

## **Document Based Exercise–Slavery and the Declaration of Independence**

Today, I want to know what you know about historical thinking. Historians ask questions about the past and make conclusions about the evidence (documents) they have. For this activity, you will use the documents provided to answer the following question:

**How was the argument over slavery an argument over the meaning of the Declaration of Independence?**

**Task 1: Activating Prior Knowledge.** Think about what the ideals of the Declaration of Independence mean. Write them down and then turn to your partner and share your definitions. Add to your information if necessary.

An ideal in the Declaration of Independence talked about equality and everyone in the U.S. being equal. After writing this and putting so much effort into it, you would think we would abide by it, but we end up having slaves anyway.

Life

Liberty

Pursuit of Happiness

Popular Sovereignty

**Task 2: Looking at Historical Documents.** Take a look at the packet of documents that you were given. Spend the next **10 minutes** reviewing your packet, thinking about what questions come up. Pick three documents that are the most interesting, (and maybe most confusing) and complete the graphic organizer below.

<b>Documents I found interesting/ confusing:</b>	<b>My 2 questions about each document are:</b>
<b>A</b>	<p><b>1. What would Lincoln's answer be to his question in the second paragraph?</b></p> <p><b>2. Was Lincoln really a servant of George Robertson?</b></p>
<b>B</b>	<p><b>1. Why was Lincoln so against equality between whites and blacks?</b></p> <p><b>2. What would happen to the slave woman if he left her alone?</b></p>
<b>F</b>	<p><b>1. What was Jefferson talking about when he said the "Author of Nature?"</b></p> <p><b>2. Why did Jefferson give up on the early extinguishment of slavery?</b></p>

**Task 3: Understanding Historical Documents.** Your next step is to look at your documents again and find out what they tell you about each historic characters' beliefs on slavery and how their interpretation of the Declaration of Independence was used to support their perspective. Remember, you will need to use these documents to answer the following question: **How was the argument over slavery an argument over the meaning of the Declaration of Independence?**

Complete the table below.

Documents I chose:	What I think this document says about the historic characters' perspective on slavery	What evidence (details) I used from each document
A	This document states that Lincoln was morally against slavery.	"When we were the political slaves of King George, and wanted to be free..."  "...we have become so greedy to be masters that we call the same maxim** a self-evident lie..."
B	This document states that Lincoln was morally against slavery but did not want equality between blacks and whites.	"...nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races..."
F	This document states that Jefferson was against slavery and wanted everyone to be equal.	"Under the law of nature, all men are born free..."

### **Let's review:**

- In **task 1** you interpreted the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.
- In **task 2** you analyzed historical documents
- In **task 3** you analyzed three characters' beliefs on slavery and how their interpretations of the Declaration of Independence were used to support their perspectives.

### **Task 4:**

You will now provide a response to:

### **How was the argument over slavery an argument over the meaning of the Declaration of Independence?**

- Must contain thesis statement
- 3 statements that support your thesis using the primary documents. Cite documents by referring to them as Document A, Document B, etc.
- Use prior knowledge to fill in the gaps

The argument over slavery was really a big argument of the meaning of the Declaration of Independence. In Document A, Lincoln states that when we were political slaves of King George, we wanted to be free, but we have grown so intent on becoming our own masters that we do not fear being slaves. We have just made our own slaves. There is no difference in what happened to us and what we did after we were freed. In Document F it states that under the law of nature, all men are born free. This says that no one should be anyone else's slave. In Document B, it states that Lincoln never was in favor of bringing equality between the blacks and the whites. Lincoln changed his view every now and then, and Jefferson wanted everyone to be their own master. When we created the Declaration of Independence, we stated that everyone should be equal, but after all that hard work to become a free nation we still did not abide by it. We went and got slaves and said that whites are better than blacks. When people started to fight for equality for black people, they were really fighting for everyone to abide by the Declaration of Independence.

