

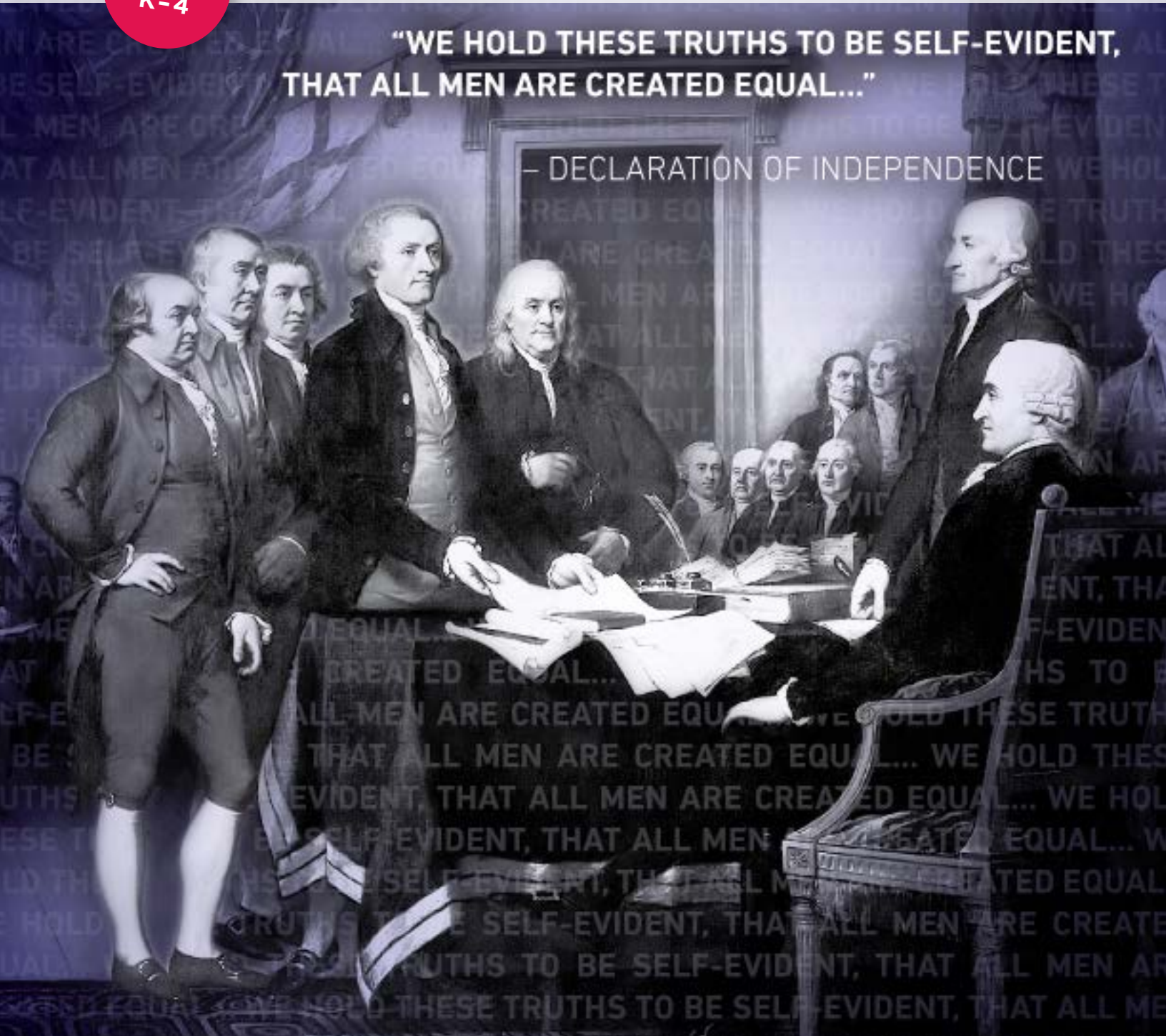
# CIVICS IN LITERATURE

GRADES  
K-4

★★ *July Lesson Plan* ★★

"WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT,  
THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL..."

— DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE



## ABOUT THIS LESSON

The books selected for July's installment of the National Constitution Center's Civics in Literature initiative help us think about the significance of Independence Day, also known as Fourth of July.

Civics in Literature is designed to meet the common core standards for students from kindergarten through fourth grade. These materials strengthen foundational skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Civics in Literature allows younger students to access complex topics and issues by meeting them at their level and guiding them to a higher level of understanding.

## READING LIST

*I Am America* by Charles R. Smith Jr.

*My Mom Is a Foreigner, But Not to Me*  
by Julianne Moore

*Emma's Poem* by Linda Glaser



## AUTHOR

Anne Spector

Anne Spector is an educator whose career has taken her into classrooms from first grade to 3rd year law students. She has taught in both the School District of Philadelphia and the School District of Cheltenham Township where she also served as a Central Office Administrator. Mrs. Spector holds an undergraduate degree in psychology, a teaching degree in Secondary English, a graduate degree in Reading, and Elementary and Secondary Principal Certification.

Throughout Mrs. Spector's career she has dedicated much of her time to developing and implementing programs that promote student voice and citizenship education through a marriage of literacy and civic literacy. With a team of educators that includes her writing partner Elaine Scarpino, Anne is helping to create the **We the Civic Kids** program for elementary students, grades K to 5. Her work in this field began over twenty years ago when she collaborated with Temple University's LEAP program (Law Education and Participation) to help in the development of law-related education material. She continued her work in elementary civic education by creating a K to 4 program known as **Let's Take Two...Two Steps Back, Two Minutes to Think, Two People to Solve a Problem.**

After retiring from Cheltenham, Anne joined the staff at the National Constitution Center as the Director of PennCORD, First Lady Marjorie O. Rendell's Pennsylvania Coalition for Representative Democracy. Through her work with PennCORD Mrs. Spector created S.T.A.R. Force (Students Thinking and Acting Responsibly), a K to 6 program that married literacy and civic literacy as a way to teach basic civic knowledge, promote public action between and among our youngest citizens, and provide practice in democratic deliberation.

Mrs. Spector embraces the notion that...**reading is our first freedom**. She is thrilled to be able to bring this philosophy to children and their teachers across the country through materials that highlight children's literature with lessons that connect young minds to complex concepts and build student voice.

# CIVICS IN LITERATURE

## FEATURED BOOK AND ACTIVITIES

*I Am America* by Charles R. Smith, Jr.

The United States was and continues to be a diverse nation to which thousands come every day to begin to live their American Dream. In *I Am America*, young students help “celebrate the many faces of children growing up in America today.”

**Activity #1:** America has always been described as a richly diverse country. Some people use the idea of “a stew” to describe the country’s diversity. This idea suggests that all of the cultures melt together to become one culture that takes traditions and practices from all of the cultures of the people who live here. Others have described the American people as “a salad bowl” in which all of the cultures come together but maintain their own unique identity. Think about your friends and neighbors. Would you describe your little piece of the world as an example of a stew or a salad bowl? Be prepared to defend your answer.

**Activity #2:** If someone in your family or your neighborhood came to America from a foreign country, what questions might you ask them to find out about their culture?

**Activity #3:** In *I Am America*, each of the young voices in the book are proud of being Americans but for different reasons. Would you like to have friends who are just like you or friends who are all different? Be prepared to share your answer.

**Activity #4:** If you were invited to be in the book *I Am America*, Part II, what would you say makes you a proud American?

**Activity #5:** Thanks to the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, we as Americans are all free to express an opinion; free to practice our own religion; and more. Although we are free to do all of these things, we are often hesitant to do them. It takes courage to “say what we want to say.” Think about the chorus to the song Brave by Sara Bareilles.

Say what you wanna say  
And let the words fall out  
Honestly I wanna see you be brave

Can you think of a time that you wished you had expressed your opinion but did not? Be prepared to describe the experience.

Now, read the Sticky Situation below and think about what you would say and why.

*A new student has just arrived at your school and has been placed in your classroom. She is from another country. As you go over to introduce yourself to her, you hear several of your really good friends making fun of her because of her accent.*

*Whether planning a field trip, looking for innovative ways to enhance classroom instruction or seeking a deeper understanding of American history and active citizenship, the National Constitution Center is an educator's ultimate civic learning resource.*

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