

Philosophers and the Declaration of Independence

The student will:

1. Color code the Declaration of Independence using the belief/contribution of four major philosophers: Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau.
2. Analyze these philosophers and their impact on the Declaration of Independence.

TEKS: 6.2A and B, 8.20A, WH.3A, WH.20B and C and GOVT. 1A-C

Vocabulary: common good, natural rights, civic virtue, state of nature, social contract, and right to revolution

Materials: colored pencils (4 colors), copies of the Declaration of Independence, sticky notes and copies of the chart

Teaching Procedure:

1. Pass out copies of the Declaration of Independence
2. Assign the four English Philosophers different colors such as,
 1. Aristotle – Green
 2. Hobbes – Black
 3. Locke – Red
 4. Rousseau – Blue
3. Number the students 1-4 and have the students read the first two sections of the Declaration of Independence (Preamble, and the New Theory of Government).
4. Have students underline their assigned philosophers' belief/contribution in the Declaration of Independence. Answer the following question on a sticky note:
What was your philosophers' greatest impact on Declaration of Independence?
5. Create an expert group by having students with the same philosopher get together with other students with the same philosopher to check their underlining and share their sticky note.
6. Once students have a clear understanding of their philosopher, students will then find three other students with different philosophers to share their underlined sections and his/her philosopher's influence on the Declaration of Independence by sharing what they have on his/her sticky note.
7. Students should complete the chart on all philosophers while the student is presenting his/her philosopher.
8. After the students have completed their chart, the teacher can select one of the suggested questions or writing assignments to complete.

Suggested Questions/Writing Assignment:

1. Which philosopher do you identify most with?
2. Compare your philosopher with the other three.
3. Which philosopher had the most influence on the Declaration of Independence?
4. Which philosopher had the least influence on the Declaration of Independence?
5. How would Hobbes respond to Locke? How is Locke more forgiving than Hobbes?
6. How would Aristotle respond to Locke?
7. How would Locke respond to Aristotle?

Extension: Have the expert group create a poster or visual that describes their philosophers' belief/contribution and their philosophers' impact on the Declaration of Independence. Students can do a gallery walk to view all the posters. Have one student from each expert group stay and explain the poster, while the other students travel to gather information from the other posters to bring back to the person who was left behind.

Influences of the Early Philosophers on the Declaration of Independence

Early Philosopher	Impact on the Declaration of Independence
Aristotle	
Hobbes	
Locke	
Rousseau	