

Name: _____

The Declaration of Independence in a Global Context

Objective: The 1776 Declaration of Independence subsequently inspired over 100 similar pronouncements around the world in Asia, Africa, and Europe. The first and probably most famous was the French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789). In this exercise you will look at how the preamble of the French Declaration differs from the American preamble.

Required Materials:

1. Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence
2. Excerpt from the Declaration of the Rights of Man

Directions:

1. Read the pre-reading questions below
2. With the pre-reading questions in mind, read the selections from the two Declarations
3. Identify and explain differences between the documents
4. Participate in a class discussion about the two texts

Pre-reading Questions:

1. Why might the French preamble refer to a “Supreme Being” and the American preamble to “God”? In your mind, is there a difference if rights come from other people (like those in government) rather than God? Which is more secure?
2. Does the French preamble have the same universal appeal as the American preamble?
3. What historical circumstances in France would have shaped its Declaration?

Reflection: Identify and explain five differences between the two documents. Be prepared to discuss them with the class.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.