

Unit 2

Deconstructed DBQ Document Set and Teacher Context

Teacher Resource

Resource Overview

This document provides teacher support for implementing the Unit 2: American Revolution Deconstructed DBQ in the middle school classroom. It includes four documents, each designed to help students explore connections to the DBQ question while understanding the relevant historical context.

Use the context in this document to guide your students in making these connections and help them engage with the primary sources effectively.

Scaffolding note: For students who need additional support, you can assign or allow them to choose 2-3 documents. For students who need more of a challenge, provide all documents and require them to use each source at least once in their analysis.

Document Exposure Table

This table shows where each primary source in the Deconstructed DBQ appears throughout the unit. Use this overview to help with lesson planning, reinforce key concepts, or activate prior-knowledge before students engage with the full DBQ.

Teacher note: As students move through the curriculum, they encounter more documents overall, but each one appears fewer times. This gradual decrease in exposure is intentional—it helps shift the responsibility for document analysis to the student, supporting the development of independent thinking and source analysis skills over time.

Document	New or Repeated Exposure	Unit Resources Using the Document
Document A: Declaratory Act (1766)	Repeated	1. <i>American Revolution</i> Interactive Timeline
Document B: The Patriot-Samuel Johnson (1774)	New	1. <i>Rising Tensions</i> Lesson Plan

Document C: Common Sense – Thomas Paine (1776)	Repeated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>American Revolution Interactive Timeline</i> 2. <i>Rising Tensions Lesson Plan</i>
Document D: Declaration of Independence (1776)	Repeated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>American Revolution Interactive Timeline</i> 2. <i>Founding Principles, Virtues, and the American Revolution Guiding Questions Lesson Plan</i>

Document Set with Teacher Context

Each Deconstructed DBQ document includes background information to help teachers understand each source. The information is organized by key concepts addressed in the DBQ question.

Scaffolding note: You can share some or all of this information with students to help them better understand the documents.

Documents

Document A: Declaratory Act (1766)

“... That the said colonies and plantations in America have been, are, and of right ought to be, **subordinate** unto, and dependent upon the imperial crown and parliament of Great Britain; and that the King's majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the lords ... of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever ...”

subordinate: lower in rank or position

Teacher Context

The **Declaratory Act**, passed by the British Parliament on **March 18, 1766**, asserted Britain's right to legislate for the American colonies "**in all cases whatsoever**." It was issued **alongside the repeal of the Stamp Act**, responding to colonial protests while re-affirming Parliament's authority over taxation and governance. Though it imposed no new taxes, the act deepened tensions between Britain and the colonies by reinforcing Parliament's control.

Key Provisions:

- **Parliament's Supreme Authority:** Britain declared its full power to govern and tax the colonies.
- **No Colonial Consent Required:** Laws and taxes could be imposed without colonial approval.
- **Maintaining Imperial Control:** Parliament aimed to prevent future colonial resistance.

Historical Significance:

- The act **escalated colonial fears** that Britain would continue imposing unfair laws and taxes.
- It **paved the way** for future conflicts, including the **Townshend Acts (1767)** and the **American Revolution (1775–1783)**.
- It revealed Parliament's refusal to recognize **colonial autonomy**, reinforcing calls for independence.

British vs. Colonial Perspectives:

- **Taxation:** Britain believed in its right to tax the colonies, while colonists insisted that only their elected assemblies could impose taxes.
- **Representation:** Britain upheld **virtual representation**, claiming Parliament represented all British subjects, while colonists demanded **direct representation** in government.
- **Self-Governance:** Britain saw the colonies as dependent on Parliament's rule, but colonists had grown accustomed to managing their own affairs and resented outside control.

By asserting **Parliament's unchecked power**, the Declaratory Act **widened the divide** between Britain and its American colonies, setting the stage for the revolutionary movement.

Document B: The Patriot- Samuel Johnson (1774)

“ ... To suppose, that by sending out a colony, the nation established an independent power; that when, by indulgence and favour, emigrants are become rich, they shall not contribute to their own defence, but at their own pleasure; and that they shall not be included, like millions of their fellow-subjects, in the general system of representation; involves such an accumulation of **absurdity**, as nothing but the show of patriotism could **palliate**. He that accepts protection, stipulates obedience. We have always protected the Americans; we may, therefore, subject them to government ...”

absurdity: unreasonable-ness or ridiculousness

palliate: make less severe

Teacher Context

Samuel Johnson's “**The Patriot**” was published in 1774. Written as tensions between Britain and the American colonies, his essay served as a direct response to the growing revolutionary rhetoric in America, defending British authority and denouncing colonial leaders who encouraged rebellion.

Key Provisions:

- **Loyalty to Britain:** He argued that the British government acted in the best interest of its subjects, including the American colonies.
- **Condemnation of Revolutionary Leaders:** Johnson dismissed colonial resistance leaders as **self-serving agitators**, rather than true defenders of liberty.

Historical Significance:

- “The Patriot” was part of **British loyalist propaganda**, aimed at discrediting colonial demands for independence.
- It reflected the British view that colonial grievances were **exaggerated** and that rebellion was unjustified.
- The pamphlet **reinforced the ideological divide** between Britain and the colonies, as many Americans rejected Johnson's claims and continued advocating for self-government.

British vs. Colonial Perspectives:

- **Taxation:** Johnson defended British taxation policies, arguing that they were legitimate and necessary for maintaining the empire, while colonists opposed taxes imposed without their consent.
- **Representation:** Samuel Johnson aligned with Britain's view of **virtual representation**, rejecting the colonial argument that they had no voice in Parliament.
- **Self-Governance:** Johnson dismissed colonial claims to self-rule, insisting that **obedience to Britain was a duty**, while colonists increasingly believed that true patriots defended their rights against tyranny.

By portraying loyalty to Britain as the mark of a true patriot, Johnson's "The Patriot" further alienated American revolutionaries, reinforcing their belief that British rule was unjust and strengthening their resolve for independence.

Document C: Common Sense – Thomas Paine (1776)

"...But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families... This new world **hath** been the **asylum** for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster..."

hath: has

asylum: protection granted

Teacher Context

Thomas Paine's **Common Sense**, published in January 1776, was a powerful political pamphlet that **called for American independence from Britain**. Written in clear and persuasive language, it argued that British rule was oppressive and that the colonies had both a moral duty and a practical reason to govern themselves. **Common Sense** became one of the most influential works of the American Revolution, convincing many undecided colonists to support full independence.

Key Provisions:

- **Rejection of Monarchy:** Paine criticized **hereditary rule**, arguing that kings were unnecessary and often corrupt.
- **Call for Independence:** He stated that Britain ruled the colonies for its own benefit, not for the good of the American people.
- **Natural Rights & Self-Government:** Paine emphasized that governments should exist **only with the consent of the governed** and that Americans had the right to **form their own democratic government**.

Historical Significance:

- **Common Sense** was a major turning point in public opinion, transforming resistance into a widespread call for **full independence**.
- It helped lay the ideological foundation for the **Declaration of Independence (July 1776)**.
- The pamphlet became one of the most widely read and circulated works in American history, influencing both **ordinary citizens and political leaders**.

British vs. Colonial Perspectives:

- **Taxation:** Paine rejected the idea that the colonies owed financial support to Britain, arguing that they received no **real benefits** in return.
- **Representation:** He attacked **virtual representation**, insisting that it did not adequately represent American interests.
- **Self-Governance:** Unlike British loyalists, who saw the colonies as part of the empire, Paine argued that America had **outgrown British rule** and could thrive as an independent republic.

By making a **clear, persuasive case for independence**, **Common Sense** radicalized the colonial resistance movement and pushed the **American Revolution toward its final break with Britain**.

Document D: Declaration of Independence (1776)

<p>“...For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:</p> <p>For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:</p> <p>For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:</p> <p>For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:</p> <p>For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:</p> <p>For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever...”</p>	<p>depriving: denying or withholding</p> <p>abolishing: ending</p>
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Teacher Context

Adopted on July 4, 1776, the **Declaration of Independence** was a formal statement by the **Thirteen American Colonies** announcing their separation from **Great Britain**. Drafted primarily by **Thomas Jefferson**, it laid out the philosophical and practical justifications for independence, emphasizing **natural rights**, **government by consent**, and **grievances against King George III**. The document marked the birth of the United States and became a foundational text for democracy and human rights worldwide.

Key Provisions:

- **Natural Rights & Government by Consent:** All people are endowed with “unalienable Rights,” including **life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**; governments derive their power from the consent of the governed.

- **Right to Overthrow Tyranny:** When a government becomes **destructive** of these rights, the people have a **duty to alter or abolish it**.
- **List of Grievances Against King George III :** The declaration detailed **British abuses**, such as imposing taxes without consent, dissolving colonial legislatures, and using military force against the colonies.
- **Formal Break from Britain:** The colonies declared themselves “**free and independent states**,” severing all political ties with Great Britain.

Historical Significance:

- The document **justified the American Revolution** and **inspired other independence movements** worldwide.
- It formally established the United States as a **sovereign nation**, **setting the stage** for the **Revolutionary War’s final phase**.
- Its ideas on **liberty, equality, and self-rule** influenced later democratic movements, including the **French Revolution** and **civil rights movements**.

British vs. Colonial Perspectives:

- **Taxation:** Colonists argued they had been taxed without representation; Britain maintained its **right to tax** the colonies.
- **Representation:** The Declaration rejected British claims of virtual representation, asserting that only directly **elected representatives could govern a free people**.
- **Self-Governance:** Colonists insisted they had the **right to govern themselves**, while Britain saw them as **subjects under imperial rule**.

By boldly asserting **independence and self-government**, the **Declaration of Independence** became a defining statement of **American ideals** and a turning point in the struggle for **freedom and democracy**.

