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| PROJECT TITLE: <b>We Hold these Truths</b> |                                                   |
| AUTHOR: <b>Jeanette Curtis</b>             | SUBJECT & GRADE LEVEL Grade 3<br>History – Civics |

### **CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

#### **1. Teaching Thesis & Guiding Questions:**

“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.”

This is one of the most famous sentences in the world! It is oft quoted. It has inspired Americans and people all over the world to work to insure equal rights. In these four lessons students will examine this sentence and the words in it. They will memorize it. They will look at some sources of the ideas in the sentence and some of the influences this sentence has had since 1776.

What are the meanings of the important words in this sentence?

What does the sentence itself mean?

What were the sources of the ideas set forth in this statement about “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” about which Thomas Jefferson said “was intended to be an expression of the American mind”?

Furthermore, what impact have these words had on the rest of the world as democracies have developed?

**2. Suggested Grade Level and Length of Activities:** Third Grade - Four 45 minute class periods. This could also be used with fourth and fifth grade students.

#### **3. Significance & Relevance:**

Thomas Jefferson called this sentence “an expression of the American mind.” It is a defining statement that all Americans should know and appreciate. Elementary students will need to study the vocabulary in order to understand the sentence. They should look at some of the sources of the ideas in the sentence. Then, they should study some of the influences the statement has had on other modern nations.

- Selected State & National Standards –

**Virginia SOL 3.11** “The student will explain the importance of the basic principles that form the foundation of a republican form of government by describing the individual rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and equality under the law.”

**National History Standards**, Part II United States History Standards

“Students Should Understand: The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and

interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory, and

Demonstrate understanding of the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence by:

Explaining the major ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence and their sources. [Marshal evidence of antecedent circumstances]”

#### **4. Lesson Objectives –**

- Students will be able to formulate definitions for the major words in this sentence from the Declaration of Independence.
- Students will be able to quote the sentence.
- Students will be able to identify some of the sources of the ideas expressed in this sentence.
- Students will be able to identify some of the legacies of the Declaration of Independence in the world today.

#### **5. Lesson Plans or Instructional Activities –** See Related Materials Folder for lesson plans and supplemental material. There are four lessons

##### **Lesson One: Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness**

Students examine the idea of “holding on to” something. They generate ideas of what “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” mean to them personally. They begin to memorize one of the most famous sentences in the world.

##### **Lesson Two: Vocabulary in this famous sentence**

Students work in six cooperative groups to use dictionaries to study the words in the sentence. Then they share with the other groups.

##### **Lesson Three: Sources and Legacy**

Reading quotes from primary sources, students examine some of the sources of the ideas in the sentence from Ancient Greece and Rome and from enlightenment philosophers.

##### **Lesson Four: Putting it all together**

Participating in a readers theater, students assimilate the ideas from the previous lessons.

**Technology** – Students can make a PowerPoint presentation on the words in the sentence from the declaration. There is an example in the related materials folder.

Extension idea- After completing the lessons, if time permits, students can make a PowerPoint presentation of the words in the sentences using digital photographs taken by the students, computer generated art, and/or scanned drawings to demonstrate comprehension of the words, phrases, and ideas in the sentence. This could be used as an assessment tool.

**7. Modifications, Differentiation, and Extensions** – See individual lessons in related materials folder.

**APPENDIX (FOLDER)**  
**Related Materials Folder**

**Lesson One: Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness**

Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness Poster form

Examples of student done posters

A PowerPoint showing the suggested hand motions (student created)

**Lesson Two: Vocabulary in this famous sentence**

Six Worksheets for guiding students through the vocabulary lesson in cooperative groups

**Lesson Three: Sources and Legacy**

Sources and Legacy PowerPoint for showing during lesson

Hourglass lesson points – Word document giving teacher additional information for lesson

Puzzle Form

Puzzle Pieces

Completed puzzle for teacher reference

**Lesson Four: Putting it all together**

Readers Theater Script

“Who Said It?” Worksheet

**Annotated Bibliography –**

***Web***

Charters of Freedom. National Archives

This site from the National Archives, the home of the Declaration, has many interactive sites. One allows students to view pages from books Jefferson read. Phrases similar to phrases from the Declaration are highlighted.

<http://archives.gov/exhibits/charters/>

Declaring Independence: Drafting the Documents. Library of Congress

This special exhibition from the Library of Congress has a chronology of events (time line), a section called Drafting the Documents reporting the events of the writing of the Declaration and “Objects in the collection which includes among other things, copies of different drafts of the Declaration. There are many images as well.

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/declara/>

Global Village. PBS

Interactive site allowing students to see what was going on in other parts of the world during this time period.

[http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/perspectives\\_global.html](http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/perspectives_global.html)

## **Books – Secondary Sources**

### **Adult Books:**

Organization of American Historians (Author), Gary Reichard (Editor), Ted Dickson(Editor) *America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to U.S. History* United States of America: Organization of American Historians, 2008.

Chapter 2 “The Declaration of Independence in World Context,” by David Armitage and “Strategies for teaching The Declaration of Independence in a Global Context,” by Ted Dickson, pages 17 – 34.

Without diminishing the importance of the Declaration of Independence at all, these two scholars have brought to light material that sets this document and the time period of its origination in a global Context.

Bender, Thomas. *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History. Chapter 2, The Great War and the American Revolution*. New York: Hill and Wang. 2006, Pps. 61 – 115.

Sets forth that the American Revolution must be interpreted as a conflict between empires and can not be considered outside of the wars in Europe. American history is vitally bound in the histories of its contemporary nations.

Armitage, David. *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007

This well documented work sets forth that the Declaration of Independence is really a “Declaration of Interdependence” as the young nation was issuing this declaration as a statement that we are a true nation able to interact with other nations particularly in matters of trade.

Wills, Garry. *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Contains many philosophical references that might shed light on Jefferson’s choice of words, the revisions made to Jefferson's original draft of the Declaration of Independence, and what those revisions reflect about politics in early America.

### **Children's Books**

Adler, David A. *A Picture Book of Thomas Jefferson*. Holiday House, Inc., 1991.

Easier reading level. Appealing Illustrations. Aimed especially at Grades 1-3. Portrays Jefferson as “intellectual, inventor, lawyer, architect, and statesman” without fictionalization.

Barrett, Marvin and Pat Fogarty. *Meet Thomas Jefferson*. Landmark Books, 2001.

Easier reading level. Aimed at ages 4-8, yet still deals with the ideas and philosophical struggles of this man and the age in which he lived.

Burgan, Michael. *The Declaration of Independence (We the People Series)* We the People Publisher, 2005.

Well done and very appropriate for the material in this kit. Aimed at children ages 9 – 12. Portrays the Declaration of Independence as a radical document departing from the “divine right” of kings accepted by monarchies. It further goes to give examples of how the words of the Declaration have inspired

human rights and freedom fighters around the world.

Center for Civic Education. *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Level 1*. Calabasas, CA 2003. pps. 1 - 46.

A Textbook intended for grades 3-5 with information about Greece and Rome, Locke and Hobbes as well as other appropriate thinkers.

Ching, Jacqueline. *Thomas Jefferson* DK Biography, 2009.

Beautiful photographs. For more advanced readers (ages 9 – 12) but pictures can be appreciated by less able readers. Has a chapter on the enlightenment. Chocked full of primary document and art images. Beautifully done as a re all DK books.

Graves, Kerry A. *The Declaration of Independence: The Story Behind America's Founding Document* Chelsea House Publishers, 2004.

Aimed at ages 8-10. Has a section on the words in the Declaration and the meanings of the words. Very appropriate for this unit. Also tells of the individual signers and some of their particular challenges.

Harness, Cheryl. *Thomas Jefferson*. National Geographic Society Childrens books, 2007.

Aimed at ages 8-12, a readable biography with many colorful pictures. Only 48 pages. Examines ideas and quotes.

Kids Discover magazine. Declaration of Independence. Copyright ©2008 Kids Discover.

This popular magazine format is well organized and well illustrated.

Ribke, Simone T. *Thomas Jefferson (Rookie Biographies)* by. Children's Press. 2004.

A rookie biography – aimed at ages 4-8, would provide independent reading for the less advanced reader.

Yero, Judith Lloyd. *American Documents: The Declaration of Independence*. National Geographic Society, June 2006.

Well illustrated. Covers major points of the Declaration of Independence, including “unfinished business” of slavery and women's rights.

**Primary Sources:** (All found on the web and all used in this kit)

American Rhetoric. *Eleanor Roosevelt: On the Adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. This site has pictures of E. Roosevelt and an audio recording of her speech.

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/eleanorrooseveltdclarationhumanrights.htm>

Anthony, Susan B. June, 1873 [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28rbnawsan2152div13%29%29)

[bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28rbnawsan2152div13%29%29](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28rbnawsan2152div13%29%29)

*Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*

<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/declaration.html>

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *Declaration of Sentiments*, Seneca Falls, New York, July 1848.

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/senecafalls.html>

[English Bill of Rights or “Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject, and Settling the Succession of the Crown” 1689. http://www.jacobite.ca/documents/16891216.htm](http://www.jacobite.ca/documents/16891216.htm)

Jefferson to Henry Lee, May 5, 1825, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (1892-1899), vol. 10, p. 343. ["TO HENRY LEE - Thomas Jefferson The Works, vol. 12 \(Correspondence and Papers 1816-1826; 1905\)". The Online Library of Liberty. May 8, 1825. http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=808&chapter=88496&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=808&chapter=88496&layout=html&Itemid=27). Retrieved 2008-03-08.

[King James I, "True Law of Free Monarchies", 1598. This is the same king of the King James Bible. http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/james1-trew2.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/james1-trew2.html)

[Lincoln, Abraham, speech given at Independence Hall, Philadelphia, February 22, 1861 http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/popup\\_lincoln.html](http://www.pbs.org/ktca/liberty/popup_lincoln.html)

[Locke, John \(1690\). Two Treatises of Government \(10th edition\). You can read this at Project Gutenberg. http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/trgov10h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext05/trgov10h.htm). Retrieved January 21, 2009.

[Thucydides, funeral oration of Pericles in 429 BC. This famous speech is often quoted to show the Greek concept of democracy. http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/greekfeatures/a/democracythucyd.htm](http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/greekfeatures/a/democracythucyd.htm)  
[Universal Declaration of Human rights http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/](http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/)