The Drafting of the Declaration of Independence

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Guiding Questions:
- Who helped draft the Declaration of Independence?
- What events surrounded the drafting of the document?
- Why was the actual drafting / editing process important?
- What is interesting about the specific terms selected to be included in the Preamble?
- How might our nation’s history be different, if the editing process had gone differently?

Materials:
- “The Drafting of the Declaration of Independence” Power Point Presentation
- Who, What, When, Where, Why (5W’s) Graphic Organizer
- Additional information (Core Content) regarding the events surrounding the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. During the 20-30 minutes allotted during the presentation, the teacher chooses how to assign core content information. For example, the teacher may choose to assign a selected reading the night before for homework.
- YouTube Clip: The Drafting of the Declaration from the HBO Series John Adams
- Classroom Participation Rubric
- Computer / LCD projector

Procedure:
1) Using the Power Point presentation as a guide, evaluate what the students already know about the drafting of the Declaration of Independence (Slide 2).
2) While viewing an image of the Declaration, give students 3-5 minutes to roughly complete the 5W’s graphic organizer.
3) Present / discuss events surrounding the drafting of the Declaration of Independence (Core Content).
4) As a class take a closer look at the specific language selected for the introduction of the document (Slide 5).
5) Divide students into groups consisting of 5 students. Within each group, assign each student a different number between 1 and 5 (Slide 6).
6) Each student then must rewrite the phrase assigned to them in their OWN WORDS (Slide 7).
7) Each group will then present their unique introduction to the class. Discus as teacher sees appropriate.
8) Teacher will go over the major & minor premises of the introduction (Slide 8).
9) Students will examine the most famous phrase within the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence (Slide 9).
10) Using the same groups & numbers assign each student a role within their discussion groups (Slide 11). The roles of summarizer, literary luminary, connector, discussion director, and reporter are described in the Power Point presentation.
11) After allowing time for discussion within the assigned groups, present clip from the HBO Series John Adams and discuss why the issue of slavery was avoided as well as the careful selection process regarding the language used in the document.
12) Examine Jefferson’s edited draft (Slide 13).
13) Discuss conclusion (Slide 14).
14) As a closing activity, students may choose from two activities (Slide 15). In their notebook or journal students must RANK the top 3 most important terms included in the Preamble, RECOMMEND at least 2 terms they think should be added, and CRITICIZE at least 1 of the terms included in the Preamble. Students also have the option to create their own unique WORDLE using www.wordle.net in which they will include 5 words from the Preamble and 5 words of their choice.

Assessment:
- Students participation will be assessed using the classroom participation rubric included.
- Closing activities will be collected and graded.