20 minutes for this first part. Time can vary. You know your class!

Next, when everyone seems to be finished decoding and identifying everyday language from the emoji codes, they will move to their chart where they will attempt to match up modern day language and emojis to the Declaration of Independence.

For the closure of this lesson, you will jigsaw groups. One person from every group will be responsible for explaining their emoji, the everyday language, and what they matched from the real declaration.

Teacher note: you may need to have everyone come back together to review the charts and check that they have the right answers.

Post-Visit

Tweet Like A Patriot

Students will be in pairs and will choose one grievance from the Declaration of Independence and write it as if they were a Patriot posting on social media.

Requirements:

- Include one grievance
- Must have 2-3 emojis
- Must be written in modern language
- After writing the tweet, students must include a one sentence explanation on how their past reflects the ideas of the Declaration of Independence

Museum Visit Variations/Extensions

Variation: Instead of hiding the modern-day language cards around the room, you can set up stations. At each station, students will:

- Decode the emoji message
- Match to modern day language
- Match to the Declaration of Independence
- Answer reflection questions

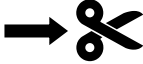
Extension: Create an Infographic

Students will design a one-page infographic titled: “The Declaration of Independence Explained.”

Must include:

- Why it was written
- Three grievances
- Natural rights
- Popular sovereignty
- Why this document still matters today

Sometimes a group of people has to say, "This situation isn't working anymore," and make a change.	We believe these ideas are obviously true. Like... this should be common sense.
Everyone starts out with the same value and deserves to be treated fairly.	People are born with rights that nobody should be able to take away. These are not something the government can just delete.
People should be able to live, be free, and go after their own goals and dreams.	The whole point of government is to protect people's rights—not make things worse.
The government only has power because the people allow it. The people are basically the ones in charge.	If a government starts hurting people instead of helping them, that's a major problem.
If the government is not doing its job, people have the right to change it or replace it.	People can create a new system that actually works better for them.
The colonists are saying, "The king keeps making unfair choices and abusing his power."	"We're not just complaining—we have receipts." Here is the evidence.

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Declaration of Independence	Modern Language	Emoji Code
When in the Course of human events...		
We hold these truths to be self-evident...		
That all men are created equal...		
Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness		
To secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men...		
Deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...		

Whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends...		
It is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it...		
And to institute new Government...		
The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations...		
To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.		