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### The Declaration of Independence: From Rough Draft to Proclamation Procedure

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#### Procedure

1. Working with the entire class, discuss students' understanding of a document. Ask the following questions to frame the discussion:
  - o What is a document? (e.g., a record of information)
  - o What are examples of common documents? (e.g., letter, diploma, passport, driver's license)
2. Explain that in this lesson students will take a close look at an important historical document. Distribute copies and engage students with the first page of Thomas Jefferson's original Rough draught of the Declaration of Independence. (Note: Do not identify the document).
  - o Ask students to examine the document. Possible questions include:
    - Where does your eye go first?
    - How would you describe what you're seeing? What do you notice about the physical condition?
    - Which words or phrases can you read? Has the document been altered in any way?
  - o Encourage students to speculate about the document, its creator, and its context. Possible questions include:
    - Are there any indications (e.g., names, dates) of ownership or time period?
    - Who do you think wrote this?
    - What do you think this document is about? What words or phrases give clues?
    - What about language, its tone and style? Writing style?
    - Do you think this is a public or private document? What might have been the author's purpose in writing this?
    - Who might have been the intended readers?
    - Do you think this is the complete document or are pages missing?
  - o Help students to think about their personal responses to the document. Possible questions include:
    - What surprises you about what you're seeing?
    - What do you want to know about this document?

3. Ask students to draw conclusions about what this document was for, who created it, and why. Reveal (or confirm) its identity as the first page of Thomas Jefferson's original Rough draught of the Declaration of Independence. Pass out copies of the first printed version of the Declaration of Independence while reviewing students' prior knowledge.
  - o Ask students to summarize what they know about the Declaration of Independence. Possible questions include:
    - What was happening during this time period?
    - What importance does this document have?
  - o Encourage students to think about the drafting of the Declaration of Independence. Possible questions include:
    - Who might have made the changes to the original draft?
    - Where and how might debates and compromises have taken place regarding such changes?
  - o Ask students how they could determine changes made to this document during the drafting process. Most students will quickly understand that comparing the two documents will reveal the changes.
4. Model the comparative analysis process using the Declaration of Independence: Making Comparisons handout. Use as an example the changes on page one. (See step five below for the process.)
5. Assign students (working in pairs or groups) specific pages from (or the entire set of) Declaration of Independence: Making Comparisons handout for analysis and comparison.
  - o Ask students to first identify unfamiliar vocabulary.
  - o Encourage students to analyze and compare the wording of the two versions by marking and making notes directly on the Declaration of Independence: Making Comparisons handout.
  - o Ask students to record their responses to the following questions on a separate piece of paper:
    - What do you think is the most significant difference(s) in wording between Jefferson's draft and the adopted Declaration of Independence?
    - Why do you think this change(s) was made?
    - How does this difference(s) in wording change your understanding of the text's meaning, if at all?
6. Group Conclusions: Working with the entire class, discuss their responses, page by page, to the questions above. Conclude by emphasizing that those who created (and signed) the Declaration of Independence understood the potential significance of every word in the document to their own lives, the new Nation, and the world.

### Extension

- Debate the changes made to the Declaration of Independence and how the "original Rough draught" versus the new wording might have set a course for future events and/or continues to impact our lives today.
- Use the online activity "[The Declaration of Independence: Rewriting the Rough Draft](#)" to experiment with different versions of the first two paragraphs of the Declaration. Discuss how each version might have changed the nation's future.