

## Chapter 6 Jefferson's Declaration

### Topic

Thomas Jefferson's credit and glorification for writing the Declaration of Independence will be examined.

### Theme

The Declaration of Independence formalized many sentiments that colonists had been shaping for years.

**CA Standard** 5.5.3 - Understand the people and events associated with the drafting and signing of the Declaration of Independence and the document's significance, including the key political concepts it embodies, the origins of those concepts, and its role in severing ties with Great Britain.

**National Standard** 1B - The student understands the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence, therefore, the student is able to explain the major ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence and their intellectual origins.

### Timeline

The lesson can be done in two 60- to 75-minute periods.

### Prior Content Knowledge and Skills

Fifth graders recognize early colonial attitudes, and the reasons for colonists' growing dissatisfaction with England. They can identify the Founding Fathers and their affiliations. Having deconstructed the Declaration of Independence, students understand its primary purpose as a tool to begin American separation from England.

Throughout the week students collected, evaluated, and built a bulletin board of famous quotations by Benjamin Franklin.

Vocabulary: petition, overthrow, the Crown, "nom de plume"

### Introductory "Hook"

Teacher briefly refreshes students' memories about the historical context and the content of the Declaration of Independence.

Students listen as the tape or CD of "Stan Freberg presents The United States of America," chapter 7 (6:27) is played (see appendix). The piece is tongue-in-cheek, and on the first listen, students should enjoy it for the humor.

### Lesson Content

Materials:

- Tape or CD of "Stan Freberg presents The United States of America," Volume I, May 1, 1961 Capitol Records, 1996 Rhino Records (<http://freberg.8m.com/text/usa1.html>),
- Joke reply from the British Government to the signers of Declaration of Independence ([webmaster@jamesfuqua.com](mailto:webmaster@jamesfuqua.com)),
- Copies of the instructions to Timothy Bigelow\* (in text of Chapter 6),

- Copies of Declaration of Colonial Rights ([http://www.lexrex.com/enlightened/laws/decl\\_right.htm](http://www.lexrex.com/enlightened/laws/decl_right.htm)),
- Copies of Virginia Declaration of Rights\*\* (in text of Chapter 6),
- Overhead map of the American colonies (appendix, page 15) (<http://www.timepage.org/spl/13colony.html>),
- Self-portrait of Norman Rockwell (<http://www.nrm.org/>),
- Prints of famous paintings of the signing of the Declaration (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h31.html>),
- Copies of excerpts from Ray Raphael's chapter 6 (appendix page 10)

Day 1: The theme is written on the board. After listening to the “hook” the students discuss what makes the script funny (the voices are corny, the language and relationship are casual and modern, the timeline is loosely played, there are puns, the punchline). The teacher asks what is factual about the Declaration in the play (the characters, setting, problem, quotes). The teacher replays the Freberg piece, a short section at a time, and asks students to jot down their impressions. The teacher asks if students picked up more information the second time, and points out any obscure connections that students might miss, like the references to painter Norman Rockwell – “the skinny kid with the pipe.”

A copy of the joke reply from the British Government to the signers of Declaration of Independence (see appendix) is displayed on the overhead projector, and read aloud. The teacher poses the same questions about the piece: why is it funny (the “legalese,” questioning a document so sacred and unquestionable)? What is the spoof, and what is factual?

The teacher explains the traditional view that holds Thomas Jefferson as the creative genius behind the writing of the Declaration of Independence. Knowing what they do about American colonists, their relationship with England, and their determined drive to be unconstrained and self-sufficient, students discuss displays of independence that existed long before the Continental Congress (for example, representative local governments, leadership by ability rather than by bloodline, resistance to taxation and other English impositions, freedom of religious choice).

Each student reads the excerpts from Raphael, chapter 6 (appendix, page 13) regarding the “other” declarations of independence, and the “enshrinement” of both the Declaration of Independence and its author, through time. As they read, they highlight the names of places where documents or assemblies correspond with steps toward independence. Using an overhead map of the colonies students identify these places where ordinary people developed notions that led to American independence.

Students are divided into three reading assignment groups, each interpreting either Massachusetts' instructions to Timothy Bigelow, the Declaration of Colonial Rights, or the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Each group orally presents the main ideas from its document. In discussion students compare and contrast the contents, while the teacher guides the class to conclude that the merging of many colonial ideals led to the First Continental Congress. Many demands were negotiated and united in one voice and in one document, written by Thomas Jefferson.

## **Conclusion**

Day 2: The teacher circles students for a class meeting. S/he elicits complaints about the control the school staff exerts over their lives in the classroom, on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in other parts the school. *All* their grievances – big, small, serious or silly – are recorded and posted on chart paper or a board.

Students divide into groups of four or five, with instructions to agree on their top five complaints from the master list. They may add new gripes as long as the majority of their small group concurs. The list of five must be written in complete sentences.

When finished, group representatives read their five grievances. Students analyze all the lists for recurring themes, strong wording, and original ideas. They hash out strategies for coming to consensus on a *revised* list of class complaints, that best encompasses everyone's concerns. As a council they must consolidate, cross out, and prioritize each complaint.

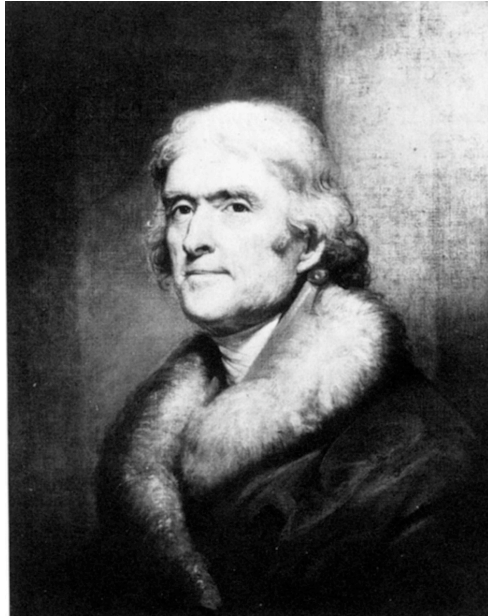
## **Evaluation**

Each student, having partaken in the thought, discussion, and revision of the Declaration of Class Complaints now drafts a two- to three-paragraph persuasive essay describing the concerns of the class. Rich language, voice and organization are the key elements to successful pieces. Volunteers will read their essays, and peers will select the best declaration.

The objective of the lesson, discussed at the conclusion of the exercise, is for students to experience the challenge of incorporating into their own writing the views of others. Students will answer for themselves,

- Is it possible to write objectively, without favoring your personal opinions?
- If you disagree with part, or all, of the group consensus, can you still be a "mouthpiece?"
- Was Thomas Jefferson's credit for writing of the Declaration of Independence overrated?
- How would you feel if your teacher got all the credit for writing your essay?

## Appendix



Thomas Jefferson by Rembrandt Peale, ca. 1805.

**Excerpt from** “Stan Freberg presents The United States of America”  
Volume I, May 1, 1961 Capitol Records, 1996 Rhino Records  
Scene Eight: Ben Franklin Signs the Declaration of Independence

Narrator: The trouble continued to brew. It was a time for action, and a time for words. On a hot July night in 1776, Benjamin Franklin was aroused from his work by the call of destiny...

(Knock at the door)

*Jefferson:* Ben, Ben! Ya in there Ben?

*Franklin:* Who's that, Sylvia?

*Sylvia:* It's the “call of destiny.”

*Franklin:* Come on; take a look through the curtains, there.

*Sylvia:* It's Tom Jefferson!

*Franklin:* What, again? Well, it's no good, I'll have to let him in...I'm coming, I'm coming!

*Jefferson:* Hi, Ben!

*Franklin:* Tom.

*Jefferson:* You got a minute?

*Franklin:* Well, to tell you the truth, I was just going out of town for the weekend.

*Jefferson:* But it's only Wednesday.

*Franklin:* Yeah. Well, you know, a penny saved is a penny earned.

*Jefferson:* What has that got to do with anything, Franklin?

*Franklin:* I don't know. It was the first thing that came into my head. I was just making conversation. An idle brain is the Devil's playground, you know!

*Jefferson:* Say, you're pretty good at that, aren't you?

*Franklin:* Yes, they're just some new “wise sayings” I just made up.

*Jefferson:* Wise sayings?

*Franklin:* Yeah, I call 'em “wise sayings.”

*Jefferson:* Uh-huh.

*Franklin:* Well, what can I do for you?

*Jefferson:* Well, I've got this petition here I've been circulating around the neighborhood. Kind of thought you'd like to sign it. It's called the Declaration of Independence.

*Franklin:* Yeah, I heard about that. Sounds a little suspect if you ask me.

*Jefferson:* What do you mean, suspect?

*Franklin:* Well, you're advocating the overthrow of the British government by force and violence, aren't you?

*Jefferson:* Yeah, yeah, but we've had it with that royal jazz.

*Franklin:* Who's "we?"

*Jefferson:* Well, all the guys.

*Franklin:* Who's "all the guys?"

*Jefferson:* Oh, George, Jim Madison, Alex Hamilton, Johnny Adams-you know, all the guys.

*Franklin:* Hah! The lunatic fringe.

*Jefferson:* Oh, they are not.

*Franklin:* Two wild-eyed radicals, professional liberals-don't kid me.

*Jefferson:* You call Washington a wild-eyed radical?

*Franklin:* Washington? I don't see his name on it.

*Jefferson:* No, but he promised to sign it.

*Franklin:* Oh, yeah, that's George for you! Talks up a storm with them wooden teeth-can't shut 'em off! But when it comes time to put the old name on the parchment-o-roonie, try and find him.

*Jefferson:* What are you so surly for today?

*Franklin:* Surly to bed and surly to rise makes a man...

*Jefferson:* All right, all right. Let's knock off the one-line jokes and sign the petition, huh, fellah?

*Franklin:* Well, lemme look at it here...When in the course of human events-so and so and so and so, so and so and so and so...that among these are life, liberty, and the purfuit of happineff?

*Jefferson:* That's pursuit of happiness.

*Franklin:* Well, all your s's look like f's.

*Jefferson:* It's stylish. It's in, it's very in.

*Franklin:* Oh, well, if it's in. We therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, so and so and so and so...solemnly publish and declare, hmm hmm hmm hmm... that they are absolved from all allegiance to-uh-the British Crown...and so on. Uh, a little overboard, isn't it?

*Jefferson:* Well...

*Franklin:* You write this?

*Jefferson:* Yeah, yeah, I knocked it out. It's just a first draft, you know.

*Franklin:* Well, I'll tell you, why don't you leave it with me, and I'll mail it in, huh?

*Jefferson:* Oh, come on.

*Franklin:* No, I'll tell you, Tom, let me say this-I'm with you in spirit, I'm sure you'll understand that. But, you know, I've got play it conservative. I'm a businessman.

*Jefferson:* Yeah.

*Franklin:* I got the printing business going pretty good, the almanac made "Book of the Month," and then I've got the inventions, you know. I've got pretty good distribution on the stoves now. And of course every Saturday evening I bring out the "mag."

*Jefferson:* The what?

*Franklin:* Magazine.

*Jefferson:* Oh. Oh, That reminds me. That artist I sent by, did you look at his stuff?

*Franklin:* You mean the Rockwell boy? Skinny kid with the pipe?

*Jefferson:* Yeah, that's the kid.

*Franklin:* Yeah, I glanced at it. He's too far out for me.

*Jefferson:* Oh, yeah. Well, I know, you've got to play it safe.

*Franklin:* Yeah.

*Jefferson:* But getting back to the signing of the petition-how about it?

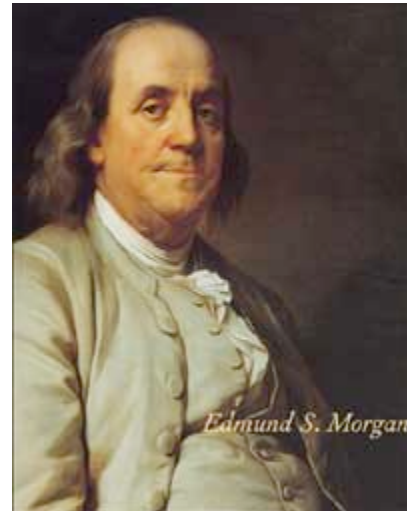
*Franklin:* Well, I-

*Jefferson:* It's a harmless paper.

*Franklin:* Oh, sure, harmless. I know how these things happen. You go to a couple of harmless parties, sign a harmless petition, and forget all about it. Ten years later, you get hauled up before a committee. No, thank you, I'm not going to spend the rest of my life writing in Europe.

*Jefferson:* Ah, come on.

*Franklin:* Come on and what?



Benjamin Franklin by Edmund S. Morgan

**(Song) A Man Can't Be Too Careful What He Signs These Days**

(Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin)

Come on and put your name on the dotted line

I got to be particular what I sign

It's just a piece of paper

Just a piece of paper, that's what you say

Come on and put your signature on the list

It looks to have a very subversive twist

How silly to assume it; wont you "nom de plume" it today?

You're so skittish--who possibly could care if you do?

The Un-British Activities Committee, that's who!

Lets have a little drinko and fill the quill

It sounds a little "pinko" to me, but still...

Knock off the timid manner if you want a banner to raise! (banner to raise)

You must take (I must take)

A stand (A stand)

For this brave (for this brave)

New land (new land)

For who wants (who wants)  
To live (to live)  
So conser- (so conser-)  
-vative? (-vative?)  
I don't dis- (He don't dis-)  
-agree (agree)  
BUT A MAN CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL WHAT HE SIGNS THESE  
DAYS!!!

*Franklin:* Well, if I sign it, will you renew your subscription?

*Jefferson:* Yeah, if you promise not to keep throwing it on the roof. If it's not on the roof, it's in the rosebushes or in the mud.

*Franklin:* My eyesight isn't what it used to be. Besides, it's hard to hit the porch from a horse.

*Jefferson:* Ah, come on, all we want to do is to hold a few truths to be self-evident.

*Franklin:* You're sure it's not gonna start a revolution or anything.

*Jefferson:* Trust me.

*Franklin:* Okay, give it to me. You got a quill on you?

*Jefferson:* Yeah, here you are.

*Franklin:* Hah! Look at that showoff Hancock, willya! Pretty flamboyant signature for an insurance man.

*Jefferson:* Ah, you did a good thing, Ben. You won't be sorry, heh, heh. Now if I can just get another three or four guys, we'll be all set.

*Franklin:* Well, I'll tell you one thing.

*Jefferson:* What's that?

*Franklin:* You better get 'em to sign it in the next couple of days, before they all take off for the Fourth of July weekend.



Norman Rockwell—Triple Self Portrait, 1960

**Joke reply from the British Government to the Declaration of Independence**  
(webmaster@jamesfuqua.com) ©2000-2001 James Fuqua Law Jokes Page

August 10, 1776

Mr. Thomas Jefferson c/o The Continental Congress  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dear Mr. Jefferson:

We have read your "Declaration of Independence" with great interest. Certainly, it represents a considerable undertaking, and many of your statements do merit serious consideration.

Unfortunately, the Declaration as a whole fails to meet recently adopted specifications for proposals to the Crown; so we must return the document to you for further refinement. The questions which follow might assist you in your process of revision:

In your opening paragraph you use the phrase "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God."

- What are these laws ?
- In what way are they the criteria on which you base your central arguments?
- Please document with citations from the recent literature.

In the same paragraph you refer to the "Opinions of Mankind."

- Whose polling data are you using? Without specific evidence, it seems to us the "Opinions of Mankind" are a matter of opinion.

You hold certain truths to be "self-evident." Could you please elaborate? If they are as evident as you claim, then it should not be difficult for you to locate the appropriate supporting statistics.

"Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" seem to be the goals of your proposal. These are not measurable goals. If you were to say that among these are:

- the ability to sustain an average life expectancy in six of the 13 colonies of at least 55 years; and/or
- to enable newspapers in the colonies to print news without outside interference; and/or
- to raise the average income of the colonists by 10 percent in the next 10 years for example, these could be measurable goals.

Please clarify.

You state that "Whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government...."



- Have you weighed this assertion against all the alternatives?
- What are the trade-off considerations?

Your description of the existing situation is quite extensive. Such a long list of grievances should precede the statement of goals, not follow it. Your problem statement needs improvement.

Your strategy for achieving your goal is not developed at all. You state that the colonies "ought to be Free and Independent States," and that they are "Absolved from All Allegiance to the British Crown."

- Who or what must change to achieve this objective?
- In what way must they change?
- What specific steps will you take to overcome the resistance?
- How long will it take?

We have found that a little foresight in these areas helps to prevent careless errors later on. How cost-effective are your strategies?

- Who among the list of signatories will be responsible for implementing your strategy?
- Who conceived it?
- Who provided the theoretical research?
- Who will constitute the advisory committee? Please submit an organization chart and qualifications of the principal investigators.

You must include an evaluation design. We have been requiring this since Queen Anne's War.

- What impact will your problem have? Your failure to include any assessment of this inspires little confidence in the long-range prospects of your undertaking.

Please submit all necessary diagrams, an activity chart, proposed time line (w/at least 3 options), itemized budget, and manpower utilization matrix.

We hope that these comments prove useful in revising your "Declaration of Independence" in accordance with all TQM procedures.

We welcome the submission of your revised proposal. Our due date for this unsolicited proposal is September 30, 1776. Ten copies with original signatures will be required.

Sincerely,

Sir Thomas Moore  
Total Quality Management  
Analyst to the British Crown

## Excerpt One from Chapter 6

### The “Other” Declarations of Independence

On October 4, 1774 — a full twenty-one months before the Continental Congress approved the document prepared by Thomas Jefferson — the people of Worcester, Massachusetts, declared that they were ready for independence. Four weeks earlier, they had toppled British authority (see chapter 4). Now, they were ready to replace the old government with a new one. Without any input or approval from Parliament or the King, delegates from throughout Massachusetts were preparing to meet in a Provincial Congress, even though it had been outlawed by the royal Governor. The Worcester Town Meeting decided to draft instructions for its representative, Timothy Bigelow. If, they said, the infractions to their rights were not repealed by the very next day — an obvious impossibility — Bigelow was to take the next step:

\*You are to consider the people of this province absolved, on their part, from the obligation therein contained [the 1691 Massachusetts charter], and to all intents and purposes reduced to a state of nature; and you are to exert yourself in devising ways and means to raise from the dissolution of the old constitution, as from the ashes of the Phenix, a new form, wherein all officers shall be dependent on the suffrages of the people for their existence as such, whatever unfavorable constructions our enemies may put upon such procedure. The exigency of our public affairs leaves us no other alternative from a state of anarchy or slavery.

Ordinary farmers and artisans from the hinterlands of Massachusetts were making practical use of the social contract theory that Jefferson would later espouse in the Declaration of Independence. Once the existing charter had been violated, these people reasoned, the contract was null-and-void — and it was time to start over.

Patriots in Worcester had a word for their dramatic move: “independency.” For the British and the Tories, any mention of “independency” was considered treasonous — and even patriot leaders shied away. Samuel Adams wrote from the Continental Congress to his comrades back home, cautioning them not to “set up another form of government.” John Adams, also a member of Congress, wrote that “Absolute Independency ... Startle[s] People here.” Most Congressional delegates, he warned, were horrified by “The Proposal of Setting up a new Form of Government of our own.” In this particular instance, the people led — the “leaders” would follow along later.

Massachusetts was certainly in the vanguard, but patriots in other colonies also declared their willingness to break from Britain several months before the Second Continental Congress commissioned Thomas Jefferson to draft a formal declaration. In Jefferson’s Virginia, the issue of independence pre-empted all others during the spring of 1776. Common folk, not just the famous patricians-turned-statesmen, came to embrace independence for political, economic, and ideological reasons. Fear of slave and Indians, as well as noble principles, contributed to the desire for independence. (See chapter 8.) In the April elections voters turned out in great numbers — and they stunned the more cautious politicians. Representatives who opposed independence or a republican form of government were turned out.

Before sending off their new delegates to the Virginia Convention, constituents of several counties gave them specific, written instructions to vote for a declaration of independence. Charles Lee wrote to Patrick Henry: the “spirit of the people ... cr[ies] out for this Declaration.”<sup>[11]</sup> Jefferson himself was in Virginia during that time. “I took great pains to enquire into the sentiments of the people,” he wrote on May 16, 1776, just a few weeks before he would pen his famous draft. “I think I may safely say nine out of ten are for it [independence]. The people had spoken, the stage was set. On May 15, 1776, the Virginia Convention instructed its own delegates to the Continental Congress to vote for a declaration of independence.

Acting more swiftly than the Continental Congress, Virginia set out to establish a new and independent government. In a preamble to the new state Constitution, George Mason drafted a “Declaration of Rights.” This was printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on June 12, the day after Jefferson was appointed to a five-man committee that would draft a national declaration. In Philadelphia, Jefferson no doubt examined these words closely. Two weeks later, Jefferson presented his own refinement of Mason’s ideas:

<p>The Congressional Declaration of Independence (Thomas Jefferson)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.</li> <li>2. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.</li> <li>3. That 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, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.</li> </ol>	<p>**</p> <p>The Virginia Declaration of Rights (George Mason)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That all men are born equally free and independant, and have certain inherent natural rights, ... among which are the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.</li> <li>2. That all power is vested in, and consequently derived from the people. ... That government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people, nation, or community.</li> <li>3. Of all the various modes and forms of government, that is best, which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety, ... and that, whenever any government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a majority of the community hath an indubitable, unalienable and indefeasible right to reform, alter or abolish it, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal.</li> </ol>
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Although Jefferson's prose flows more smoothly from point to point than Mason's, he certainly introduced no new concepts. Many key phrases were merely re-arranged. Jefferson in no sense "copied" the Virginia Declaration, but he was evidently influenced by it. That should come as no surprise. This was a time of frenzied but collective agitation, and the Revolution's participants continually referred to each other's words and propositions. In all likelihood Mason himself had consulted Jefferson's *Summary View of the Rights of British America*, written two years earlier. Undoubtedly, both men had read classic English and Scottish works that asserted revolutionary concepts, and both were privy to expressions that were common parlance among their peers. Mason and Jefferson were tapping into the same rich source.

Virginia's Declaration was only one of many. Historian Pauline Maier has discovered ninety other "declarations" issued by state and local communities in the months immediately preceding the Congressional declaration. (She does not include documents like the Worcester instructions, written earlier yet.) Taken together, these reveal a groundswell of political thinking in support of independence. Jefferson and Mason drafted their declarations with full knowledge that others were doing the same.

Most of these declarations took the form of instructions by towns, counties, or local associations to their representatives in state conventions, telling them to instruct *their* representatives in Congress to vote for independence. The chain of command was clear: representatives at every level were to do the bidding of their constituents. The custom of issuing instructions to representatives did not originate with the American Revolution, but never before had local instructions expressed views of such monumental importance. Now more than ever, patriots insisted that the business of government remain under their immediate control. Witness the "Committee for the Lower District of Frederick County [Maryland]":

*Resolved, unanimously*, That as a knowledge of the conduct of the Representative is the constituent's only principle and permanent security, we claim the right of being fully informed therein, unless in the secret operations of war; and that we shall ever hold the Representative amenable to that body from whom he derives his authority.

Many of the instructions, while granting new powers to Congress, asserted that the states must retain "the sole and exclusive right" to govern their own internal affairs. People were not about to relinquish any of their political "independence," even to other Americans.

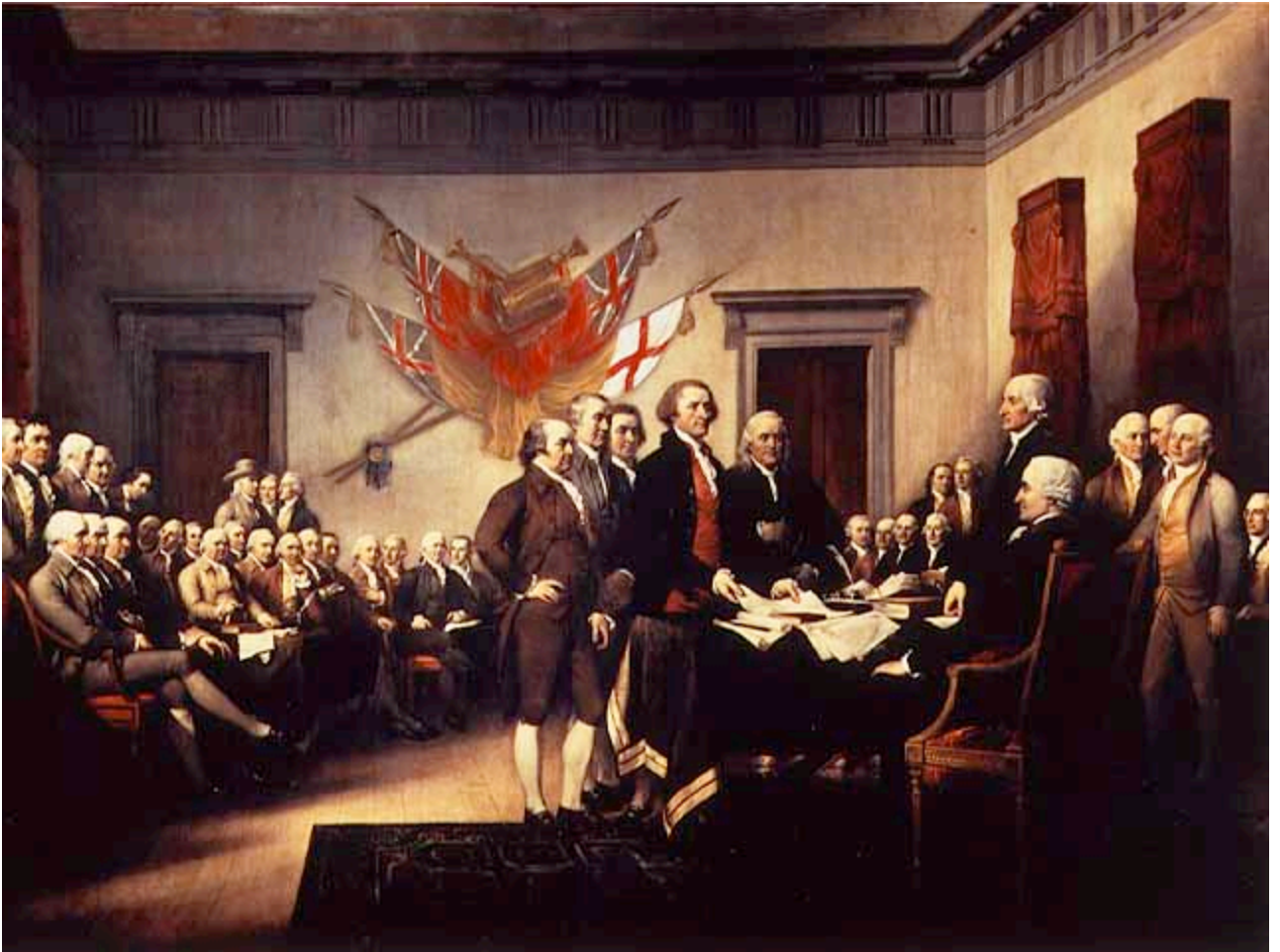
Several of the local declarations offer succinct expressions of the social contract theory. From Frederick County, Maryland:

*Resolved, unanimously,* That all just and legal Government was instituted for the ease and convenience of the People, and that the People have the indubitable right to reform or abolish a Government which may appear to them insufficient for the exigency of their affairs.

Patriots from Buckingham County, Virginia, issued a similar declaration, then followed with an optimistic vision that would have made the visionary Mr. Jefferson proud: they prayed that “a Government may be established in *America*, the most free, happy, and permanent, that human wisdom can contrive, and the perfection of man maintain.”

Like the later Declaration, many of these earlier documents listed specific grievances — often more concisely and pointedly than Jefferson would do. Delegates at more than twenty conventions signed off by pledging to support independence with their “lives and fortunes,” foretelling the famous conclusion to the congressional declaration: “we mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” Some of these added creative touches to this standard oath: Boston delegates sardonically pledged “their lives and the remnants of their fortunes,” while patriots from Malden, Massachusetts, concluded: “Your constituents will support and defend the measure to the last drop of their blood, and the last farthing of their treasure.”

Thomas Jefferson was one of many scribes, not the sole muse, of the American independence movement. To ignore that, ironically, is to obscure the contributions of “the people” themselves.



Signing of the Declaration of Independence, by John Trumbull, 1819.

### Excerpt Two from Chapter 6

#### The “Enshrinement” of the Declaration of Independence

During the 1790s, partisan politics determined Jefferson’s standing. Since Federalists vilified Jefferson, they ignored his authorship and regarded the Declaration itself as suspect. Phrases like “liberty,” “equality,” and “the rights of man”— all too reminiscent of the French Revolution — did not mesh with either their conservative philosophy or their pro-British foreign policy. Anti-Federalists, meanwhile, celebrated Jefferson’s authorship in order to promote the leading figure of their own political party. Not until Anti-Federalists staged separate Fourth of July festivities in the late 1790s was Jefferson’s name linked to the Declaration of Independence in public discourse.

Two turn-of-the-century historians replicated these divergent stances. John Marshall, a staunch Federalist, mentioned Jefferson only in a footnote: a committee of five was appointed to prepare the document, he wrote flatly, “and the draft, reported by the committee, has been generally attributed to Mr. Jefferson.” Rather than focus on Jefferson, Marshall mentioned several of the other declarations of independence, and he quoted extensively from two of them. Mercy Otis Warren, on the other side of the political spectrum, waxed effusive:

[T]he instrument which announced the final separation of the American Colonies from Great Britain was drawn by the elegant and energetic pen of Jefferson, with that correct judgment, precision, and dignity, which have ever marked his character. The declaration of independence, which has done so much honor to the then existing congress, to the inhabitants of the United States, and to the genius and heart of the gentleman who drew it ... ought to be frequently read by the rising youth of the American states, as a

palladium of which they should never lose sight, so long as they wish to continue a free and independent people.

Warren and other supporters of Jefferson enshrined the Declaration's author in the early nineteenth century, when memories of the Revolution were revived and put in the service of a growing nationalism. The Democrat-Republicans, Jefferson's party, would remain in power for six presidential terms, during which the document and its principle author were increasingly celebrated and indelibly linked.

In 1817 Congress commissioned John Trumbull to paint a large canvas commemorating the approval of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. Trumbull's masterpiece was displayed to large crowds in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. With the mood set, two engraved copies of the Declaration competed for public attention in 1818 and 1819. In 1823 Congress distributed an official facsimile far and wide. Historians quickly moved into this promising territory. During the 1820s Joseph Sanderson published a nine-volume series entitled *Biography of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, and in 1827 the popular writer Charles Goodrich came out with a single-volume bestseller, *Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*. The Declaration by then was firmly entrenched in popular culture.

Jefferson himself fed this frenzy. As far back as 1786, he had talked of an artistic commemoration of the Declaration with John Trumbull and had provided a rough sketch. He approved the distribution of the facsimile edition, hoping it would inspire greater "reverence" for the principles it espoused. He even applauded the gathering of artifacts he had used while drafting the document: "Small things may, perhaps, like the relics of saints, help to nourish our devotion to this holy bond of Union, and keep it longer alive and warm in our affections," he wrote to a promoter — and he then indicated where some these "relics" might be found.

All this rankled John Adams, the only other member of the drafting committee still alive during the Declaration's revival. According to Adams, the hard-earned *achievement* of independence should be the object of celebration, not the simple act of *writing* about it. "The Declaration of Independence I always considered as a theatrical show. Jefferson ran away with all the stage effect of that," he wrote — and, he added grudgingly, "all the glory of it" as well.

Starting in 1811, thirty-five years after-the-fact, these two elder statesmen quibbled over who should receive accolades. Adams argued that he had successfully pushed the motion for independence through Congress. He also noted that Jefferson's draft was discussed, revised, and approved by a five-member committee, then discussed, revised, and approved by the body of Congress. (According to Jeffersonian scholar Julian Boyd, "In all there were eighty-six alterations, made at various stages by Jefferson, by Adams and Franklin, by the Committee of Five, and by Congress.") Jefferson countered that Adams's memory was flawed and that revisions had been minimal.

Jefferson won the argument. The telling of history, if not history itself, was on his side. Before he died, he proposed that "Author of the Declaration of American Independence" be inscribed on his tomb. Although he accepted and even sought credit for penning the words, however, never once did Jefferson seek credit for dreaming up the ideas. That unsolicited honor would be bestowed upon him by others, much later.

