



A Break, Then a Promise

WisdomForge Booklet — Ages 11–14

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About This Book

The elementary booklet told the story of a hot room. This one is a map. The Declaration of Independence is 1,337 words. It creates no courts, no president, no taxes. It announces a break and states a philosophy. The Constitution, eleven years later, is the machine. If you mash the two papers into one “founding,” you will not see why slavery could be legal and still be a betrayal of 1776.

Six sittings, same spine as the other bands: Philadelphia 1776, self-evident truths, created equal, unalienable rights, consent and revolution, second-life chain. Each chapter has narrative, at least one table, a Big Idea, Try This, Talk About It, and a question to carry.

Primary text first: National Archives transcription. Then Jefferson’s draft at the Library of Congress. Then Paine, Mason, Locke, Douglass, Lincoln, King. Harry’s 37-file pack is the research spine. No invented quotes. No family names. No legal or pastoral advice.

Chapter 1: The Clock Congress Actually Used



Illustration for Chapter 1

| Date | What actually happened | | -- | -- | | June 7, 1776 | Richard Henry Lee moves that the colonies are free states | | June 11 | Committee of Five appointed; Jefferson asked to draft | | June 28 | Draft presented | | July 1 | Debate; Dickinson argues not yet | | July 2 | Vote for independence (12 yes, New York abstains) | | July 4 | Text adopted; Dunlap prints

broad sides that night | | July 8 | First public reading, State House yard | | July 9 | New York authorizes; statue of George III pulled down in New York | | August 2 | Most signatures on the engrossed parchment |

John Adams told Abigail the second of July would be the festival. He named the vote, not the printer. The letter is public; the booklet will not keep paraphrasing it.

The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable Epocha, in the History of America. — I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the Day of Deliverance by solemn Acts of Devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews, Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more. — John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 July 1776 (Massachusetts Historical Society)

He was right about the celebration. He was wrong about the date culture kept. The same letter refuses fireworks as a mood:

You will think me transported with Enthusiasm but I am not. — I am well aware of the Toil and Blood and Treasure, that it will cost Us to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States. — Yet through all the Gloom I can see the Rays of ravishing Light and Glory. — same letter, 3 July 1776

Pauline Maier's *American Scripture* is the book that kills the single-day cartoon. Hancock and Thomson signed the journal on the Fourth. Most quills waited for parchment. Adams named the cost before the picnic. Keep both sentences.

Lee's resolution, so the vote is not a rumor either:

That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved. — Richard Henry Lee, resolution introduced 7 June 1776 (the vote is 2 July)

Adams named the second. Congress adopted the explanation on the fourth. Culture kept the explanation. The table at the top of this chapter is the clock. The letter is the festival Adams wanted. The resolution is the act.

The Committee of Five was not a writers' room of equals in hours. Jefferson drafted. Adams and Franklin marked. Sherman and Livingston are easy to forget because the later portrait wants a lone genius. Livingston did not even sign; New York had not authorized him.

Dickinson would not sign because he thought the colonies unready. Eight men present on July 4 never put their names on the parchment.

| Who was in the room | Who was not | | --- | --- | | 56 signers over months | Women | | Mostly lawyers, merchants, planters | Enslaved people | | Property-owning white men | Indigenous nations | | Delegates of colonial assemblies | Men without property in many places |

Risk was real. Treason's penalty was death. Franklin's hang-together line is reported, not filmed. Five signers were captured at some point. Houses were looted. Most signers also survived and later held office. Two became presidents. Courage and career can share a biography.

The war had already started in April 1775. The Declaration did not light the first musket. It explained a war already burning. 1763 (debt after the Seven Years' War) to Stamp Act to Townshend to Tea Party to Intolerable Acts to Lexington is the road. Salutary neglect ended. "No taxation without representation" is the consent principle in slogan form.

Paine's *Common Sense* (January 1776) made independence speakable in taverns. Congress still had to count. Rodney's storm ride is true and over-filmed. South Carolina's switch and Pennsylvania's reshuffle did as much work.

The Committee of Five, slower: Jefferson, 33, rented a room from Jacob Graff at Market and Seventh and wrote for about two weeks. Adams later told Timothy Pickering (1822) that he pushed Jefferson because Virginia should lead and because Jefferson wrote ten times better. Memory in 1822 is not a tape. The politics of the story still hold: the largest colony's pen, not Massachusetts's mouth. Franklin, 70, marked the draft. Sherman, the self-made Connecticut man, later signed Declaration, Articles, Constitution, and Bill of Rights — the only person to sign all four. Livingston of New York helped draft and did not sign. Sherman and Livingston barely appear in the writing legend because the portrait wants a solitary genius. File 5.4 exists to kill that portrait.

Jefferson's modest claim, which you should not swallow whole or spit out whole: he did not aim at originality of principle or sentiment; he meant an expression of the American mind. File 7.1 uses that sentence against the plagiarism charge. File 1.3 uses the 86 congressional changes against the lone-genius charge. Hold both files.

Paine's *Common Sense* (January 1776) made independence speakable in taverns.

After July, the military year was ugly. New York lost. Philadelphia lost. Saratoga (1777) brought France. Paris, 1783, ended the first life of the paper as a diplomatic act.

The road before the room matters as much as the room. In 1763 Britain won a world war and inherited debt plus a larger North American map. Salutary neglect — loose trade rules, colonial assemblies doing most of the governing — had made colonists proud of being the freest people in the empire. Revenue policy after 1763 felt like a new empire: the Stamp Act (1765) as the first direct internal tax; the Stamp Act Congress; repeal plus a lingering claim that Parliament could bind the colonies “in all cases whatsoever.” Townshend duties (1767) on glass, paper, paint, tea. Boston Massacre, 5 March 1770, five dead, immediately named for propaganda as well as grief. Tea Act 1773 as a company bailout that still collected the tea tax. 342 chests in the harbor on 16 December. Intolerable Acts 1774: port closed, Massachusetts charter gutted, officials removable to Britain for trial, troops to be housed. First Continental Congress still wanted rights as Englishmen, not a new country. Lexington and Concord, 19 April 1775, happened before the Second Continental Congress even sat as a war government.

Maier’s earlier book *From Resistance to Revolution* is the escalation study. Middlekauff’s *Glorious Cause* is the war narrative. Bailyn is the pamphlet war in people’s heads. Gordon Wood is the republicanism thesis you will meet again in high school. None of those books turn July 4 into a spell. They show a decade of arguments about consent, then muskets, then a text.

Congress itself was not a nation. It could not tax. It could request. It appointed Washington. It sent Franklin toward France. Delegates represented colonies that still thought of themselves as the real sovereigns. That weakness is not a plot hole. It is the same suspicion of centers that later made the Articles too weak and the Constitution a fight.

Myths to retire with Maier: everyone signed on July 4; the Liberty Bell rang a special Fourth concert (it rang for the public reading on the 8th, as bells rang for many events); fireworks in the State House on the Fourth while exhausted men danced. The Dunlap broadsides — about 200 printed, 26 known surviving — are the first public form. The engrossed parchment is the shrine form. The journal entry is the official-act form. Three objects, one Declaration.

Button Gwinnett died in a duel, not as a cartoon martyr of the Fourth. John Hart was driven from a wrecked farm. Francis Lewis lost property. Richard Stockton was imprisoned. Those costs are real and still not the whole story: most signers later held office. History that only martyrs them is as false as history that only picnic-them.

The elementary booklet used a locked-door picture. This chapter uses a clock and a road. If you can tell 1763–1775 without the word independence, you are ready for July 1776. If you start at fireworks, you will think a paper started a war that muskets had already started.

Big Idea

July 4 is the date of a text, not the date of a unanimous quill circle. The Declaration is an act plus an explanation of an already-started war.

Try This

1. Copy the table of dates onto a card. Cover the July 4 row. Tell the story without it. Then uncover. 2. List the Committee of Five from memory, then check. Who did you drop? 3. Read Adams's July 3 letter to Abigail (a grown-up can find a library copy). Circle the date he names.

Talk About It

1. Why do nations prefer one birthday to a messy calendar? 2. Is a signer more important than a printer? Why did Dunlap matter? 3. If Livingston helped draft and did not sign, what is authorship?

Which date would you defend as Independence Day if you had to argue in a classroom without fireworks?

Chapter 2: From Sacred to Self-Evident



Illustration for Chapter 2

Jefferson wrote “sacred and undeniable.” Franklin wrote “self-evident.” Maier and Allen both treat the change as a hinge.

| Word | Kind of authority | Who it includes most easily | | --- | --- | --- | | Sacred | Religious, set apart | People who share the faith | | Undeniable | Forbidden to contradict | People who accept the speaker | | Self-evident | Reason, like an axiom | Anyone claimed as a thinking person |

The paper still names God four times: Nature's God, Creator, Supreme Judge, Divine Providence. It never names Christ, never quotes Scripture. Harry's file 7.3 calls it theistic, not Christian-or-secular as a sports match.

| Phrase in the enrolled text | Job in the sentence | What it is not | | --- | --- | --- | | Laws of Nature and of Nature's God | Higher law than Parliament | A church name | | endowed by their Creator | Source of rights, not a statute | A creed test | | Supreme Judge of the world | Appeal for rectitude of intentions | A named Messiah | | protection of divine Providence | Closing reliance | Proof of a Christian nation |

Copy the four cells from the Archives text, not from this table. The table is a map. The paper is the source.

Jefferson cut miracles from his private New Testament. Franklin used Deist language. Adams was Unitarian. Washington preferred Providence. Witherspoon was a Presbyterian minister. Sherman was a devout Congregationalist. The Committee and Congress were not one chapel.

Euclidean axioms are the school metaphor Jefferson knew. "The whole is greater than the part" is not proved; it is recognized. The Declaration treats equality and rights as starting points, not as prizes won at the end of a sermon.

Paine had already attacked monarchy as absurd in plain English. Jefferson's tone is legal-philosophical. You need both if you want to know 1776. Paine mobilizes. Jefferson universalizes. Paine's other famous cry is not the weeping-voice line (that sits on the passage card). It is the worth of the cause:

*The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. — Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, January 1776*

A tavern can hear that sentence. A Congress still has to count. File 3.2 is the shift file: 120,000 copies in three months in a population of about 2.5 million. That is not a footnote. It is how independence became speakable before Jefferson's draft was even requested.

Allen's *Our Declaration* reads the sentences as public argument: "decent respect to the opinions of mankind" means the paper is not a conspiracy note. It is a brief filed with the world.

The opening sentence in full is worth keeping on the desk:

“When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”

Notice the moving parts: necessity (not whim), one people (a collective, not a clique), Laws of Nature and of Nature's God (double appeal), decent respect (audience is mankind). File 1.2 calls this the frame. File 2.6 is the decent-respect file. If you skip it, you will think the Declaration is only the famous equality sentence. The frame is why the paper is a public act.

Wills's *Inventing America* pushed Scottish sources hard — Hutcheson, Reid's common-sense philosophy under “self-evident.” Scholars still argue how much Jefferson owed Scotland versus Locke versus Mason. The argument is useful even when it overreaches: it stops you from saying “Jefferson invented rights.” He assembled.

The four God-references again, slower. Nature's God is natural-theology language: known through the order of the world, not through a named church. Creator is the source of endowment — rights are not issued by Parliament. Supreme Judge is a courtroom metaphor aimed at “rectitude of our intentions,” which is a nervous line for men about to commit treason. Divine Providence is the closing reliance, a habit-word in eighteenth-century English, not a creed test. Gaustad, Meacham, and Hall fight about how Christian the founding was. This booklet's job is to make you read the four phrases before you pick a team.

May 15, 1776, Congress told colonies to suppress royal authority and form governments under the people. That resolution is the political stair Jefferson's draft climbed. Without Paine and without May 15, June 11's committee is a writing club.

Elementary treated sacred/self-evident as two cards. Middle treats them as a design choice with an audience. If your class only debates “Christian nation: yes or no,” you have left the sentences.

Big Idea

Self-evident relocates the proof. The Creator remains the source of rights in the next clause. Reason is how the paper claims anyone can see them.

Try This

1. Write the four God-phrases from the Declaration without looking, then check the Archives text. 2. Mark a Venn diagram: Christian, Deist, theistic-overlap. Place Nature's God in the overlap until you can defend a move. 3. Translate "self-evident" into a geometry class sentence and into a playground sentence. Keep both.

Talk About It

1. Does a document become secular if it stops saying "sacred"? 2. Why might Franklin want skeptics in the audience? 3. Can a truth be self-evident and still need a war?

If you had been at the table, would you have kept "sacred," kept "self-evident," or written both?

Chapter 3: Equality as a Tool That Outran the Room



Illustration for Chapter 3

In 1776 “all men are created equal” struck at natural aristocracy: no one is born with a right to rule. It did not automatically mean identical talents, identical wealth, or a universal franchise.

| Group | In the sentence as later read | In 1776 practice | | -- | -- | -- | | Property-owning white men | Yes | Often yes (still not all could vote) | | White women | Later yes (Seneca Falls adds “and women”) | No political rights as a class | | Enslaved people | Later yes (abolition, 13th–15th) | No; many signers were enslavers | | Indigenous nations | Later contested | Named with a slur in a grievance | | Free Black people | Later yes, then Jim Crow theft | Local, fragile, often denied |

At least 41 of 56 signers held people in slavery. Jefferson enslaved more than 600 people over a lifetime. He also drafted a paragraph blaming the king for the slave trade. Congress cut it. South Carolina and Georgia would not carry an attack on the market they used. Jefferson’s moral vocabulary and Jefferson’s household did not match. Say both.

Lincoln in 1858: the sentence is a “standard maxim for free society,” constantly approximated, never perfectly attained. Douglass in 1852: the principles are saving principles; the nation is not living them. Stanton in 1848 copies the form. King in 1963 calls the papers a promissory note.

Danielle Allen argues equality is the Declaration’s core, not a decoration around independence. If you treat equality as frosting, you will not understand why later movements refused to let the holiday be only cannons.

Lincoln, longer than a slogan:

“They meant to set up a standard maxim for free society, which should be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for, and even though never perfectly attained, constantly approximated...” — Abraham Lincoln, Lincoln–Douglas debates, 1858

Douglass, 5 July 1852, Rochester: he will not let white listeners rest in the fathers’ glory. He also refuses to throw the instrument away. “The principles contained in that instrument are saving principles. Stand by those principles...” The speech is long. You owe it more than a title. Garrison in Framingham, 1854, burned a Constitution and praised a Declaration — a tactic this booklet describes, not assigns.

Seneca Falls, 1848, is a remix, not a sequel written by Jefferson. Stanton knew the power of stealing a form. The form-sentence is on the page so you do not meet it as a rumor:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women 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; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. — Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls, 19–20 July 1848

| 1776 form | 1848 theft | What the theft could not take | | --- | --- | --- | | all men are created equal | all men and women | A working franchise in 1848 | | He has... against the king | He has... against man | An army and a foreign alliance | | Pledge of lives, fortunes, honor | Resolutions including the vote | A Congress that could amend |

Anthony's 1872 illegal vote and trial pushed the 14th Amendment toward suffrage and lost in court. The 19th Amendment arrived in 1920. 144 years is not "soon."

King at the Mall, 1963: the founders signed a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir; the check came back insufficient funds. *Letter from Birmingham Jail* reaches for natural law: an unjust law is not rooted in eternal law. That is Aquinas as well as Jefferson. The Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965) are statutes. They are also, in King's telling, cash.

File 5.5 is the myth that the principles applied to everyone in 1776. They did not. File 2.1 is the radical premise anyway. Both files are required. A middle-schooler who can only say "hypocrisy" has half. A middle-schooler who can only say "liberty" has the other half.

The elementary booklet used empty chairs. This chapter uses a table and named later users. If you cannot name Douglass, Stanton, Lincoln, and King as readers of 1776, you are still in the picnic.

The honest middle-school move is not "the founders were villains, so trash the sentence" or "the founders were saints, so ignore the table." Hold the table. Hold the sentence. Watch which one later people used as a lever.

Big Idea

Equality in 1776 attacked kings. Equality after 1776 attacked the founders' own exclusions. The lever was the sentence they wrote down.

Try This

1. Recreate the in/out table from memory. Fix misses in another color. 2. Copy one Lincoln sentence and one Douglass sentence. Draw an arrow from each back to "created equal." 3. Write a four-line "Declaration of Sentiments" grievance that is about school or local rules — not a fake 1848 document. Label it practice, not history.

Talk About It

1. Is hypocrisy a reason to discard a principle, or a reason to enforce it? 2. Why did Seneca Falls copy the form instead of inventing a new one? 3. Who in your town still has to cash a promissory note?

If a rule is written wider than the rulers meant, who owns the extra width?

Chapter 4: Life, Liberty, and a Substitution



Illustration for Chapter 4

Locke's *Second Treatise* (1689) named life, liberty, and property. Mason's Virginia Declaration (June 1776) named life, liberty, property, happiness, and safety. Jefferson named life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and added "among these." Mason's first article is the colonial list elementary only paraphrased:

That all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety. — Virginia Declaration of Rights, art. 1 (adopted 12 June 1776; National Archives transcription)

Virginia added “when they enter into a state of society” so the equality sentence would not be read as freeing people held in slavery. That is a local lock. Jefferson’s list dropped property as a named head and kept an open “among these.” Two papers, two weeks apart, two different locks.

| Source | List | Weight | | --- | --- | --- | | Locke | life, liberty, property | Labor and estate at the center | | Mason | life, liberty, property, happiness, safety | Longer colonial list | | Jefferson / Congress | life, liberty, pursuit of happiness | Flourishing, not only owning | | Ninth Amendment later | unenumerated rights | “Among these” grown into law |

Unalienable means you cannot transfer the right the way you transfer a deed. You can sell a horse. You cannot rightly sell yourself into slavery even by “consent.” That claim sits beside a country that did sell people. The contradiction is the subject of Chapter 3 and Chapter 6. This chapter names the philosophy that made the contradiction visible.

| Thing | Alienable? | Why the analogy holds or breaks | | --- | --- | --- | | A horse, a bike, a house | Yes | Deed, sale, gift | | A vote (once you have it) | Fought | Later law treats it as not for sale | | A body / labor as a person | The philosophy says no | 1776 practice said yes for millions | | “Pursuit of happiness” | Not a mood coupon | A right to seek, not a right to be given joy |

Life, in 1776, meant no arbitrary killing by the crown. Liberty meant no arbitrary arrest, no taxation without consent, no quartering as a habit of empire. Pursuit of happiness, Wills and Hamowy argue, draws Scottish Enlightenment language (Hutcheson) as well as Locke’s *Essay*. It is not a government-issued mood. It is the right to seek a good life without the state assigning the content.

“Among these” is a door. A closed list would have been easier to police. An open list is how later claims (conscience, movement, equal dignity) keep knocking.

Jefferson did not hide Locke. In 1825 he told Henry Lee what the paper was for:

Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind... — Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, 8 May 1825

File 7.1 uses that sentence against the plagiarism charge. File 1.3 uses the 86 congressional changes against the lone-genius charge. Hold both files. Synthesis plus a political act. Locke wrote a treatise. Congress declared a break.

Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch. 19, is not a personality type. It is a paragraph:

*The reason why men enter into society, is the preservation of their property; and the end why they choose and authorize a legislative, is, that there may be laws made, and rules set, as guards and fences to the properties of all the members of the society... whenever the legislators endeavor to take away and destroy the property of the people, or to reduce them to slavery under arbitrary power, they put themselves into a state of war with the people, who are thereupon absolved from any farther obedience... — John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ch. 19, §222 (1689)*

That is the ancestor sentence of “alter or abolish.” Jefferson’s list still swapped property for happiness. The swap is the American accent. File 7.1’s four changes — genre, list, authority, function — belong in high school prose. Middle only needs: Locke wrote a treatise. Congress declared a break. Copying a shared language is not hiding a source.

Hutcheson and the Scottish moralists treated the pursuit of happiness as a natural drive, not a shopping list. Reid treated some truths as immediately known. Whether Jefferson had Reid on the desk is a scholarly fight. Whether “self-evident” *functions* like an axiom is visible in the syntax.

Life in later U.S. law becomes due process against deprivation (Fifth, Fourteenth). Liberty grows into movement, conscience, speech, and later “substantive due process” fights you will meet in high school and may not settle. Pursuit of happiness stays the most mocked and the most used: it is how people say the state is not the author of a good life.

File 4.1 warns: the Declaration is not a statute. Courts cite it as rhetoric and principle. They decide cases on the Constitution. Mixing the two is how posters are born.

Other Congress edits besides sacred/self-evident: a blast at “Scotch brethren” removed; some grievance compression; Jefferson’s pain at “mutilation,” copies of his draft mailed to friends. Adams and Franklin were calmer: a political instrument must hold a coalition. File 1.3 is required reading before you call Jefferson the sole author.

Elementary used three stones. Middle uses a source table and a warning that rights-talk is not a court order. If you can tell Locke from Mason from Jefferson in one minute, this chapter did its job.

Big Idea

The rights sentence is a system: source beyond government, unalienable, secured by government, listed without being exhausted. Happiness replaced property and widened the fight.

Try This

1. Make a three-row translation: Locke / Mason / Jefferson. No extra adjectives. 2. Define unalienable in twelve words. Then test it against “I sold my bike.” 3. Find “among these” in the Archives text. Highlight it. That highlight is the Ninth Amendment’s ancestor, not a twin.

Talk About It

1. Did dropping “property” make the Declaration less economic or more? 2. Can a right be unalienable if courts fail to protect it? 3. Why might a slaveholder still write that liberty cannot be sold?

What would you add after “among these,” and who would you have to convince?

Chapter 5: Consent, Grievances, and the Last Door



Illustration for Chapter 5

The social-contract sentence: governments are instituted to secure rights; just powers come from consent. Hobbes gives consent once to a sovereign. Locke lets you dissolve a trustee

who betrays the trust. Rousseau's general will is not the Declaration's engine. Bailyn's *Ideological Origins* is the book for the colonial mix.

Locke, *Second Treatise*, ch. 9, on why anyone would leave the state of nature — a different chapter from the dissolution paragraph in Chapter 4:

*The great and chief end, therefore, of men's uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property. — John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ch. 9, §124 (1689)*

...the power of the society, or legislative constituted by them, can never be supposed to extend farther, than the common good... — same chapter, §131

Property in Locke includes life and liberty, not only land. Jefferson still swapped the named head to happiness. Consent in the Declaration is Locke's trust plus a public list of facts. Hobbes's one-time surrender is what the paper refuses.

| Condition in the text | What it is not | | -- | --- | | Government destructive of rights-ends
| Bad policy you dislike this year | | Right of the People | A faction, a mob with a flag | |
Prudence against light causes | A dare | | Long train of abuses toward despotism | One lost
election | | Institute new government | Destruction as a hobby |

Twenty-seven grievances follow, mostly "He has..." King George is the defendant. The structure is a legal brief: law, facts, prayer for relief. The last grievance includes a slur against Native nations and frames frontier war as the king's tool. File 1.2 calls it the most shameful passage. It is not a footnote.

Shays (1786–87) and the Whiskey Rebellion (1794) invoked revolutionary feeling and were put down. The Confederacy claimed revolution to keep slavery. Lincoln's first inaugural and Gettysburg refuse that claim: you cannot use 1776 to destroy the equality 1776 named. File 7.5's bar is high on purpose. This booklet will not coach rebellion against a working vote. It will teach the paper's own hedges.

Consent in 1776 was narrow. The 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments widened who may say yes. The principle outran the original voter roll, the same way equality did.

Magna Carta clause 61 gave twenty-five barons a right to distrain a king who broke the charter — a medieval resistance device, not a democratic revolution. The English Bill of Rights (1689) followed a revolution that replaced a king. The Dutch Act of Abjuration (1581) deposed Philip II with a public justification. File 6.1 and 2.4 put the Declaration in that chain. American uniqueness is not that nobody had ever said a ruler could forfeit authority. American uniqueness is the universal vocabulary plus a new-world war.

Grievance clusters, so you do not drown in twenty-seven. Keep one enrolled line per cluster on a card:

| Cluster | Sample enrolled charge | What it is evidence of | | --- | --- | --- | | Political | He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly... | Consent broken at the assembly | | Judicial | He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone... | Law as the king's payroll | | Military | He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies... | Force without local yes | | Economic | For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent. | The slogan made into a count | | Charter | taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws | Local law gutted | | Last / shame | ...the merciless Indian Savages... | A slur the booklet names and will not chant |

- Political: dissolving houses, refusing laws, controlling governors - Judicial: tenure and pay of judges, obstructing justice, fake trials overseas - Military/economic: standing armies, quartering, cutting off trade, taxes without consent - Charters: taking away local law - Last: insurrections and the Indigenous slur

File 5.6 is the myth that the Declaration is just a grievance list. The list is the evidence section. Without the principles, it is a colonial complaint. Without the list, the principles are a sermon.

Hobbes: consent once, then obey. The Declaration rejects that. Locke: fiduciary government. The Declaration takes that. Rousseau: general will that can swallow persons. The Declaration does not install that. The tension Harry names remains: if consent is king, can a majority enslave a minority? Unalienable rights say no. American practice often said yes. Constitutional limits (Bill of Rights, Equal Protection) are later attempts to trap the tension, not a 1776 solution.

Prudence sentence, full enough to memorize:

“Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed.”

That is the anti-tantrum clause. File 7.5 uses it against Confederacy-as-1776 and against treating a certified election as despotism. This band names the misuse. It does not assign you a current protest.

Elementary used a last door drawing. Middle uses conditions, clusters, and a chain back to 1215 and 1581. If you can explain why a lost vote is not a long train, you are done with the cartoon version of “alter or abolish.”

Big Idea

Revolution in the Declaration is a last door with a lock: pattern of tyranny, the people not a faction, a new government in view. Elections are the ordinary key.

Try This

1. Sort five made-up complaints into “light cause” vs “long train.” Defend one sort. 2. Read three “He has” grievances aloud. Rewrite one in modern nouns without changing the charge. 3. Draw the last door. Write elections, courts, amendments on the welcome mat.

Talk About It

1. Why list 27 facts after five principles? 2. Can a majority consent to take a minority’s unalienable rights? 3. How do you tell a people from a faction without cheating?

If the last door is never used, is the sentence still doing work?

Chapter 6: Silence, Then the Second Life

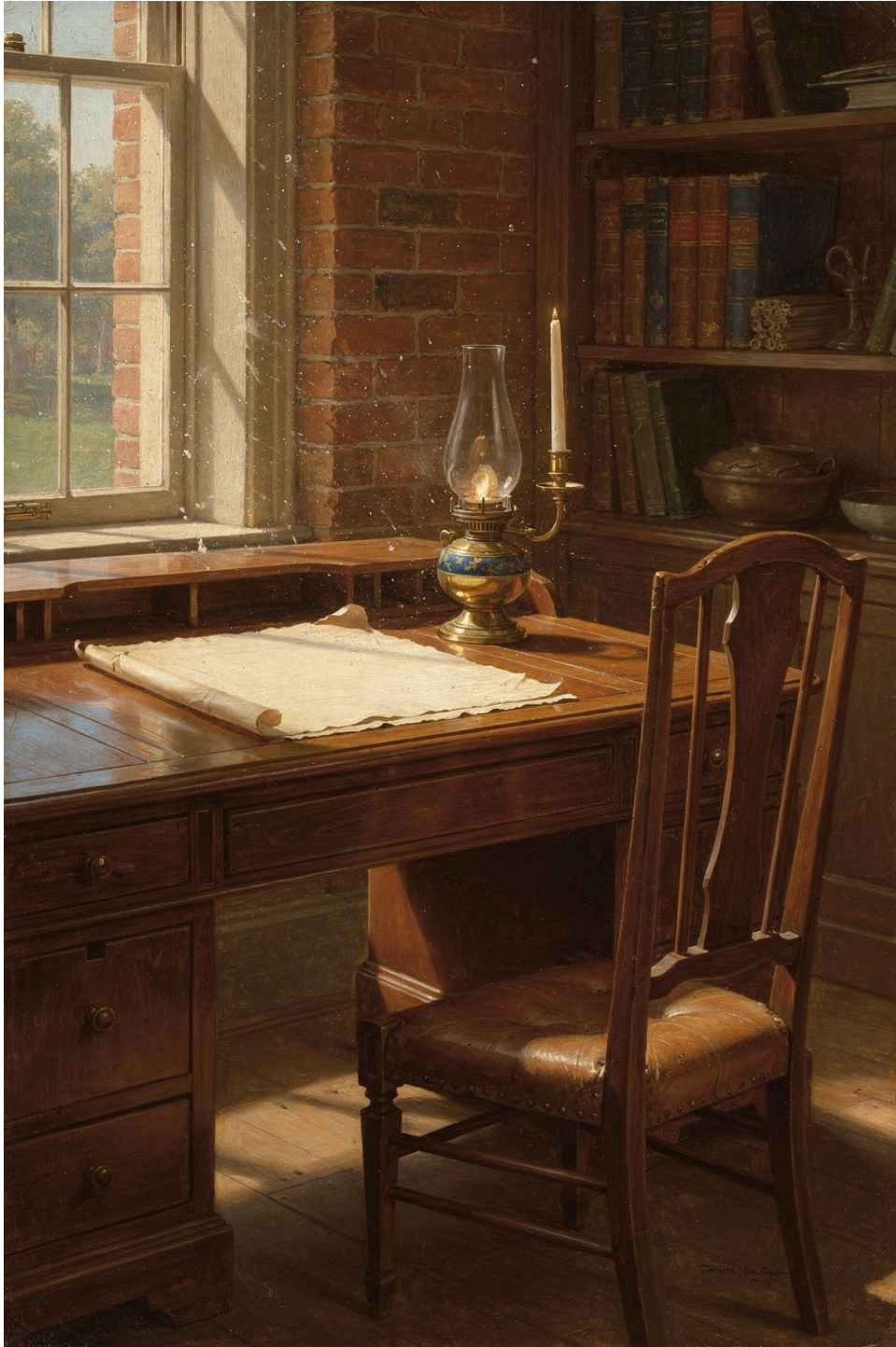


Illustration for Chapter 6

Jefferson's cut paragraph called the slave trade a cruel war against human nature. Congress chose silence to keep a coalition. Davis and Finkelman are the historians for the age-of-revolution problem. Gordon-Reed is the historian for Jefferson's household. The Civil War is the price tag later generations paid for 1776's postponement.

| Paper | Job | Legal status | | -- | -- | -- | | Declaration (1776) | Why a break; principles |
Not a statute | | Articles (1781) | First machine; too weak | Superseded | | Constitution
(1787) | Working machine | Supreme law | | 13th–15th Amendments | Write equality into
the machine | Supreme law |

Lincoln's synthesis: Declaration as sheet anchor, Constitution as imperfect instrument, war amendments as repair. Originalists may give 1776 less courtroom weight. "Declarationists" want the manifesto to inform the machine. Living-constitution arguments also reach for 1776's width. You do not have to join a team in eighth grade. You do have to see that the fight exists.

Douglass: stand by the principles. Garrison burned a Constitution and praised a Declaration — a strategy, not this booklet's assignment. King: cash the check. Seneca Falls: copy the form. Obergefell later speaks of equal dignity; that is adult court talk. Here, notice the pattern: excluded people use the universal words.

Armitage traces copies and cousins worldwide. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man is a sibling in a violent family. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is a later cousin. Global fame does not wash local crimes.

The second life is longer than the first. 1783 ended the diplomatic act. The measuring stick is still on the table.

| Later user | What they took from 1776 | What they would not take | | -- | -- | -- | |
Douglass, 1852 | Saving principles | An easy Fourth | | Lincoln, 1858 / 1863 | Standard
maxim; four score and seven | Slavery as a 1776 right | | Stanton, 1848 | The form, plus
"and women" | A closed "all men" | | King, 1963 | Promissory note / insufficient funds |
Gradualism as cash | | Armitage's cousins | Universal vocabulary | Innocence for local
crimes |

The table is not a choir. Putting names in rows is a study move. Each speaker can refuse the others. What they share is the leftover width of a sentence written without a racial or sexual adjective.

Jefferson's draft language, so you see what silence replaced:

"He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, capturing & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere..."

Blaming the king for a trade the colonies used is a stretch. Naming slavery as a violation of the same rights the preamble proclaims is not a stretch. Both can be true. Congress chose coalition over that paragraph. File 7.2: the founders knew the contradiction. Washington

freed people in his will, unique among planter presidents. Adams never enslaved. Franklin ended as an abolition society president. Knowing and paying the cost are different verbs.

Gettysburg is a speech, not a sixth article of the Constitution. It still re-aims the country at 1776. Zuckert's *Natural Rights Republic* and Jaffa's Lincoln school make that the philosophic founding. Scalia-style originalism can respect 1776 as politics and still deny it as a constitutional clause. File 6.2 and 7.4 are the adult versions. Middle only needs: manifesto $\neq$ machine.

French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) borrows universal rights language and then meets Terror — file 6.5. Armitage's global history is the map of copies. Haitian revolutionaries heard liberty too. The UN UDHR (1948) is a later attempt to write a world-scale decent respect. Cousins. Not clones.

File 5.1: the Declaration did not create American democracy. Voting systems, constitutions, parties, and exclusions did that work, slowly. File 5.3: the founders were not united. Dickinson, Livingston's New York problem, and the slavery cut are enough to kill the marble chorus.

Disability rights and immigrant-rights arguments later reach for “all men” and for “any person” in the 14th. Obergefell's dignity language is a court cousin. Name the pattern; do not pretend Jefferson voted for it.

Elementary used a folded broadside with two lives. Middle uses a papers table and a cut paragraph. If you can say “silence postponed a war” without smirking or kneeling, this chapter landed.

Big Idea

The Declaration's first life succeeded in 1783. Its second life is the unfinished standard. Silence about slavery was a political choice with a war-sized bill.

Try This

1. Fill the four-row papers table without looking, then check. 2. Read twenty lines of Douglass's 1852 speech (grown-up helps pick a public-domain excerpt). Mark every time he praises 1776 and every time he condemns practice. 3. Compute Lincoln's four score and seven. Write $1863 - 87 = 1776$ on a card. Keep it in the book.

Talk About It

1. Was cutting the slave-trade paragraph prudence or cowardice — or both? 2. Why would Lincoln point to 1776 in a cemetery in 1863? 3. What is the difference between a cousin document and a copy?

When a holiday makes the second life invisible, what is the smallest true sentence you can say at the picnic?

Passage card — read this before Chapter 2's table

Keep the principles block on a card. It is not the whole Declaration. It is the part later movements quoted.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — 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 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.”

Closing pledge, so the risk is not abstract:

“And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.”

Grievance samples (not the full twenty-seven — go to the Archives for the rest):

“He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.”

>

“He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.”

>

“He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.”

>

“For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent.”

>

“For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury.”

If a video quotes only equality and fireworks, it has hidden the brief's middle. If a video quotes only taxes, it has hidden the philosophy. You need both halves.

Paine, the full cry, because taverns and Congress were not the same speaker, and a labeled paraphrase is not a source:

*Every thing that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one, over the other, was never the design of Heaven. — Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, January 1776*

Open the pamphlet. Do not cite a booklet when the public-domain text is on the desk. Paine mobilizes. Jefferson universalizes. You need both speakers if you want 1776.

King, so Chapter 3's promissory note is not a rumor:

“When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir.” — Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream,” 28 August 1963

Douglass, so Chapter 6 is not a summary of a speech you never met:

“The principles contained in that instrument are saving principles. Stand by those principles, be true to them on all occasions, in all places, against all foes, and at whatever cost.” — Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?”, 5 July 1852

These four speakers — Congress, Paine, Douglass, King — are not one choir. Putting them on one card is a study move, not a claim that they agreed.

File 4.5 (modern American life) is the picnic-vs-standard file: flags, readings, arguments at tables. File 4.3 (democratic government) is the consent-as-elections file. File 4.4 (international) is Armitage in short. You do not need all 37 Harry files in eighth grade. You need to know they exist so you do not think this booklet is the archive.

A note on voice: the elementary booklet tells. This one maps. The high booklet will argue. If you find yourself wanting a debate about original meaning versus living reading, you are already peeking at Chapter 6's adult shelf. Peek. Then come back and finish the tables.

For the Grown-Up Reader

Middle band: tables, Talk About It (3×6), closing italic questions, then a passage card of real quotes. Sitzings match elementary. Quotes: Declaration, Paine, Lincoln, Douglass, King. No invented sayings. No family names. No advice to rebel against democratic process.

Harry pack: `content/declaration-independence/`, 37 files, no INVENTORY.md. Typeset only. Not gold.

About WisdomForge

WisdomForge turns founding documents and great thinkers into booklets for every age. Each figure or document gets four booklets: ages 5–10, 11–14, 15–18, and adults. The same text, told at the right depth. Because the Declaration is not a costume of liberty. It is a counted vote, a printed sheet, and a long second life. Read the 1,337 words before you read a summary. The National Archives keeps a public text. Use it.