

**Carol Breeding
Marlene Mathews**

Unit Plan – The Declaration of Independence as a “Dear John” Letter

Standard – History Standard Three

Timeframe – Three 90 minute classes

Materials – Declaration of Independence interpretation form (see below)

**The Declaration of Independence; the Words that Made America, Sam Fink,
Scholastic Publishing (optional – but the glossary is extremely helpful)**

Dictionaries/Thesauri

Internet Access (optional)

Article about “Dear John” letters

Procedures - Day One

Ask students if anyone has ever “broken up” with someone via texting, email or by note or if they know someone who this has happened to.

After students have shared personal experiences explain that ending a relationship in this manner is known as a “Dear John” letter.

Explain the negative impact of Dear John letters and the military situation (Iraq and Afghanistan at present)

Discuss with students the general format of such a letter.

“It’s not you – it’s me”

“However, these are some of the reasons I’m breaking up with you – you may want to work on ‘fixing’ them.”

And the infamous “Let’s still be friends”

Tell students that they are going to analyze the Declaration of Independence as Thomas Jefferson’s “Dear John Letter” to King George III. (Allow them to snicker)

Handout the attached worksheet – guide the students through the Preamble. If you have a copy of the Declaration of Independence in the handwritten form you may want to show the students that. (Explain to them that since you are such a fabulous human being, you have provided an easily readable transcript for them – demand chocolate for your consideration)

Model interpreting the Preamble explaining what Thomas Jefferson meant.

Read aloud the directions for interpreting the indictments against King George III.

Call on volunteers to model interpreting two or three of the reasons stated by Jefferson. Have students fill in the Individual Interpretation box.

Allow the students to either work individually, in pairs or in very small groups and assign them several of the indictments – explain that this is a jigsaw assignment and that other students/groups will share answers with them. Give students time to work on the interpretations and to share their findings.

Day Two: Guided Discussion – call on volunteers to share their interpretations, as a class decide if the interpretation is accurate, you may prompt students to “rework” an interpretation if necessary. Have them fill in the group interpretation box at this time. You may have students come up to the blackboard/whiteboard/overhead project/smartboard (whatever) to write the class interpretation.

Day Three – have students fill in the text message / notespeak box – this should reflect how they would write these grievances. After students have completed this, they should then write their own Declaration of Independence to King George III. They are to pick the ten most important/most valid arguments and explain why they are important in their Declaration.



IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

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.

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. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

Directions: Using dictionaries, thesaurus, glossary, books, your textbook, or the internet you are to interpret that list of reasons that Thomas Jefferson gave for “breaking up” with King George III. Put your interpretation in the individual interpretation box.

For Bonus points (on your own time – that means as homework) On the lines provided, check whether the reason is a political reason, a geographic reason, an economic reason, a cultural/societal reason or a technological reason. You do not have to do all of them to receive bonus points.

For Super Bonus Points – (on your own time – that means as homework) give specific evidence/example that the reason given by Jefferson is factual.

After you have completed the interpretations you will be required to write your own Declaration of Independence to the king – you will have to decide which 10 (and no more than 10) are the most important reasons and explain why they are so important.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____
** Evidence/support _____

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____
** Evidence/support _____

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

Individual Interpretation:

Group Interpretation:

Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

Individual Interpretation:

Group Interpretation:

Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

Individual Interpretation:

Group Interpretation:

Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

Individual Interpretation:

Group Interpretation:

Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

Individual Interpretation:

Group Interpretation:

Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

Individual Interpretation:

Group Interpretation:

Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & Perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

Individual Interpretation:
Group Interpretation:
Text Message/Notespeak

** Political _____ Economic _____ Cultural/Societal _____ Geographic _____ Technological _____

** Evidence/support _____

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

— [John Hancock](#)

New Hampshire:

[Josiah Bartlett](#), [William Whipple](#), [Matthew Thornton](#)

Massachusetts:

[John Hancock](#), [Samuel Adams](#), [John Adams](#), [Robert Treat Paine](#), [Elbridge Gerry](#)

Rhode Island:

[Stephen Hopkins](#), [William Ellery](#)

Connecticut:

[Roger Sherman](#), [Samuel Huntington](#), [William Williams](#), [Oliver Wolcott](#)

New York:

[William Floyd](#), [Philip Livingston](#), [Francis Lewis](#), [Lewis Morris](#)

New Jersey:

[Richard Stockton](#), [John Witherspoon](#), [Francis Hopkinson](#), [John Hart](#), [Abraham Clark](#)

Pennsylvania:

Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

Delaware:

Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean

Maryland:

Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia:

George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

North Carolina:

William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

South Carolina:

Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton

Georgia:

Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton

Dear John Letter [relationship](#)

permalink:



Share on

Send to a friend

your email:

their email:

send me the word of the day (it's free)

1. Dear John Letter [50 up](#), [2 down](#)  

A letter (or e-mail in today's world) that is used by a woman to break up with their boyfriend from a distance. Usually used by girls who have boyfriends in the military deployed for extended periods of time.

Susie couldn't wait for her boyfriend Sam to finish his one year deployment in Iraq, so she sent him a Dear John letter over the Internet three months into his deployment to tell him she was seeing someone else.

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