

# Lesson Plan: Independence Day



AMERICAN  
**A E**  
ENGLISH

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# Independence Day

[1] On July 4, 1776, a group of **colonists** published an important paper: the Declaration of Independence. It said they wanted to be a new, free country. 250 years later, Independence Day celebrates the day the United States of America began.

[2] In the early 1770s, people in the American colonies became unhappy with Great Britain. They felt their freedom was being taken away. The colonists were angry that they had to pay British taxes because they were not **represented** in the British government. They wanted to make their own decisions, free from British control.

[3] Tensions continued to grow between the British Army and American colonists, leading to the first battles of the war for independence. The American colonists chose George Washington to be the commander-in-chief and lead the Continental Army.

[4] In 1776, colonists got together to decide their future. In this meeting, people from each of the colonies with different economies, cultures, and beliefs discussed their ideas for how they should be **governed**. Although they did not agree on everything, they shared key ideas. They believed that leaders should be chosen by the people. This group decided that the colonies should become **independent** from the British government.

[5] A group met in the city of Philadelphia to write down their ideas and announce the start of the new country in the **Declaration** of

Independence. This document explains the country's founding **principles** and the reasons for separating from Great Britain. The war for independence continued after the Declaration was written. After the war, George Washington became the first president of the United States.

[6] Many people used the **motto** *E Pluribus Unum* to describe the new country. This is a Latin phrase that means "Out of many, one." It described how the United States was formed by the thirteen colonies coming together to become one country. This idea is still important to Americans today. The phrase now describes how people from many backgrounds, cultures, and experiences make up one country.

[7] Now, Americans celebrate Independence Day with enthusiasm. Every year on the 4th of July, many cities and towns host parades, sports competitions, and ceremonies. People sing or play **patriotic** music like the "Star-Spangled Banner," the national **anthem** of the United States. The American flag is displayed on homes and businesses, and many people wear its colors – red, white, and blue. Communities and families have barbecues with favorite foods like hot dogs, hamburgers, and pie. In the evening, people gather to watch **fireworks** light up the sky.

[8] Today, Independence Day is not only a celebration of the past. It also reminds people that the story of the United States continues, and each generation brings something new to this story.



## Overview

In this 90-minute lesson, students learn about the founding of the United States and the celebration of Independence Day. Students explore how communities come together under shared principles and represent their personal contributions to their community with a class quilt.

## Goals

Students will:

- Practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.
- Learn about Independence Day history, celebration, and traditions in the United States.
- Make connections between Independence Day and their own culture or community.
- Strengthen collaboration, communication, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

## Lesson Materials

1. Printed or projected copy of the photo at the beginning of this lesson
2. Printed or projected copy of the Independence Day reading included with this lesson
3. Printed or projected copy of the U.S. Culture Find Someone Who activity included with this lesson
4. Printed or projected copy of the Independence Day mind map included with this lesson
5. Square pieces of paper, pens or pencils, and markers

## Preparation

1. Read through this lesson in its entirety.
2. Review the Independence Day reading and the Vocabulary from the Reading list below.
3. Determine whether you will need to activate students' prior knowledge, pre-teach, or otherwise provide scaffolding, or support, for your students beyond the suggestions in the Procedures section.
4. Consider if, or how, you will adapt or change this lesson to better meet your students' needs.



## Vocabulary from the Reading

- **anthem** (noun) – A song that is important to a group of people
- **colonists** (plural noun) – People who live in a new place controlled by their home country
- **declaration** (noun) – A formal or public statement
- **fireworks** (plural noun) – Small objects that explode to make colorful lights in the sky
- **govern** (verb) – To lead and make decisions for a country
- **independent** (adjective) – Free from control or restrictions by others
- **motto** (noun) – A phrase or sentence that represents guiding ideas or principles
- **patriotic** (adjective) – Showing appreciation and pride for a country
- **principles** (plural noun) – An idea that is important to a person or group of people
- **represent** (verb) – To speak or stand in for another person or group in government

## Procedures

### Introduction Activity: What's the Story? (10 minutes)

1. Show students the photo at the beginning of this lesson.
2. Tell students to imagine the photo is the cover of a book. Direct them to discuss these questions with a partner:
  - What do you predict this book will be about?
  - What might happen in this book's story?
  - What would be a good title for this book?
3. Ask pairs to share their answers with the class. Use the photo and discussion to preview lesson-related vocabulary as desired.

### Speaking and Listening Activity: U.S. Culture Find Someone Who (20 minutes)

1. Distribute a U.S. Culture Find Someone Who chart to each student or ask students to copy the information onto their own paper from a model.
2. Tell students they will have 10 minutes to complete their charts. Explain that they will need to get out of their seats, walk around, and ask each other questions to find classmates who match the description in each box of the chart. Explain the activity procedures:
  - Students can ask questions about the chart items in any order. They can ask a classmate a maximum of two questions before they must move on and speak with another person.

- When a classmate responds positively to a question (matching the description in the box), the interviewer should write that person's name in that space on the chart. Students cannot write the same person's name more than two times.
  - The person who completes the most boxes will be the winner.
3. Model how to complete the chart with a volunteer. Start the timer to begin the mingle time. Tell students when they have one minute remaining.
  4. Announce when the mingle period is over and ask students to return to their seats.
  5. Survey the class to determine which student(s) found the most matches.
  6. Review the chart with the class, asking students to share the names of classmates they found who matched each item. As time allows, ask follow-up questions related to the items in the chart. Use the debrief as a pre-reading discussion before reading the Independence Day article.

### Reading and Critical Thinking Activity: Independence Day (25 minutes)

1. Give each student a copy of the Independence Day reading or display it for all students to read.
2. Give students copies of the Independence Day Mind Map provided with this lesson or display it as a model for students to create on their own paper.
3. Ask students to read the article and identify the topic of the article. Tell them to write the topic in the center of their mind map.
4. Tell students to review the reading. Conduct a whole class discussion, asking students to identify several main ideas from the article. Write a list of ideas on the board. If students need guidance to identify the main idea, write the following questions on the board.
  - Why did the colonists want independence?
  - What happened in 1776?
  - What is the meaning of *E Pluribus Unum*?
  - How do Americans celebrate Independence Day today?
5. Ask students to write the main ideas and/or provided questions in the four main idea circles surrounding the center topic circle.
6. Direct students to add details from the reading to the smaller circles related to each main idea. These details could include examples, facts, explanations, or vocabulary. Encourage students to use their own words, write short phrases, and draw more circles and connector lines as needed.
7. When students are ready, ask them to compare their mind maps with a partner or small group.

8. Debrief with the class as time permits, clarifying any misunderstandings and reviewing the key vocabulary from the reading. If desired, return to the Find Someone Who charts and fill in any remaining answers.

### Creativity and Collaboration Activity: Class Quilt (30 minutes)

1. Ask students to recall the meaning of the motto *E Pluribus Unum*. Remind them it is a Latin phrase that means “Out of many, one.” Ask them to recall how the phrase describes the past and present of the United States. Explain that just as the United States is one country made up of 50 states, the class is made up of many different individuals.
2. Tell students they will make a quilt to represent their class community. If needed, explain that a *quilt* is a type of blanket made with many squares of fabric stitched together. A quilt may have different colors or designs on each of the squares.
3. Give each student a square piece of blank paper. Ask students to think about how they contribute to their class community. Tell students to create a design on their square that represents them in the class community. Suggest that they include drawings, words, colors, or symbols to represent themselves.
4. When students have completed their squares, ask them to work together to arrange the squares into a quilt. Tape the squares together on the board, floor, or table.
5. Invite the class to look at the completed quilt. Ask students to describe their creative choices for their designs. Help the class reflect on their contributions. Select from the following discussion questions as desired:
  - Why did you choose these colors, pictures, or words to represent you?
  - How does your quilt square show something important about you?
  - What do you notice when we put all the squares together?
  - How does our quilt represent our classroom community?

### Closing Activity: The Story Continues (5 minutes)

1. Ask students to reflect on the class session.
2. Tell them to look back at the photo from the beginning of the lesson and recall their predictions. Ask students to respond to the following questions:
  - What was the “book” about?
  - How have your ideas changed?
  - Will you change your title based on what you’ve learned?
  - How will the story continue?
3. Encourage students to use vocabulary from the lesson in their answers. Collect students’ responses as exit tickets as they leave the class, or ask students to verbally share their responses.

# Variations and Extensions

## Listening and Speaking Activity: U.S. Culture Find Someone Who Variation

Students may complete this activity in place of the U.S. Culture Find Someone Who mingle activity.

1. Distribute a U.S. Culture Find Someone Who chart to each student or ask students to copy the information onto their own paper from a model displayed on the board.
2. Ask students to work in small groups. Tell them to use the information in the chart as conversation prompts. Ask them to write short notes in each of the boxes as they discuss the prompts.
3. Give students a set amount of time to discuss in groups, then debrief as a class.

## Creativity and Collaboration Activity: Class Quilt Variations

Students may complete this activity in place of the Class Quilt activity.

1. Ask students to recall the meaning of the motto *E Pluribus Unum*. Remind them it is a Latin phrase that means “Out of many, one.” Ask them to recall how the phrase describes the past and present of the United States. Explain that just as the United States is one country made up of 50 states, the class is made up of many different individuals.
2. Tell students they will make a quilt to represent their class community. If needed, explain that a *quilt* is a type of blanket made with many squares of fabric stitched together. A quilt may have many different colors or designs on each of the squares.
3. Ask students to think about how they contribute to their class community. Then tell them to think about each other and their classmates’ contributions.
4. Tell students to write their name at the top of a piece of square paper. Place all of the papers around the room.
5. Ask students to mingle around the room and add notes to each person’s quilt square, noting things they appreciate about each other and their role in the class community. Suggest that they include drawings, words, colors, or symbols to represent their classmates. Monitor students as they work.
6. When students have completed their squares, ask them to work together to arrange the squares into a quilt. Tape the squares together on the board, floor, or table.
7. Invite the class to look at the completed quilt. Ask students to describe their creative choices for their designs. Help the class reflect on all of their contributions. Select from the following discussion questions as desired:
  - How did you feel seeing the notes your classmates wrote about you?
  - How does your quilt square show something important about you?
  - What do you notice when we put all the squares together?

- How does our quilt represent our classroom community?

### Listening and Critical Thinking Activity: Lyrics Exploration Extension

Students may complete this activity as an extension to the Independence Day reading activity.

1. Ask students what songs they know that represent their country or community.
2. Remind students that many Americans celebrate Independence Day by singing or playing patriotic songs like the “Star-Spangled Banner,” the national anthem.
3. Put students into small groups. Invite groups to explore the lyrics to the “[Star-Spangled Banner](https://bensguide.gpo.gov/j-star-spangled)” (<https://bensguide.gpo.gov/j-star-spangled>). You can even listen to [a recording](#) of the “Star-Spangled Banner” from 1916! As time allows, encourage them to review other patriotic American songs, such as “America, the Beautiful.”
4. When students are ready, facilitate a class debrief. Help students make connections between U.S. Independence Day celebrations and significant national celebrations in their country.

### Writing and Creativity Activity: Historical Perspective Taking Journal Entry

Students may complete this activity as an extension to the Independence Day reading activity.

1. Tell students to imagine they are living in the American colonies in the late 1700s. Invite students to think about the future from the perspective of their character. They may consider what kind of country they hope America will become, what freedoms or rights are important to them, and how they imagine the country will be in the future.
2. Ask students to write a creative journal entry from the point of view of someone living at that moment in history. Tell them to write in the first person, using words like “I,” “me,” and “we” to share their hopes for the new country and their ideas about change and new beginnings. Provide sentence starters as needed, such as
  - I imagine that this new country will be a place where...
  - I feel proud that...
  - I hope that one day, ...
  - I feel excited that...
3. Challenge students to include historical details and vocabulary from the Independence Day reading in their journal entry.

# U.S. Culture Find Someone Who

Ask your classmates questions to find someone who fits the descriptions below. Write the person's name in the box to complete the sentence. Match each person to a maximum of two squares.

## Example

Partner A: "Were you born in July?"

Partner B: "Yes, I was." – *Write their name in the box.*

"No, I wasn't." – *Ask another classmate.*

Was born in July	Has red as their favorite color	Has seen fireworks	Knows a popular American food
Can name one U.S. state	Knows the year the United States declared independence	Has watched an American sport	Can name one American holiday
Can name the first president of the United States	Has watched an American TV show or movie	Has blue as their favorite color	Knows an American brand
Knows a tradition related to U.S. Independence Day	Can name a U.S. national symbol	Knows an American singer or song	Knows the day and month of U.S. Independence Day

# Independence Day Mind Map

