

0. DRAFTING THE DECLARATION - Story Preface

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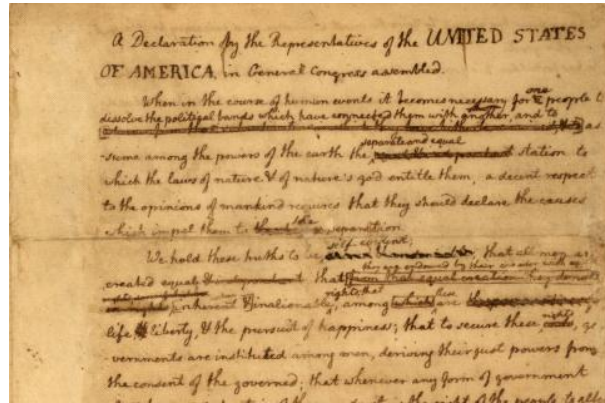
16. MARION'S BRIGADE

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This image depicts Thomas Jefferson's original draft of the Declaration of Independence. It also contains edits, principally in the handwriting of Benjamin Franklin. Online, courtesy Library of Congress. PD

While Washington and his troops were fighting the war, the Second Continental Congress convened to formally manage affairs on the home front. It wasn't easy.

The "federal" system of government was not yet created. Each colony had its own legislature; there was no centralized authority to govern what was not yet a unified country. People disagreed about all kinds of things.

Most of the representatives did agree on one thing, though. The colonies needed to formally declare their independence from George III. But how would they do it?

Richard Henry Lee, a representative from Virginia, submitted a resolution on June 11, 1776. The Second Continental Congress, meeting in Philadelphia, would appoint a committee to prepare a Declaration of Independence.

Five men were chosen. Thomas Jefferson, a gifted writer from Virginia, would prepare the first draft.

Drawing on his own educated background and his knowledge of John Locke's theories of civil government, Jefferson penned his initial thoughts. (Follow this link to the only surviving fragment of his preliminary work.) Years later, using the Declaration of Independence as a model, Jefferson would help his friend Lafayette write the French "Declaration of The Rights of Man."

By the time Jefferson had completed a draft (follow this link to the original manuscript) he was willing to share with the committee, the final Declaration of Independence was taking shape. After he delivered it to the full Congress, however, he had to overcome one major hurdle.

Jefferson initially included a scathing indictment of the slave trade. Had it remained in the final draft, a unanimous vote adopting the Declaration could not have happened.

The slavery denunciation was cut. The issue would be debated (and fought over) later.

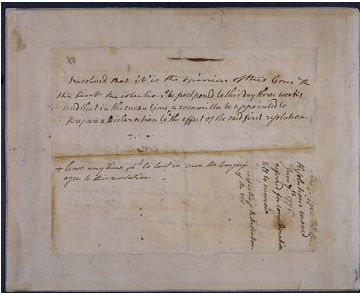
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DRAFTING-THE-DECLARATION-American-Revolution-Highlights>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/DRAFTING-THE-DECLARATION-American-Revolution-Highlights>

Media Stream



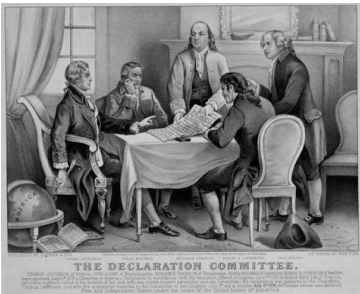
Resolution - Draft a Declaration of Independence

Original Resolution, U.S. National Archives.

Information and quote from the National Park Service publication (and web site) entitled *Signers of the Declaration*.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Resolution-Draft-a-Declaration-of-Independence>

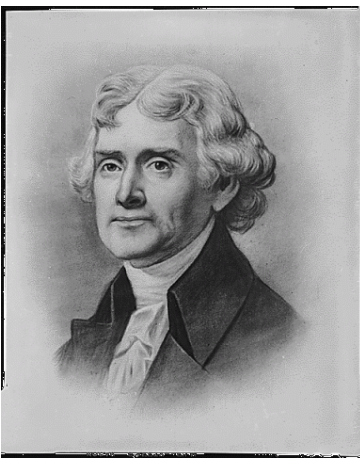


Declaration Committee

The Declaration Committee, copyprint of lithograph by Currier and Ives. New York, 1876. Library of Congress, image vc56.

Information and quote from Library of Congress web site, *Thomas Jefferson Exhibition*.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Declaration-Committee>



Thomas Jefferson - Declaration Drafter

Portrait of Jefferson by Charles Willson Peale, 1791.

Image, Library of Congress.

Quote from Library of Congress web site, *Thomas Jefferson Exhibition*.

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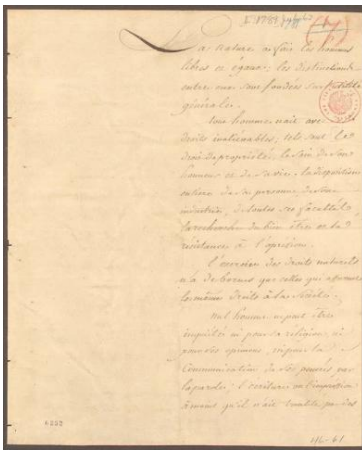
Thomas Jefferson's Notes - Declaration

Fragment of earliest draft, Library of Congress.

Information and quote from Library of Congress web site, *Thomas Jefferson Exhibition*.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Thomas-Jefferson-s-Notes-Declaration>



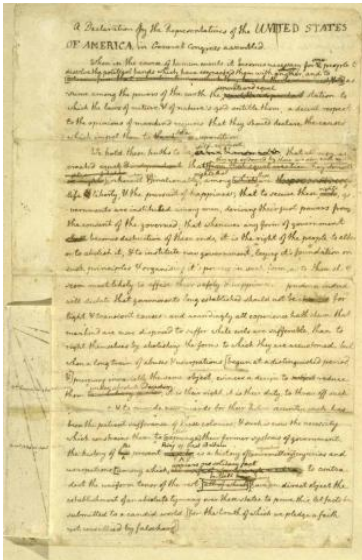
Declaration of the Rights of Man

Image, Library of Congress: *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, 1789. Manuscript, page 2.

Information and quote from Library of Congress web site, *Thomas Jefferson Exhibition*.

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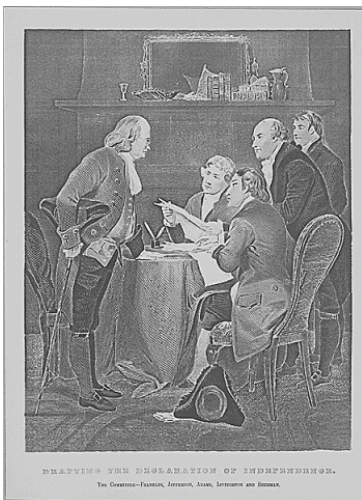
Jefferson's Draft - Edits by Franklin and Adams

Image, Library of Congress.

Information and quote from Library of Congress web site, *Thomas Jefferson Exhibition*.

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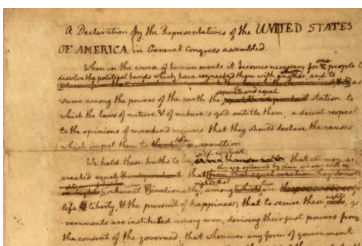


Declaration of Independence - Committee

Image, U.S. National Archives.

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