

The Declaration of Independence

A Found Poem Activity

Objective:

In this activity you will gain a deeper insight into the meaning of the Declaration of Independence by carefully selecting and organizing words and phrases from the original text to create a found poem. A found poem is a type of poem that is entirely made out of someone else's words. Just as a collage is art made of someone else's images, but cut up and arranged by the artist, so a "found poem" is a poem made of words and phrases found in another text.

Procedure:

1. Carefully read the provided excerpt from the Declaration of Independence.
2. Highlight or underline 20-25 words and phrases that seem particularly interesting or important.
3. Copy each word and phrase onto the accompanying worksheet in the same order as they appeared in the original text.
4. Read over your list of words or phrases. Eliminate any words or phrases that seem unnecessary. Your goal is to cut your list down to 10-15 words and phrases. The resulting arrangement of these words and phrases is your "found poem."
5. You may now add up to 5 of your own words to help create flow.
6. Read your poem looking for one word or phrase that seems to sum up the message or theme of your poem. Use this word or phrase as the title of your found poem.
7. Type your completed found poem for homework.

("Statement of Beliefs" excerpted from the Declaration of Independence – 1776.)

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. 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. But when a long train of

abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.

The Declaration of Independence

Found Poem - Sample

("Preamble" excerpted from the Declaration of Independence – 1776.)

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.

When It Becomes Necessary

When it becomes necessary

To dissolve political bands

And to assume powers of the earth

The Laws of Nature and God entitle

And a decent respect requires

They should declare separation

The Declaration of Independence

Found Poem - Worksheet

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Name: _____ Pd: _____

Declaration of Independence – Found Poem Rubric				
CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Title	Title increases the meaning of the poem and connects to the focus.	Title connects to the focus of the poem, but does not increase meaning of the poem.	The title is vague and does not connect to the focus of the poem.	The poem does not have a title.
Focus on Relationship Between Natural Rights and Government	The entire poem is related to the relationship between natural rights and government.	Most of the poem is related to the topic of relationship between natural rights and government, but the poem wanders off topic at one point or its focus is too general.	Some of the poem is related to the topic of relationship between natural rights and government, but the majority of the poem is general or on another topic.	No attempt has been made to relate the poem to relationship between natural rights and government.
Use of Details	The poem uses effective details from the original passage that go beyond the obvious or predictable.	The poem uses effective details from the original passage.	The poem uses obvious or predictable details from the original passage.	The poem does not use details from the original passage.
Logical Progression or Sequence	The poem is presented in a logical sequence.	The poem is presented in a logical sequence, but includes 1–2 items out of order.	The poem is presented in a logical sequence, but includes 3–4 items out of order.	The poem is presented out of sequence or with an unclear order.
Clear, Consistent Tone	The poem maintains a consistent tone that clearly and effectively communicates the writer’s attitude toward the subject.	The poem maintains a consistent tone that usually communicates the writer’s attitude toward the subject.	The poem maintains a consistent tone but does not effectively communicate the writer’s attitude toward the subject.	The poem does not maintain a consistent or clear tone

Total: _____/20