

Lindsay M. Chervinsky

Concluding Independence

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

1. Chervinsky centers her essay on the final paragraphs of the Declaration, where independence is formally declared. What stood out most to you about how she frames this moment?
2. How did focusing on the closing lines change your understanding of the Declaration as a whole?

CLOSE READING AND INTERPRETATION

3. How does Chervinsky describe the shift in the Declaration from a statement of grievances and principles to a decisive act of political separation?
4. What is the significance of the phrase “Free and Independent States” in the final paragraph, and what new powers does it claim?
5. How does the concluding pledge—“our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor”—help define the seriousness and stakes of the document?

EXPLORING TENSIONS

6. What risks—political, personal, and military—did the signers assume by making this declaration public?
7. How does the strong language of unity in the final paragraph compare to the reality of disagreement and uncertainty among the colonies?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

8. Chervinsky suggests that the Declaration is not only descriptive but performative—that it helps bring a new political reality into being. What does it mean for words to have that kind of power?
9. How does understanding the Declaration as an act, rather than only a statement of ideals, change the way we think about its role in American history?

CLOSING REFLECTION

10. What does Chervinsky’s essay suggest about the relationship between language, commitment, and the creation of a new nation?