

The Declaration of Punctuation

Overview:

Students practice the proper use of punctuation by writing their own “Declaration of Independence” while learning about an important American document.

Procedure:

The teacher discusses how the Declaration of Independence was written by Thomas Jefferson and how he used punctuation when writing this important document. The teacher should also discuss how America declared its independence from Great Britain. Explain to students that they will be listing items/activities that they would like to declare independence from by creating a classroom Declaration of Independence.

1. Review or introduce punctuation symbols and their functions in the English language. Show examples of their use in sentences. Model their use by writing sentences that utilize punctuation. Use an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence to help instruct proper use of punctuation. (*Please note that the Declaration of Independence uses the following punctuation: commas, periods, colons, and semicolons.*)
2. Give students some examples of things you would like to declare independence from using the think aloud approach to help model brainstorming. (“I can’t stand washing windows, so I would like to declare independence from washing windows.”)
 - a. Ask students to brainstorm their own list of things they would like to declare independence from. Allow students to be creative and to declare independence from things that they are not fond of like homework or going to the dentist.
 - b. Ask students to declare their top two choices.
 - c. Break students into pairs or small groups to share their top choices and ask them to again revise their lists by picking one choice from each student’s list. Students should be encouraged to discuss the choices and come to a consensus. The teacher walks around and comments on use of punctuation.
 - d. Students report out their group choices to the teacher as the teacher transcribes on chart paper. As he/she writes the choices, the teacher asks for help from the students regarding punctuation. The teacher may want to forget punctuation on purpose and see if any students notice.
 - e. The teacher asks the students if any changes or additions should be made. If the teacher left out punctuation on purpose and students didn’t notice, now would be a good time to lead them into finding these errors. For example, “Does anyone see anything missing? Look at each sentence. Do we have correct capitalization? Is ending punctuation correct for each sentence?”
 - f. Allow each student to sign the completed and polished Declaration of Independence.

ASOLs Covered in this Activity:

5E--WP9a: The student will list words that describe an event or personal experience to use when writing about it.

Extension Idea: Once students have picked their top two choices, ask them to write a list of words that describes each of them. Ask students to then break into groups to discuss their choices and the words that describe them. Allow the students to help their group members decide on a top choice for each student.

5E--WP7d or 8E--WP1c: The student will plan by brainstorming and revise own writing by adding more information.

HSE--WP1e: The student will develop writing by planning and revising own writing by adding more information

Extension Idea: Ask students to brainstorm a list of activities that they would like to declare independence from. Ask them to revise that list by prioritizing the most important to the least important. Students can take their list and cut each item out and arrange them in their prioritized order. Students can then pick their top two choices by getting rid of the ideas that are of low priority or importance. Allow students time to think about the choices that are left over and to add more information to those choices.

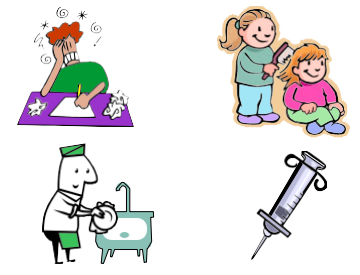
For students who need less support:

My Declaration of Independence

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

For students who need more support:

My Declaration of Independence
(circle your choices)



8E--WE3a: The student will use standard English rules when writing by using ending punctuation and capitalization when writing a sentence or question.

Extension Idea: After students have chosen their top choice for the item/activity that they would like to declare independence from, ask each student to write their choice in a complete sentence. Ask them to remember to capitalize and use punctuation within their sentence. Some students may need someone to transcribe their sentence. In this case, ask the student what should be capitalized and/or where punctuation should go and what type of punctuation. For example, say, "Would we use a period or a question mark in your sentence? Where does the period go in your sentence, at the beginning or the end of it? Should anything be capitalized? Should the first word or the last word in the sentence be capitalized?"

HSE--WE2a: The student will peer edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing.

Extension Idea: Allow students to share their completed sentence with a peer. Ask the students to review their peer's sentence(s) for correct punctuation and capitalization. Allow students to give feedback to their peers. For added practice, give students a made up sentence that needs editing or give them an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence that is missing punctuation and ask them to edit that. If students need more support, give them glue-in punctuation and capitalized letter choices.

HSE--WP5b: The student will develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising,

editing, and rewriting.

Extension Idea: Allow students to report out the activity/item that they are declaring independence from. The teacher should write each student's statement on chart paper. Ask students to tell the teacher how to edit the sentence on the chart paper by identifying where punctuation and capitalization should be used. The teacher may have to help give hints or ask questions to help support some students through this editing process.

***Please note the following history ASOL's that can be paired with this lesson:

HS--H1b, HS--H4, HS--C10a, HS--C17b, HS--C20a, HS--C20b

Materials Needed:

- Punctuation marks printed in large font for visuals when teaching
- Excerpt from Declaration of Independence
- Writing utensils or alternative pencils
- Paper for Lists (Picture cue choices for students who need more support to make lists)
- Scissors
- Chart paper for teacher
- Markers for teacher
- Optional: Judy Moody Declares Independence by Megan McDonald (This activity could follow the read aloud of this book as Judy Moody writes her own declaration of independence in this book. This book is grade level equivalent of 3.2).

Instructional Setting:

Classroom

Community Connections and/or Peer Interaction:

The teacher can invite another classroom to watch the students present their Declaration of Independence. The students might reenact the proposal of the declaration and each student could announce their individual sentence that they contributed to the declaration. The classroom visiting can be encouraged to raise their hands or activate a voice-output device for each sentence that they agree with.

Functional Activity/Routine:

This lesson gives students many opportunities to work with others, which promotes functional communication and socialization. It also allows students time to practice correct use of capitalization and punctuation in their writing which is a skill that can be generalized in both school and personal activities.

Strategies to Collect Evidence:

Include a student's brainstorming, word lists, and final product along with a detailed anecdotal record that includes a description of how they presented/shared their writing with others. Make sure to include prompts given. If your student is a scribbler or in one of the other early stages of developmental writing, be sure to include an interpretation of the writing in your anecdotal record.

Specific Options for Differentiating this Activity:

- Allow students to use their preferred "pencil" to complete this activity. This may include a writing

utensil, keyboard, alternative pencil, or dictating to a scribe. Students may need picture cue choices of items/activities that they would like to declare independence from. Additionally they may need picture choices that will help them list words that describe the items/activities that they would like to declare independence from.

-A student in any of the developmental stages of writing can complete this activity.

*If your student is a scribbler, be sure to reinforce his/her product as authentic writing, and if necessary, help assign meaning.