

MEET THE SIGNER, READ THE SOURCE: JAMES WILSON

Teacher Resource

Background

In this activity, students will get to know one of the [signers of the Declaration of Independence](#) by exploring both their life story and one of their original writings from the *Founders' Library*.

Meet James Wilson

Share this [video about James Wilson](#) to learn more about his life and the role in the American Revolution.

Read the Signer's Source

Next, share the primary source [Speech at a Public Meeting in Philadelphia](#), written by James Wilson. There are reading comprehension questions that correspond with this source to deepen understanding and build connections.

Supporting Vocabulary

These definitions might support student learning as they read the primary source.

- **Superfluous:** More than what is needed; extra or unnecessary.
- **Elucidate:** To explain something clearly so it's easier to understand.
- **Disquisition:** A long, detailed talk or written piece about a specific subject.
- **Jurisdiction:** The official power or authority to make decisions and enforce laws in a certain area.
- **Copious:** A large amount of something; plenty.
- **Palladium:** Something that acts as a strong protection or safeguard. (In ancient times, it was also a statue believed to protect a city.)
- **Aggregate:** The total amount after adding different things together.
- **Emolument:** Money or payment you get for doing a job.

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Comprehension Questions

These comprehension questions are also included in the student version of the primary source.

1. Do you agree with Wilson's argument against a Bill of Rights? Why or why not?
2. How does Wilson view the powers given to the state government versus powers delegated to the national government?
3. Why does Wilson believe some people may not support the new constitution?
4. How might self-interest influence someone's political views?

Extension Activity: Show What You Know

You are a reporter covering the new Constitution. After watching the video of Wilson and reading his speech, write a news article highlighting common themes you find in both pieces.