

TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES—MTSU
**Primary Source Set & Links Guide:
 Founding Documents**

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The phrase “Founding Documents” refers to a group of documents that were essential to the formation of the United States in the late eighteenth century. The core of the Founding Documents, what the National Archives refers to as “Charters of Freedom,” consists of the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. These three documents, however, were not created spontaneously and fully-formed, but evolved through negotiations and debate on the part of colonial leaders.

So, what did the Founding Documents actually “found”? In other words, why are they so significant? Obviously, they established the independence of a new nation from its British colonial rulers, in direct reaction to a series of unpopular British policies. The Founding Documents established what form the new government would take and what its powers would be. The equality of (white) men regardless of land-ownership, checks and balances among three branches of government, and freedom of speech were enshrined in American history through these documents. This experiment in self-government would serve as an example and inspiration to nations around the world interested in building democracies.



[The repeal, or the funeral of Miss Ame=Stamp](#) [1766 or later]

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

The founding documents are must-reads for many classrooms. Their length, vocabulary, and complexity of thought, however, make them difficult for many students to grasp. In this case, a good approach is to break the text down into small chunks of about 4-5 lines and have students concentrate on their chunks in small groups. Older students can use the [analysis tools](#) for [printed texts](#) and [manuscripts](#) as a way to think critically about the documents. See our [February 2014 newsletter](#) for more ideas!

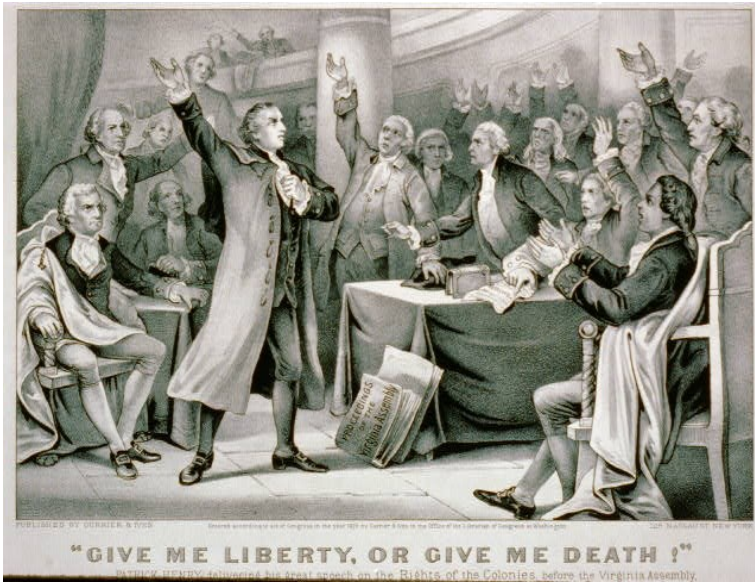
ADDITIONAL LINKS

- [February 2014 TPS-MTSU newsletter: Founding Documents](#)
- [Primary Documents in American History: The American Revolution and the New Nation, 1763-1815](#)
- [The American Founders Online: An Annotated Guide to Their Papers and Publications](#)
- [The Charters of Freedom](#) (from the National Archives)
- [Documents from the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention, 1774-1789](#)
- [“Preparing for Revolution”](#) (lesson plan from TPS-MTSU)

Presidential papers:

- [George Washington Papers](#)
- [Thomas Jefferson Papers](#)
- [James Madison Papers](#)
- [Adams Family Papers](#) (from the Massachusetts Historical Society)
- Benjamin Franklin’s [Papers](#) (from Yale) and [Autobiography](#)

PATRICK HENRY

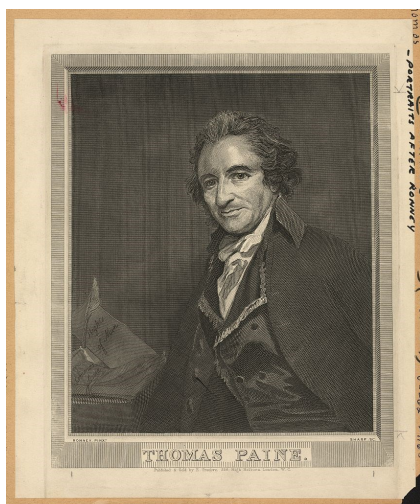


- [Patrick Henry, “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech, March 23, 1775](#) [The Avalon Project]
- [Give me liberty, or give me death!: Patrick Henry's speech in the Virginia Convention of 1775](#) [sound recording]
- [Patrick Henry Was Born](#) [America’s Story]

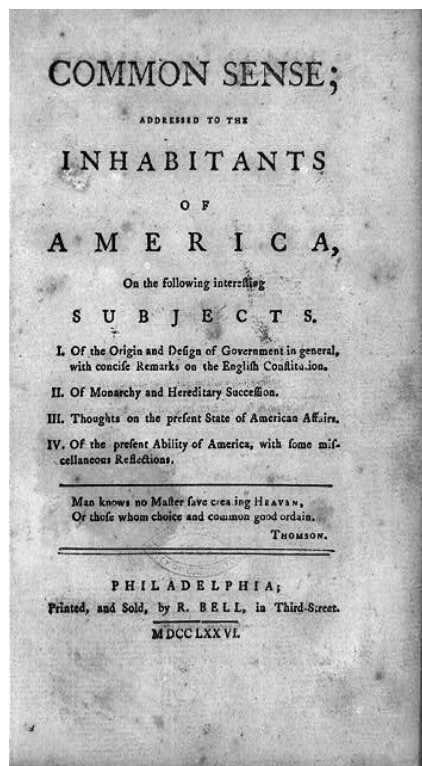
["Give me liberty, or give me death!" Patrick Henry delivering his great speech on the rights of the colonies, before the Virginia Assembly, convened at Richmond, March 23rd 1775, concluding with the above sentiment, which became the war cry of the revolution.](#) [1876]

THOMAS PAINE

- [The American Crisis](#) [1776], page 1
- [More Thomas Paine writings](#)
- [“Thomas Paine and Common Sense”](#) lesson idea from February 2014 TPS-MTSU newsletter (top of p. 2)



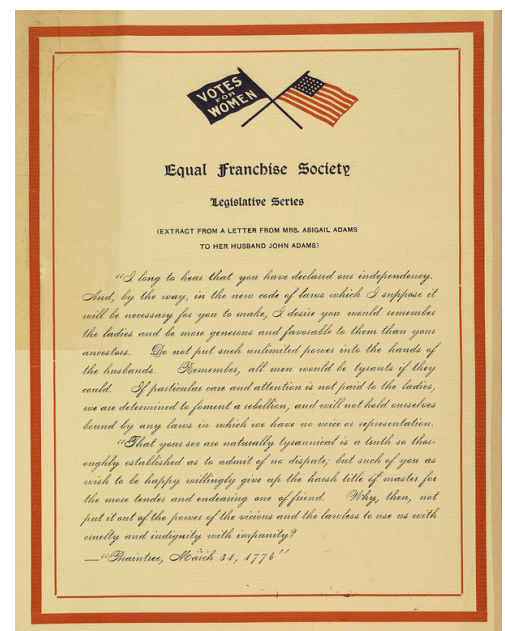
[Thomas Paine / Romney pinxt. ; Sharp.sc.](#) [1794]



[Common sense; addressed to the inhabitants of America, on the following interesting subjects](#) [1776]

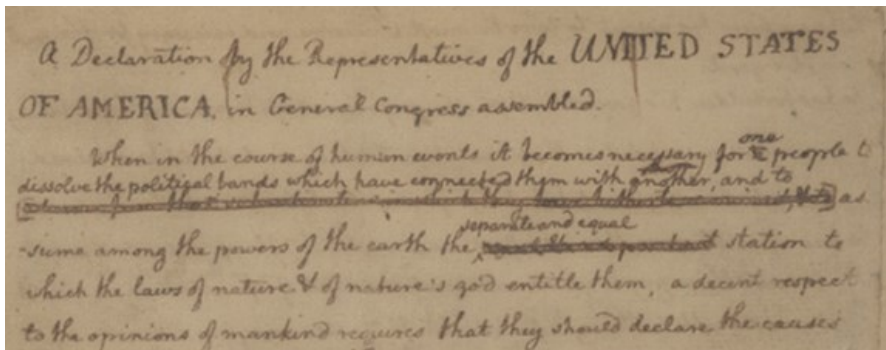
ABIGAIL ADAMS

- [Full text of “Remember the ladies...” letter, March 31, 1776](#) (from PBS)
- [More letters from Abigail to John Adams](#)

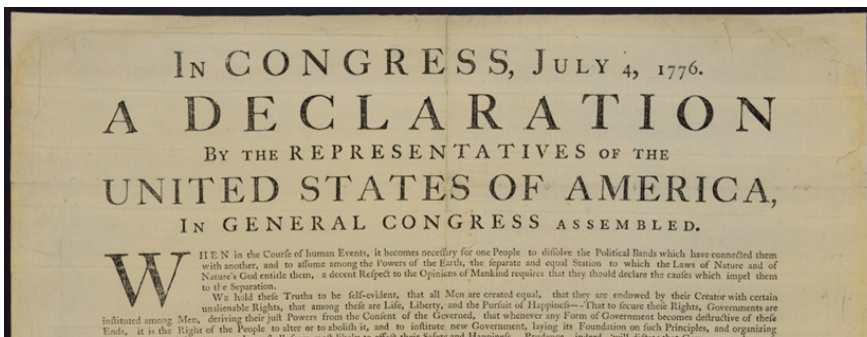


[Equal Franchise Society Legislative Series; extract from a letter from Abigail Adams to her husband John Adams](#) [n.d.]

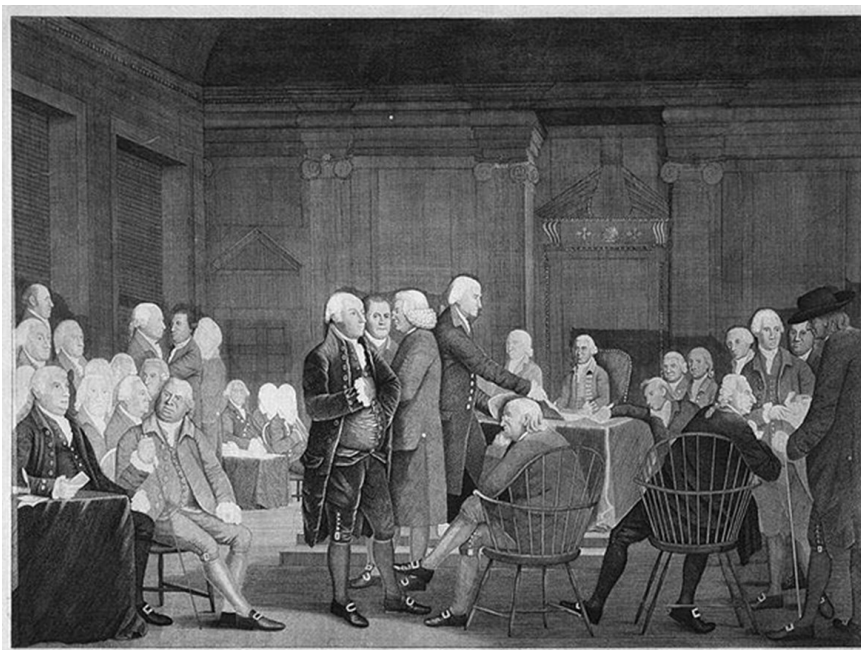
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



[Thomas Jefferson. Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence, June–July 1776](#) [1776, detail]



[Declaration of Independence, Philadelphia: John Dunlap, July 4, 1776](#) [1776, detail]



[Congress voting the Declaration of Independence](#) [between 1776 and 1817]; see also [description](#).

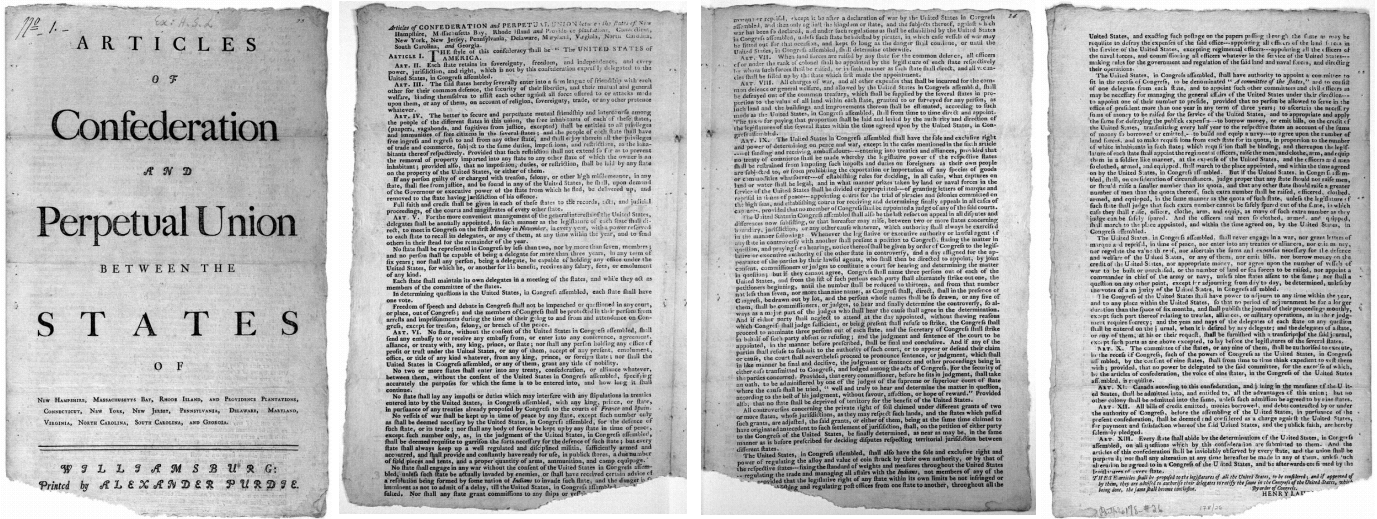
Other versions of the Declaration of Independence:

- [Fragment of the earliest known draft of the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson in June 1776](#) (1st page, 2nd page, and click [here](#) for transcription)
- [First printed edition that shows the names of all the signers] [In Congress, July 4, 1776. The unanimous declaration of the thirteen United States of America.](#) *Click [PDF](#) to read transcription.
- [First printed copy of final version] [from Statutes at Large, 1845-](#)

Related links:

- [Primary Documents in American History: Declaration of Independence](#) (Web Guide)
- [The Declaration of Independence: Rewriting the Rough Draft](#) (blog post)
- [“The Declaration of Independence: Created Equal?”](#) (lesson plan)
- [“The Declaration of Independence: From Rough Draft to Proclamation”](#) (lesson plan)
- [The Declaration of Independence](#) (America’s Story)
- [Creating the Declaration of Independence](#) from *Creating the United States* (exhibition)
- [“Fanning the Flames of Patriotism”](#) from “To Form a More Perfect Union” (essay)
- [Declaring Independence: Drafting the Documents](#) (exhibition)

ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION



[Articles of confederation and perpetual union between the states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, and Providence plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South](#) [1777; click [here](#) for transcription of all four pages]

See also:

- [“The Articles of Confederation: The First Constitution of the United States”](#) (blog entry)
- [“The Articles of Confederation”](#) (lesson idea from TPS-MTSU Founding Documents newsletter, bottom of p. 3)
- [Articles of Confederation](#) (from the World Digital Library)
- [“Identifying Defects in the Confederation”](#) from *To Form a More Perfect Union* (essay)

THE CONSTITUTION

- [Constitution of the United States](#) (from the World Digital Library)
- [Primary Documents in American History: United States Constitution](#) (Web Guide)
- [Constitution](#) (Primary Source Set from Teachers Page)
- [Creating the United States Constitution](#) from *Creating the United States* (exhibition)
- [“The Constitution: Counter Revolution or National Salvation?”](#) (lesson plan)
- [“The Constitution: Drafting a More Perfect Union”](#) (lesson plan)
- [“The U.S. Constitution: Continuity and Change in the Governing of the United States”](#) (lesson plan)
- [“Creating the Constitution”](#) from *To Form a More Perfect Union* (essay)
- [U.S. Constitution](#), September 17, 1787 (Today in History)

[South elevation - Independence Hall Complex, Independence Hall, 500 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA](#) [1959]



REACTIONS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Federalist Papers

- [The Federalist Papers](#) from Congress.gov - links to original text transcriptions of all eighty-five sections
- [“The Federalist”](#) lesson idea from February 2014 TPS-MTSU newsletter (top of p. 3)
- [The Founding Fathers Unite](#) video on the Federalist Papers (2 min 51 sec) from Hidden Treasures (Library of Congress & the History Channel)
- [The Federalist Papers](#), October 27, 1787 (Today in History)



[The Founding Fathers Unite](#)

*Fellow Citizens of the Senate
and
of the House of Representatives*

*Among the vicissitudes in
cident to life, no event could have
filled me with greater anxieties than
that of which the notification was
transmitted by your order, and received
on the 14th day of the present month.
On one hand, I was summon-
ed by my Country, whose voice I can
never hear but with veneration and*



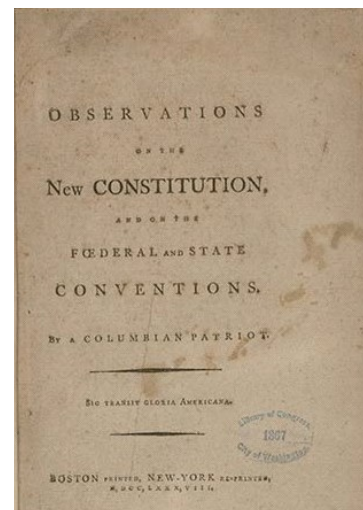
[The Federal Edifice. Massachusetts Centinel, August 2, 1788. Woodcut. Serial and Government Publications Division Library of Congress \(70.00.00\) \[1788; detail\]](#)

[George Washington's first inaugural address, 30 April 1789.](#)

- [Primary Documents in American History: George Washington's First Inaugural Address](#)
- [More pages](#) and [partial transcription](#) available at the *Creating the United States* exhibition.
- [George Washington's Farewell Address](#) [1796]

Mercy Otis Warren:

- [Observations on the New Constitution, and on the Federal and State Conventions, by a Columbian Patriot. Boston, 1788.](#) [selected pages]
- [History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution](#) [1805; selected pages; click [here](#) for limited transcription]
- [Selected poems](#)



[\[Mercy Otis Warren\]. Observations on the New Constitution, and on the Federal and State Conventions, by a Columbian Patriot. Boston, 1788. Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress \(069.00.00\) \[1788; detail\]](#)

BILL OF RIGHTS

RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, TWO thirds of both Houses concurring, That the following articles be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States, as amendments to the Constitution of the United States, all or any of which articles, when ratified by three fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all intents and purposes, as part of the said Constitution—Viz.

ARTICLES in addition to, and amendment of, the Constitution of the United States of America, proposed by Congress, and ratified by the Legislatures of the several States, pursuant to the fifth Article of the original Constitution.

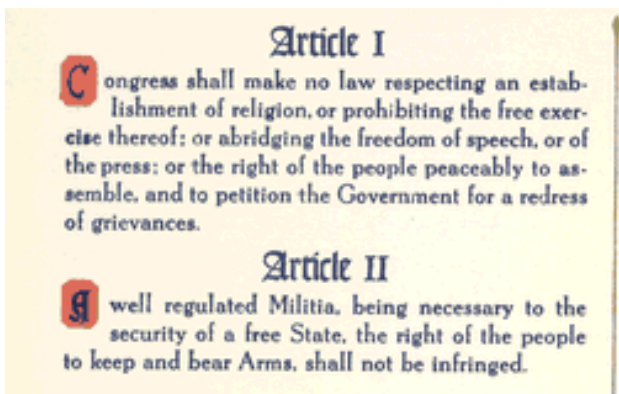
ARTICLE THE FIRST.

After the first enumeration, required by the first article of the Constitution, there shall be one Representative for every thirty thousand, until the number shall amount to one hundred; to which number one Representative shall be added for every subsequent increase of forty thousand, until the Representatives shall amount to two hundred; to which number one Representative shall be added for every subsequent increase of sixty thousand persons.

ARTICLE THE SECOND.

No law, varying the compensation for the services of the Senators and Representatives, shall take effect, until an election of Representatives shall have intervened.

Madison's Copy of the Proposed "Bill of Rights": [[Proposed Articles of Amendment](#)] New York: Thomas Greenleaf [September 14, 1789] Rare Book & Special Collections Division [detail]



[A bill of rights as provided in the ten original amendments to the constitution of the United States in force December 15, 1791. \[n. p. 195-\].](#)

ALIEN AND SEDITION ACTS

June 18, 1798. CHAP. LIV.—An Act supplementary to and to amend the act, intituled "An act to establish an uniform rule of naturalization; and to repeal the act heretofore passed on that subject."
[Repealed.]
Act of April 14, 1802, ch. 28, sec. 5.
No alien may become a citizen, unless he shall have declared his intention to become such, five years before his admission.
He shall declare and prove fourteen years

SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That no alien shall be admitted to become a citizen of the United States, or of any state, unless in the manner prescribed by the act, intituled "An act to establish an uniform rule of naturalization; and to repeal the act heretofore passed on that subject," he shall have declared his intention to become a citizen of the United States, five years, at least, before his admission, and shall, at the time of his application to be admitted, declare and prove, to the satisfaction of the court having jurisdiction in the case, that he has resided within the United States fourteen years, at least, and within the state or territory where, or for which such court is at the time held, five years, at least, besides conforming to the other

[Statutes at Large, 5th Congress, 2nd Session](#)
[Naturalization Act, 1798; see page 31 of the PDF]

- [Primary Documents in American History: The Bill of Rights](#) (Web Guide)
- [Creating the Bill of Rights](#) from *Creating the United States* (exhibition)
- [Bill of Rights](#) from World Digital Library
- ["The Bill of Rights: Debating the Amendments"](#) (lesson plan)
- [The Bill of Rights](#), December 15, 1791 (Today in History)
- [The New United States of American Adopted the Bill of Rights](#) (America's Story)
- [Our Documents: Bill of Rights](#) (1791) from the National Archives, with [transcription](#)



[Temple of Liberty](#). New York: Jared Bell, 1834. Woodcut. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (86)

- [Primary Documents in American History: Alien and Sedition Acts](#) (Web Guide)

Reactions to the Alien and Sedition Acts:

- Thomas Jefferson, et al., [Kentucky Resolutions](#) [1798]
- ["Thomas Jefferson on the Sedition Act"](#) (lesson plan) from EDSITEment!
- James Madison, et al., [Virginia Resolutions](#) [1800]
- [Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions from Bill of Rights Institute](#) [transcriptions] (1798)

CITATIONS: FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is May 14, 2014.

“The repeal, or the funeral of Miss Ame=Stamp”. Cartoon. Ca 1776. From Library of Congress, *Cartoon Prints, British*. <http://www.loc.gov/item/2006678564/>

Currier & Ives. “Give me liberty, or give me death!’ Patrick Henry delivering his great speech on the rights of the colonies, before the Virginia Assembly, convened at Richmond, March 23rd 1775, concluding with the above sentiment, which became the war cry of the revolution.” Illustration. New York : Published by Currier & Ives, c1876. From Library of Congress, *Popular Graphic Arts*. <http://www.loc.gov/item/2001700209/>

Sharp, William. “Thomas Paine”. Illustration. London: E. Truelove, 1794. From Library of Congress, *Miscellaneous Items in High Demand*. <http://www.loc.gov/item/2008676218/>

Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense*. Pamphlet. Philadelphia: R. Bell, 1776. From Library of Congress, *Miscellaneous Items in High Demand*. <http://www.loc.gov/item/2006681076/>

Equal Franchise Society. *Equal Franchise Society Legislative Series; extract from a letter from Abigail Adams to her husband John Adams*. Letter. New York City: Equal Franchise Society. From Library of Congress, *Miller NAWSA Suffrage Scrapbooks, 1897-1911*. <http://www.loc.gov/item/rbcmiller002888>

Jefferson, Thomas. *Rough Draft of the Declaration of Independence*. June 1776. Document. From the Library of Congress, *The Thomas Jefferson Papers Series 1. General Correspondence. 1651-1827*. Jefferson, Thomas. *In Congress, July 4, 1776, a declaration by the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled*. 1776. Document. From the Library of Congress, *Rare Book and Special Collections Division*. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/battle-joined.html#obj21>

Savage, Edward. “Congress voting the Declaration of Independence”. Boston: 1800-1900. Print. From the Library of Congress, *Popular Graphic Arts*. <http://www.loc.gov/item/2008678323/>

Articles of Confederation. Williamsburg, 1777. Document. From the Library of Congress, *Broadsides, leaflets, and pamphlets from America and Europe*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/rbpebib:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(rbpe+17802600\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+17802600)))

Boucher, Jack E. “South elevation - Independence Hall Complex, Independence Hall, 500 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA”. Photograph. From the Library of Congress, *Historic American Buildings Survey/ Historic American Engineering Record/ Historic American Landscapes Survey*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/pa0939.color.368272c/>

Dimunation, Mark. *The Founding Fathers Unite*. Online Video. From the Library of Congress, *Rare Book and Special Collections Division*. <http://www.loc.gov/item/myloc5#about-this-item>

Washington, George. *First Inaugural Address*. April 30, 1789. Document. From the Library of Congress, *James H. Hutson and Janice E. Ruth, Manuscript Division*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(mcc/053\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/mcc:@field(DOCID+@lit(mcc/053)))

“The Federal Edifice”. *Massachusetts Centinel*, August 2, 1788. Woodcut. From the Library of Congress, *Serial and Government Publications Division*. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/forging-a-federal-government.html#obj1>

CITATIONS CONTINUED...

Warren, Mercy O. *Observations on the New Constitution, and on the Federal and State Conventions, by a Columbian Patriot*. Boston, 1788. From the Library of Congress, *Rare Book and Special Collections Division*. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/forging-a-federal-government.html#obj0>

Proposed Articles of Amendment. Document. New York: Thomas Greenleaf, September 14, 1789. From the Library of Congress, *Rare Book and Special Collections Division*. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbc0001.2010madison38253/?st=gallery>

A bill of rights as provided in the ten original amendments to the constitution of the United States in force. 1950. From the Library of Congress, *Broadsides, leaflets, and pamphlets from America and Europe*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/rbpebib:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(rbpe+24404400\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/h?ammem/rbpebib:@field(NUMBER+@band(rbpe+24404400)))

Bell, Jared W. "Temple of liberty". New York: 1834. Woodcut. From the Library of Congress, *Cartoon Prints, American*. <http://www.loc.gov/item/2008661765/>

"Proceedings June 18, 1798". *Annals of Congress*. House of Representatives, 5th Congress, 2nd Session. Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1849, pg. 566-567. From the Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875*. <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/5th-congress/c5.pdf>