



Eric Slauter

The Declaration's Promises

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

1. Slauter argues that the meaning of the Declaration emerged over time. What stood out most to you?
2. What idea or argument from this essay stayed with you?

CLOSE READING AND INTERPRETATION

3. Why might independence have mattered more than equality in 1776?
4. How did later generations elevate the "self-evident truths"?
5. What role did reformers and abolitionists play in shaping the document's meaning?

EXPLORING TENSIONS

6. What does it mean for a founding document's meaning to evolve?
7. How does this challenge the idea of a fixed interpretation?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

8. Where do you see the Declaration shaping American life today?
9. What does it take for ideas to move from text into lived experience?

CLOSING REFLECTION

10. What does this essay suggest about our responsibility to interpret and apply founding ideals?