

The Principles of the Declaration of Independence

OBJECTIVE: The student will explain how the principles of government are reflected in the beginning of the Declaration of Independence.

TEKS:

5.16 **Government.** The student understands important ideas in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. The student is expected to: (A) identify the purposes and explain the importance of the Declaration of Independence

Instructions:

8.16 **Government.** The student understands the American beliefs and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution and other important historic documents. The student is expected to: (D) analyze how the U.S. Constitution reflects the principles of limited government, republicanism, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. *Organize students into groups of 2-3*
2. *Read to them the text below found in the Declaration of Independence*

Declaration of Independence

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...

3. Give them the chart below and have them list and analyze the principles of government reflected in this text and the relationship between the principle and what the text says.
4. Below are the principles of government

Republicanism – *a belief that government should be based on the consent of the people; people exercise their power by voting for political representatives*

Limited Government – *the principle that requires all U.S. citizens, including government leaders, to obey the law*

Individual Rights – *a personal liberty and privilege guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the Bill of Rights*

Checks and Balances – *the ability of each branch of government to exercise checks, or controls, over the other branches*

Separation of Powers – *the division of basic government roles into branches*

Federalism – *a system of government where power is shared among the central (or federal) government and the states*

Popular Sovereignty – *a government in which the people rule; a system in which the residents vote to decide an issue*

5. You could also ask students to illustrate that part of the text and then reflect on the principles of government.
6. **ENRICHMENT** – Have students pick out the parts of the text that reflect a principle and then have them explain how the principles are reflected.

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Declaration of Independence	Principle of Government Reflected	Explain the relationship between the principle and what the text says
<i>We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal</i>		
<i>that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness</i>		
<i>that to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men</i>		
<i>deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed...</i>		
<i>How are these ideas reflected in the U.S. Constitution?</i>		
<i>What is the most important part of this text to Americans today? Why?</i>		