

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE'S INFLUENCE AROUND THE WORLD

by Dr. David Armitage

Directions: Read and annotate Thomas Jefferson's last letter, written to the mayor of Washington in reply to an invitation to attend the celebration of the Jubilee of American Independence. Afterward, complete the graphic organizer based on the following prompt:

David Armitage's essay describes the Declaration of Independence as "the birth certificate of the United States of America," and Jefferson's letter describes the document as "an instrument pregnant with our own, and the fate of the world." How did the Declaration of Independence represent the "birth" of the United States?

Respected Sir —The kind invitation I received from you on the part of the citizens of the city of Washington, to be present with them at their celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of American Independence, as one of the surviving signers of an instrument pregnant with our own, and the fate of the world, is most flattering to myself, and heightened by the honorable accompaniment proposed for the comfort of such a journey. It adds sensibly to the sufferings of sickness, to be deprived by it of a personal participation in the rejoicings of that day, but acquiescence is a duty, under circumstances not placed among those we are permitted to control. I should, indeed, with peculiar delight, have met and exchanged there congratulations personally, with the small band, the remnant of that host of worthies, who joined with us, on that day, in the bold and doubtful election we were to make for our country, between submission and the sword; and to have enjoyed with them the consolatory fact that our fellow citizens, after half a century of experience and prosperity, continue to approve the choice we made. May it be to the world, what I believe it will be, (to some parts sooner, to others later, but finally to all,) the signal of arousing men to burst the chains under which monkish ignorance and superstition had persuaded them to bind themselves, and to assume the blessings and security of self-government. The form which we have substituted restores the free right to the unbounded exercise of reason, and freedom of opinion. All eyes are opened or opening, to

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the rights of man. The general spread of the lights of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others—for ourselves let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.

I will ask permission here to express the pleasure with which I should have met my ancient neighbors of the city of Washington and its vicinities, with whom I passed so many years of a pleasing social intercourse; an intercourse which so much relieved the anxieties of the public cares, and left impressions so deeply engraved in my affections, as never to be forgotten. With my regret that ill health forbids me the gratification of an acceptance, be pleased to receive for yourself, and those for whom you write, the assurance of my highest respect and friendly attachment.

TH: JEFFERSON.

R. C. WEIGHTMAN, Esq. Chairman, &c.

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Prompt: David Armitage's essay describes the Declaration of Independence as "the birth certificate of the United States of America," and Jefferson's letter describes the document as "an instrument pregnant with our own, and the fate of the world." How did the Declaration of Independence represent the "birth" of the United States?

Topic Sentence	
Textual Evidence #1 Thomas Jefferson's Letter	
Textual Evidence #2 Thomas Jefferson's Letter	
Textual Evidence #3 Dr. Armitage's Essay	
Textual Evidence #4 Dr. Armitage's Essay	