



Grade 5 Lesson Plan #1: Why the Colonists Spoke Up— Grievances in the Declaration of Independence

Teacher Notes

Materials:

- Text: "Why the Colonists Spoke Up: Grievances in the Declaration of Independence"
- Sticky notes and highlighters (for predictive writing, question generation)
- Chart paper and markers
- Student copies of Handouts 1-5
- Video: John Hancock video from whitehouse.gov (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/videos/john-hancock/>)
- Linear Array word cards (laminated, reusable)

Preparations:

- Number the paragraphs of the text (1-12) for ease of locating text evidence
- Display the Essential Question at the beginning of lesson
- Display text codes on white board or PowerPoint
- Create directed note-taking graphic organizer
- Prepare vocabulary cards with Linear Array materials
- Test video link and playback equipment

Standards Alignment:

Florida Grade 5 Civics Literacy Standard—**SS.5.CG.1.1**: Recognize that the Declaration of Independence affirms that every U.S. citizen has certain unalienable rights. *Clarification 1*: Students will identify the grievances detailed in the Declaration of Independence.

Essential Question

Why did the colonists believe they had no choice but to declare independence from Great Britain?

Opening (20 minutes)

Video Introduction (4 minutes)

Show the John Hancock video from <https://www.whitehouse.gov/videos/john-hancock/> to build background knowledge and engagement about the Declaration of Independence.

Brief Discussion: "What stood out to you from the video? How might it feel to sign something that could change history?"

Hook Question & Predictive Writing (11 minutes)

Topic Question (spoken): "Think about leaders in your life—principals, coaches, elected officials. What would a leader have to do before you would decide 'I'm not following you anymore'?" Possible follow-up prompts if needed:

- Unfair rules about money (taxes, fees, costs)?
- Rules about your safety (where you can go, who protects you)?
- Not having a say in decisions that affect you?
- Being treated unfairly compared to others?"

Predictive Written Response (Handout #1 [first prompt], 5 minutes)

Prompt: What would cause a colony or territory to break away from its country?

Vocabulary Instruction (15 minutes)

Direct Instruction (Handout #2, 5 minutes)

Present the words, point them out in the text, and model how to determine the meaning. Provide the student-friendly definitions.

| Paragraph | Word | How it will be taught (Word Parts/Context/Both) | Student-Friendly Definition |
|-----------|------------|--|---|
| 3 | Grievance | Context – punctuation; “A list of <i>grievances</i> , or complaints, against King George.” And word parts – Gravis (heavy) + ance (state or quality) | A complaint about something unfair or wrong |
| 7 | Quartering | Context - Even when there was no war, the king sent British soldiers to live in the colonies. These soldiers could stay in colonists’ homes and eat | The king could require you to let soldiers stay in your house and eat your food |

| | | | |
|----|----------------|--|---|
| | | their food. This was called “quartering.” | |
| 5 | Representation | Context - The Stamp Act and Tea Act forced them to pay taxes on things like paper, newspapers, and tea— even though the colonists had no representatives in Parliament. That’s why they shouted, “No taxation without <i>representation!</i> ” They believed only their own elected leaders should have the power to tax them. | Having someone speak or vote for your interests |
| 5 | Tax | Same as above. | Money people must pay to a government for services |
| 10 | Liberty | Word parts – libertas means “free or freedom” and “y” means “the state of being” | Freedom to make your own choices without unfair control |

Linear Array Activity (10 minutes)

Setup: Students work in groups of 3-4. Each group gets word cards.

Linear Array: *CONSENT* ↔ *FORCED*

"Place these words on a line between CONSENT (full agreement) and FORCED (no choice):"

Word cards: voluntary | agreed upon | required | demanded | compelled | insisted

Expected arrangement: CONSENT → voluntary → agreed upon → required → demanded → compelled → insisted → FORCED

Discussion prompts

- "Why did you put 'required' closer to consent or forced?"
- "The colonists said the King FORCED them to pay taxes. Where does that belong?"
- "Can something be 'required' but still fair? Explain."

Teacher moves

- Circulate and ask groups to EXPLAIN their placements
- Challenge thinking: "Could 'required' go anywhere else? Defend your choice."
- Connect to grievances: "Keep these words in mind as we read the colonists' complaints. Were their taxes closer to 'voluntary' or 'forced'?"

Reading #1: Text Coding (Handout #2, 12 minutes)

Text Codes

- Taxes issues - T
- Military issues - M
- Representation/Fairness issues - RF

- Information - I

Teacher Modeling (5 minutes)

- Read aloud paragraphs 1-3 and model text coding using the codes above.

Student Practice (7 minutes)

- Students independently code paragraphs 4-12
- *Critical thinking required:* Students can mark multiple codes per section if they justify their choices
- Partner share (last 2 minutes): Compare text coding and discuss when codes overlap or differ

Paired Text Reading: Jigsaw Expert Groups (Handout #3, 20 minutes)

Purpose: Students become "experts" on specific grievances before completing directed notes.

Setup: Divide class into 4 Expert Groups by category

- Group 1: Tax Experts
- Group 2: Military Experts
- Group 3: Representation Experts
- Group 4: Justice Experts

Grievance Distribution: Each group receives Handout #3 with 3 simplified grievances that primarily fit their category

Taxes Group

1. He taxed us without our consent.
2. He stopped our trade with other countries.
3. He forced us to pay for things we didn't want.

Military Group

1. He kept armies in our towns without our permission.
2. He made us house troops in our homes.
3. He let soldiers avoid punishment for hurting us.

Representation Group

1. He refused to approve helpful laws.
2. He shut down assemblies for disagreeing with him.
3. He refused laws unless people gave up their voting rights.

Justice Group

1. He took away our right to jury trials.
2. He sent colonists to England for fake trials.
3. He controlled judges' jobs and pay to keep them loyal.

Group Task (Handout #3, 20 minutes)

Handout #3 includes a chart like below for each group of grievances that students complete.

| Grievance Chart – Taxes | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Grievance | What does this mean? | Why did this bother the colonists? | What could this look like today? |
| He taxed us without our consent. | | | |
| He stopped our trade with other countries | | | |
| He forced us to pay for things we didn't want | | | |

Instructions for groups

1. Read your 3-4 grievances together
2. Discuss and record:
 - What does each grievance mean in your own words?
 - Why did this bother the colonists?
 - Can you think of a modern example that's similar?

Reading #2: Directed Note-taking from Why the Colonists Spoke Up: Grievances in the Declaration of Independence (Handout #4, 15 minutes)

Guiding Question: "What were the main grievances the colonists had against King George III and which categories do they fall into?"

Teacher Modeling (5 minutes)

Display note-taking template on board/projector and model recording the notes (example below).

| Why the Colonists Spoke Up: Grievances in the Declaration of Independence | | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------|----------|----------------|---------|
| Guiding Question: What was the main reason the colonists declared independence? | | | | | |
| Paragraph # | Notes | Check relevant categories below | | | |
| | | Taxes | Military | Representation | Justice |
| 4-5 | Colonists paid taxes on paper, newspapers and tea without having representatives in Parliament – no say in government | X | | X | |

Group Task (10 minutes)

Students complete note-taking independently or in small groups.

Support strategies:

- Students can reference their jigsaw handouts
- Encourage students to mark multiple categories when appropriate
- Circulate to provide support and check understanding

Extended Text Discussion (Handout #5, 15 minutes)

Discussion Question: "According to the text, which category of grievances was MOST important in causing the colonists to declare independence? Was it Taxes, Military, Representation, or Justice?"

Small Group Discussion (5 minutes)

Groups of 3-4 discuss and reach consensus

- Groups must identify text evidence (paragraph numbers and specific examples) to support their choice
- Recorder writes group's position and evidence on graphic organizer. They will also use this graphic organizer to take notes on the presentations of other groups.

| Group Name | Position/Category Defended | Main Points and Textual Evidence |
|------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| MY GROUP | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Sentence frames provided:

- "Our group believes ____ grievances were most important because..."
- "According to paragraph ____, the text shows..."
- "This category matters more than others because..."

Whole Class Discussion (10 minutes)

Step 1: Initial positions (2 min)

- Teacher records vote: "How many groups chose Taxes? Military? Representation? Justice?"
- Post on chart paper

Step 2: Group presentations (6 min)

- Each position group presents (1-2 min each)
- Must cite specific paragraph numbers and evidence
- Other groups listen without interrupting

Step 3: Response & debate (2 min)

- Teacher facilitates: "Taxes group, you heard Representation group say representation was most important. What's your response?"
- Allow 2-3 back-and-forth exchanges

Teacher moves:

- Remain neutral - don't validate any position

- Push for evidence: "Which paragraph supports that claim?"
- Make connections: "Two groups both mentioned 'consent' - are these categories related?"
- Encourage respectful disagreement: "You can disagree with ideas while respecting people."

Final Vote: "After hearing all arguments, which category do YOU now think was most important? You can stick with your original choice OR change your mind based on evidence you heard."

Record changes: "Interesting! Three people switched from Taxes to Representation. What evidence convinced you?"

Reading #4: Question Generation (Handout #4 [flip side], 8 minutes)

Teacher Modeling (3 minutes)

Reread paragraph 10 (about "all men are created equal" and rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness")

Model generating complex questions

1. "Why did the Declaration say 'all men are created equal' when not all people in America were actually treated equally?"
2. "How did declaring independence help the colonists protect their rights to 'life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness'?"

Think aloud: "Notice these aren't yes/no questions. They ask WHY and HOW - they require explanation and thinking."

Student Practice (5 minutes; using provided template)

| Student Question Generation | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|----------|----------------|---------|-------|
| Question | Check relevant categories below | | | | |
| | Taxes | Military | Representation | Justice | Other |
| Why did the Declaration say "all men are created equal" when not all people in America were treated equally? | | | | X | |
| How did declaring independence help the colonists protect their rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" | | | | | X |

Instructions

- Generate 2-3 questions about the text
- Questions should require explanation (WHY/HOW questions work well)

Sharing

- Students share 1-2 questions with the class
- Teacher records 4-5 strongest questions on chart paper for potential extended inquiry

Final Written Response to Essential Question (Handout #1 [second prompt], 12 minutes)

Writing Prompt: "Which category of grievances (Taxes, Military, Representation, or Justice) was MOST responsible for driving the colonists to declare independence from Great Britain? Use evidence from the text to support your answer."

Instructions:

Write a well-developed paragraph that:

- States which category was MOST responsible
- Explains WHY this category was most important
- Includes at least TWO specific examples from the text with paragraph numbers
- Addresses why this category was more important than the others
- Includes a concluding sentence

Sample Rubric (10 points total):

- Clear claim about which category was most responsible (2 points)
- Two specific examples from text with paragraph numbers (4 points)
- Explanation of WHY this category was most important (2 points)
- Addresses why it was more important than other categories (1 point)
- Concluding sentence (1 point)

Advanced option: "Some might argue that ____ grievances were most important, but I believe ____ grievances were more responsible because..."

Closure (5 minutes)

Revisit Predictions: "Let's look back at your predictive writing from the beginning of class."

- Display the chart showing where students' sticky notes were placed initially
- "How many of you stuck with your original prediction? How many changed your mind?"
- Call on 2-3 students: "What evidence from the text made you change your mind?" OR "What evidence confirmed your prediction?"

Connection to Today: "According to paragraph 12, these grievances remind us that the colonists valued freedom, justice, and representation. Every time citizens vote, speak up, or write to their leaders, they are carrying on the spirit of independence that began in 1776."

Turn-and-talk: "What is ONE way Americans today make sure their voices are heard, just like the colonists wanted?"

Exit Ticket: "What is one grievance from the Declaration of Independence that surprises you or that you didn't know about before today?"

Handout #1
Shaping Your Written Response
Why the Colonists Spoke Up: Grievances in the Declaration of Independence

Predict—What would cause a colony or territory to break away from its country?

Final Written Response—Which category of grievances (Taxes, Military, Representation, or Justice) was MOST responsible for driving the colonists to declare independence from Great Britain?

[illegible]

Handout #2

Why the Colonists Spoke Up: Grievances in the Declaration of Independence

In the 1700s, the thirteen American colonies were ruled by Great Britain and its king, King George III. At first, many colonists were proud to be British. But over time, they grew upset with how the king and Parliament treated them. They felt their rights were being ignored.

In 1776, leaders from the colonies met in Philadelphia to make an important decision. This was the Second Continental Congress. During the First Continental Congress in 1774, the colonists sent a petition to King George, pleading for a redress of their grievances. Now, just two years later, the colonists' concerns had grown. This time, they wrote a document explaining why they wanted to separate from Great Britain. This document was called the Declaration of Independence, mostly written by Thomas Jefferson.

The Declaration has three main parts:

1. An introduction, explaining why the colonies were declaring independence.
2. A list of grievances, or complaints, against King George III.
3. A conclusion, declaring that the colonies were now free and independent states.

The list of grievances was especially important—it showed the world why the colonists felt they had no other choice but to break away.

1. Unfair Taxes and Laws

The colonists were angry that the king and Parliament made laws and taxes without asking their opinion. The Stamp Act and Tea Act forced them to pay taxes on things like paper, newspapers, and tea—even though the colonists had no representatives in Parliament. That's why they shouted, "No taxation without representation!" They believed only their own elected leaders should have the power to tax them.

2. No Say in Government

The king often refused to let the colonies make their own laws. Sometimes, he even shut down their assemblies—the groups that represented the people. The colonists believed this took away their right to govern themselves and make local decisions. They wanted to run their own affairs, just like citizens in Britain could.

3. Soldiers Everywhere

Even when there was no war, the king sent British soldiers to live in the colonies. These soldiers could stay in colonists' homes and eat their food. This was called "quartering." Many colonists felt nervous and powerless with armed soldiers living among them. It made them feel like prisoners in their own towns. In fact, fighting had already begun by the time the Declaration of

Independence was released. The British government had declared Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion and sought to seize the colonist's military supplies. This led to the famous Battles of Lexington and Concord in April of 1775.

4. Unfair Courts and Trials

The king made sure that judges and officials were loyal to him, not to impartial justice. If a colonist broke a British law, they could be sent all the way to England for trial—far from their families and witnesses. Colonists believed this system was unfair because it denied them a fair chance to defend themselves.

5. Ignoring Petitions and Protests

For years, the colonists tried to fix these problems peacefully. They sent petitions—formal letters—to the king, asking him to listen to their concerns. Instead of helping, the king either ignored them or punished them by creating even stricter laws. This made the colonists believe that he would never respect their rights.

A Break from Britain

After years of being ignored, the colonies decided they had no choice but to declare independence. On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress officially approved the Declaration of Independence. It stated that “all men are created equal” and that people have rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—rights that governments must protect.

From that day on, the colonies considered themselves the United States of America. The Declaration was not just a letter to the king—it was a promise to build a government that listened to the people.

Why It Still Matters

The grievances in the Declaration of Independence remind us how much the colonists valued freedom, fairness, and representation. These ideas inspired many other nations and continue to shape American democracy today. Every time citizens vote, speak up, or write to their leaders, they carry on the spirit of independence that began in 1776.

Handout #3

| Grievance Chart – Taxes | | | |
|--|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Grievance | What does this mean? | Why did this bother the colonists? | What could this look like today? |
| He taxed us without our consent. | | | |
| He stopped our trade with other countries. | | | |
| He forced us to pay for things we didn't want. | | | |

| Grievance Chart – Military | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Grievance | What does this mean? | Why did this bother the colonists? | What could this look like today? |
| He kept armies in our towns without our permission. | | | |
| He made us house troops in our homes. | | | |
| He let soldiers avoid punishment for hurting us. | | | |

| Grievance Chart – Representation | | | |
|--|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Grievance | What does this mean? | Why did this bother the colonists? | What could this look like today? |
| He refused to approve helpful laws. | | | |
| He shut down assemblies for disagreeing with him. | | | |
| He refused laws unless people gave up their voting rights. | | | |

| Grievance Chart – Justice | | | |
|--|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Grievance | What does this mean? | Why did this bother the colonists? | What could this look like today? |
| He took away our right to jury trials. | | | |
| He sent colonists to England for fake trials. | | | |
| He controlled judges' jobs and pay to keep them loyal. | | | |

Handout #4

Directed Note-Taking

Directions: Record notes containing the most important information relevant to the guiding question.

[illegible]

Question Generation

Directions: Record questions that you have based on your notes and text-reading.

[illegible]

Handout #5

Listening Graphic Organizer for the Debate

Directions: List the name of each group, enter the position/category they are defending, and record each group's main points and evidence from the text. Use the space for your own group to plan what your group will present.

| Group Name | Position/Category Defended | Main Points and Textual Evidence |
|------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| MY GROUP | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |