

1776 PRESS CONFERENCE

Teacher Resource

The 1776 Press Conference is an interactive role-play that brings the Declaration of Independence to life. Students research one of the signers, then take turns acting as a panel of signers answering live questions from their classmates—who play the role of reporters. The activity blends historical research, public speaking, and critical thinking, while encouraging students to connect with the ideas, debates, and risks behind declaring independence in 1776.

Teacher Instructions

Step 1: Assign Groups and Roles

1. Divide the class into signer groups of 4-5 students.
2. Each student in a group chooses and represents a different signer of the Declaration of Independence.
3. While one group presents as signers, the rest of the class acts as colonial reporters.

Step 2: Research and Preparation

For Signers:

1. [Watch your chosen signers' biographical video.](#)
2. Using the Founders Profile Worksheet, prepare notes covering name and colony, background (job, education, family), role in independence, reasons for signing and risks taken, three surprising facts.

For Reporters

1. Write at least five thoughtful questions to ask the signers.
2. Include a mix of factual questions and questions that invite perspective.

Step 3: Running the Press Conference

1. Invite the first group of signers to the front of the classroom.
2. As the teacher, act as the moderator to:
 - Set the scene for the event
 - Call on reporters to ask their questions from the Reporter Worksheet
 - Encourage signers to answer in character
 - Allow follow-up questions if time permits
 - Encourage reporters to take notes in the Reporter Note Sheet
 - After 10 minutes, rotate to the next group of signers and repeat.

Step 4: Optional Activity - Closing Statements

1. After all groups present, each signer gives a brief in-character closing statement on why independence matters.
2. Students sign a classroom Declaration of Independence poster to conclude the activity.