

Freedom to Thrive: The American Experiment in Colorado Springs

LESSON & DISCUSSION GUIDE



Open the discussion with an overview of the basic purpose of the Declaration of Independence. Share that today, students will focus one key concept - *equality*.

Declaration of Independence: Primary Documents in American History

1. Have students brainstorm individually and then in small groups - how do they define **freedom** and **equality**? Discuss as a class.
2. Have students read the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence. What words or details stand out to them? [Library of Congress: Image 1 of In Congress, July 4, 1776. The unanimous declaration of the thirteen United States of America](#)
3. Review the phrase: **“all men are created equal”** Ask students to share what they think of this.
4. Review the phrase: **“that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”** Ask students to share their thoughts.
5. In her book, *Our Declaration*, Harvard professor and political philosopher Danielle Allen argues, **“The Declaration of Independence matters because it helps us see that we cannot have freedom *without* equality.”** Ask students to share their thoughts.

The Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum recently opened a new exhibit, *Freedom to Thrive: The American Experiment in Colorado Springs*. Through a variety of sources and the powerful stories of people in our community, this exhibit maintains that freedom and equality are not incompatible. Instead, they are equally accessible — if we choose them not just for ourselves — but for our neighbors as well.

Discuss the following in small groups and/or as a class:

1. What does the *Freedom to Thrive* mean to you?
2. What are the greatest barriers and opportunities to thrive in your community?
3. Review one of the *Freedom to Thrive* profiles from www.cspm.org/learnthrive. How did this community member fight for equality?
4. Consider your own schools, neighborhoods, and communities. Who are the changemakers that are working to make a difference?
5. How *can* you or *are* you making a difference in your community?

