

Lesson 1: Grievances in the Declaration of Independence

Teacher Version

Essential Question

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

Opening



[John Hancock Video](#)

How might it feel to sign something that could change history?

Hook/Topic Question

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"?

Key Vocabulary

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 their food. This was called “quartering.”	The king could require you to let soldiers stay in your house and eat your food
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 – <i>libertas</i> means “free or freedom” and “ <i>y</i> ” means “the state of being”	Freedom to make your own choices without unfair control

Linear Array Activity

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

Text Coding Guide

T = Taxes

M = Military

RF = Representation / Fairness

I = Information (background)

Modeling Text Coding

T = Taxes

M = Military

RF = Representation
or Fairness

I = Information
(background)

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.

Jigsaw Overview

Students become experts on one category:

- Taxes
- Military
- Representation
- Justice

Then teach peers in mixed groups.

Grievances Chart

Teacher explanation:

- Students record each grievance.
- Determine category (T, M, RF, or J).
- Explain what it meant and how colonists were affected. (Sample for taxes below.)

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			

Directed Note-Taking

Model one example:

- Identify grievance.
- Categorize it.
- Explain the impact.

Students complete the rest independently or in groups. (Sample 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 Discussion

Prompt: *Which category of grievances mattered MOST to the colonists? Why?*

Students must cite evidence.

Question Generation

Students reread the final paragraph and generate WHY/HOW questions:

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

Final Writing Prompt

Prompt: *Which category of grievances was MOST responsible for the decision to declare independence?*

Students must:

- Make a claim.
- Support with text evidence.
- Explain the reasoning.

Closure

- Return to predictions.
- Ask students how their thinking changed.
- Brief reflection on how grievances connect to unalienable rights in Lesson 2.