FACING HISTORY & OURSELVES

`ACTIVITY`

Supporting Question 1: The Nation's Founding Ideals

Overview

About This Activity

Students explore Supporting Question 1 through a series of activities that help them analyze the ideals within the Declaration of Independence. They define *ideal* and identify the ideals found in an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence. They conclude with a Formative Task that asks them to illustrate the nation's founding ideals.

Supporting Question	What does the Declaration of Independence state about the nation's founding ideals?
Formative Task	Students complete a Sketch to Stretch activity to illustrate the nation's founding ideals.
Featured Sources	● Reading: The Declaration of Independence Excerpt ● Handout: The Ideals of the Declaration Graphic Organizer

Procedure

Day 1

Activity 1: Define *Ideal*

To begin, share with students this Oxford Languages definition of the word *ideal*:

> *ideal* (noun): a standard or principle to be aimed at.

Ask students to write the definition of *ideal* in their own words in their journals. Then ask them to write a private journal reflection in response to the following prompt:
● What ideals do you try to adhere to in your life? Why are those ideals important to you?

Activity 2: Examine Ideals in the Declaration of Independence

Tell students that in class today, they will be exploring the ideals within the Declaration of Independence, widely regarded as the foundational text of American democracy. Distribute **The Declaration of Independence Excerpt** and read it aloud with students. As you read, ask students

Supporting Question 1 | We the People Inquiry

to underline key ideas or record questions in the margins. Then read the text a second time, stopping after each section to ask the following questions:

1. According to the Declaration, where do our rights come from? (Section 1)
2. Are there other rights not mentioned in the Declaration that you think we should all possess by virtue of our existence? (Section 1)
3. According to the Declaration, why does government exist? Where does the power of government come from? (Section 2)
4. When do the people have a right to create a new government? What should be the purpose of that government? (Section 3)

Ask students to discuss their answers. Make sure that they understand the democratic ideals laid out in the Declaration, including the concepts of freedom, equality, natural ("unalienable") rights, and consent of the governed.

Then ask students to create a concept map for the term "democratic ideal." Lead students through the steps of the Concept Map teaching strategy, first generating a list of words, phrases, and ideas they associate with democratic ideals and then representing the relationship between their ideas on the page using spacing, lines, arrows, color, and sizing.

Next, have students share their concept maps using the Think, Pair, Share teaching strategy format. Invite students to revise their maps by adding new information they learned from their pair-shares that extends or challenges their thinking.

You might then facilitate a discussion in which students share ideas from their maps for you to collect on a class concept map that you hang in the room, refer back to over the course of the inquiry, and modify as students' thinking develops.

Formative Task

Declaration of Independence Sketch to Stretch

Break the class into small groups of three to five students. In their groups, ask students to choose two to three lines from the Declaration that represent the most important democratic ideals in the document. Then apply the Sketch to Stretch teaching strategy by asking students to copy their selected lines onto a piece of paper, create a sketch that captures the meaning, and then explain the sketch in a short written reflection. Students can use the handout **The Ideals of the Declaration Graphic Organizer**, or they can use a blank sheet of paper or poster for the activity.

Have students share their finished sketches in a Gallery Walk.