

COMMON CORE: Literacy

Lessons for Social Studies Educators

Reading Standard 2. SUMMARIZE CENTRAL IDEAS

Reading Standards: Gr. 6-8	Reading Standard: Gr. 9-10	Reading Standard: Gr. 11-12
2. SUMMARIZE CENTRAL IDEAS		
Determine the central ideas or information from a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source, distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.	Determine the central ideas or information from a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary <i>of how key events or ideas developed over the course of the text.</i>	Determine the central ideas or information from a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary <i>that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.</i>

Overview: Understanding the topic of a textual passage, the “gist”, or the central idea(s) of a textbook chapter, an article, or primary source is a sophisticated reading task. Being able to draw conclusions, evaluate, and critically interpret text is important for overall comprehension in reading. Textbook chapters, articles, and even individual paragraphs all have main (central) ideas. The topic of a text is the broad, general theme. It is what some call the “subject”. The main (central) idea is the “key concept” being expressed or the “message”. Details, whether major and minor, support the central idea by telling how, what, when, where, why, and how. Locating the main idea and supporting details helps a student understand the point(s) the writer is attempting to express.

Lesson Ideas:

1. A paragraph is a group of sentences related to a particular topic. Every paragraph has a key concept or main idea. The main idea is the most important piece of information the author wants you to know about the concept of that paragraph. A writer will state his/her main idea explicitly somewhere in the paragraph. That main idea may be stated at the beginning of the paragraph, in the middle, or at the end. The sentence in which the main idea is stated is the topic sentence of that paragraph. Read one paragraph from the student textbook or primary source. Using the “Think, Pair, Share” strategy, ask students, working individually, then in pairs, to underline with a highlighter the statement or phrase which students believe to be the topic sentence expressing the central idea of the entire paragraph. Ask student pairs to share with the class their findings. Does every pair agree? Why or why not? Do students see patterns used by one author? (For example, is the topic sentence always found at the beginning of the paragraph?)
2. An author also organizes each paragraph's main idea and supporting details in support of the central idea, and each paragraph supports the paragraph preceding it. The bulk of an expository paragraph is made up of supporting sentences (major and minor details), which help to explain or prove the main idea. These sentences present facts, reasons, examples, definitions, comparison, contrasts, and other pertinent details. They are most important because they sell the main idea. Using the GIST strategy, ask

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students to summarize the main ideas of each individual paragraph of a text, in their own words in 20 words or less. Allow students to work in pairs, if desired, discussing how best to summarize the information in a short 20-word-or-less statement. Use the GIST template to chart out the entire textbook section or multi-paragraph primary source.

3. Teaching students structured approaches to note-taking of vital information from primary or secondary sources is an excellent tool for both learning the content, as well as summarizing central ideas necessary for complex reading comprehension. The Cornell (two-column) note-taking strategy is the most well-researched and commonly-used strategy in secondary and college classrooms. It can be adapted and used effectively for students of all ages.

4. To support an active level in reading and summarizing text involving the pairing of good readers with struggling readers, use the highly-structured “Six Step Paired Reading and Note-Taking” strategy which encourages students to interact with text as they offer brief summarizations of “chunked” textual passages in a very non-threatening environment.

5. Teach students how to create formal outlines of their summaries from textual reading (notes) as a method to visually see the structure of the author’s main ideas and supporting details (evidence, facts, reasoning, examples, etc.) Most textbooks and secondary sources are written with the first or last sentence of each paragraph being the topic sentence. Identifying these topic sentences first will help guide the construction a formal outline. Follow up by developing a formal outline for the article “Effects of the Declaration of Independence” in order to model the outlining process. (*Tip:* Formal outlines which require students to write complete sentences are more effective as a reading comprehension strategy because it requires a deeper thought process as students re-state the central ideas in their own words and complete thoughts.)

6. The “Central Idea Concept Map” is visual strategy effective for graphically organizing the relationships of key details to central ideas. Use this graphic organizer to demonstrate how short, summary statements can be developed over the course of a textual reading. Use the graphic organizer to trace/discuss the development of an author’s idea throughout the entire textual passage. For example, using the “Central Idea Concept Map”, trace the idea of the “global legacy of American ideals” through selected portions of the article, “Effects of the Declaration of Independence.”

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

(Paragraph 1.) When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

(Paragraph 2.) We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

(Paragraph 3.) Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government.

(Paragraph 4.) The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

Line 4.1 He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

Line 4.2 He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance...

Line 4.3 He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people...

Line 4.4 He has sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance...

Line 4.5 He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures...

Line 4.6 For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us...

Line 4.7 For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world...

Line 4.8 For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent...

Line 4.9 For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury...

Line 4.10 He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people...

Line 4.11 He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages...

Line 4.12 In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury...

(Paragraph 5.) We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these united Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

New Hampshire: Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton

Massachusetts: John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island: Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery

Connecticut: Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott

New York: William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris

New Jersey: Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark

Pennsylvania: Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

Delaware: Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean

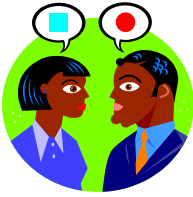
Maryland: Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia: George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

North Carolina: William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

South Carolina: Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton

Georgia: Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton



Think, pair, share

Overview:

This strategy allows students to individually evaluate information prior to sharing their discoveries with fellow members of the class. The process becomes one which moves from quiet contemplation to class debates over the varying perspectives of class members toward the same set of data. Students will have time to think before having to share their ideas and eventually all students will have the opportunity to rehearse in pairs before talking to the whole group.

Materials:

Data to examine, charts, photos, short readings, etc.
Paper and pencil or chart paper and markers

Procedure:

1. Students are given a topic or a question and are given time to individually reflect on the topic or question and write down their responses.
2. Students are then asked to share their responses with one partner. This could involve putting their response together to form a shared response.
3. Students could then share their responses to the whole class.



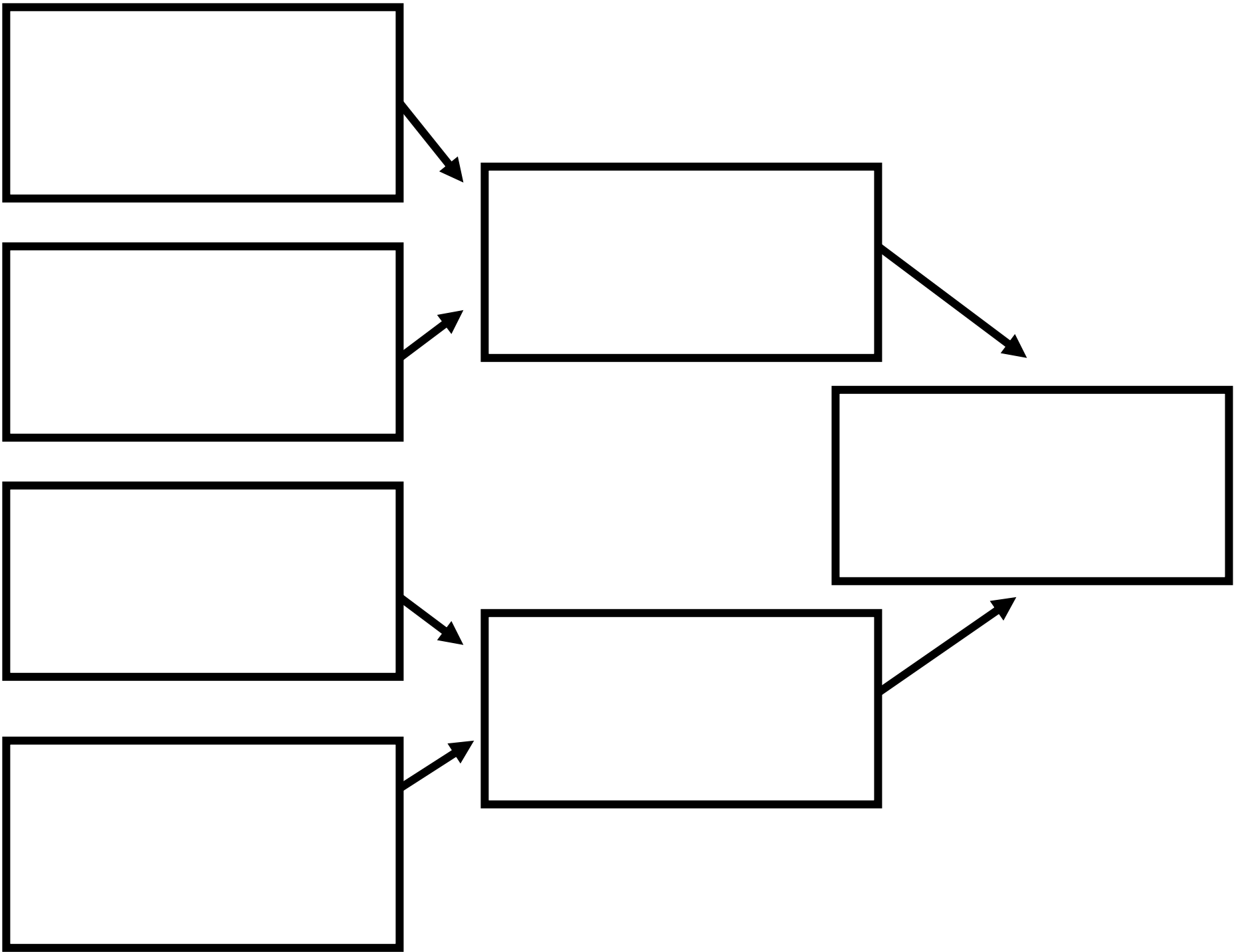
GIST

The ability to distill a lengthy paragraph, passage, or article into its essential ideas is the mark of a proficient reader in any content area. Moreover, writing a summary enhances students' reading comprehension. Yet, writing a coherent summary is more difficult than one might assume. It is far more complex than simply copying a text passage verbatim into a notebook. Rather a coherent summary requires a student to select key information by deciding what to leave out, what to include, and how best to organize this

information in a memorable fashion. Learning to write summaries in a content classroom can best be accomplished through a carefully guided sequence of instruction like the one that follows. A number of strategies for teaching students to summarize text effectively have been developed and explored. A strategy called GIST (which denotes "generating interactions between schemata and text,") can effectively improve students' reading comprehension and summary writing.

Procedure:

1. (Modeling) Select a short passage in a chapter that has an important main idea. A passage of three to five paragraphs is ideal. These paragraphs should be typed on an overhead transparency. Place the transparency on the overhead and display only the first paragraph (cover the other paragraphs). Put 20 blanks on the chalkboard. Have students read the paragraph and instruct them to write a 20 word (or less) summary in their own words.
2. As a class, have students generate a composite summary on the board in 20 or fewer words. Their individual summaries will function as guides for this process.
3. Reveal the next paragraph of the text and have students generate a summary statement of 20 or fewer words that encompasses both of the first two paragraphs.
4. Continue this procedure paragraph by paragraph until students have produced a gist statement for the entire passage under consideration. In time, they will be able to generate gist statements across paragraphs without the intermediate steps. By restricting the length of students' GIST summaries, the teacher compels the students to use the three major strategies necessary for comprehension and retention of key ideas in any text. They must delete trivial information, select key ideas, and generalize in their own words. Thus, GIST produces dual benefits by advancing students reading comprehension and writing fluency.
5. After modeling, the teacher can assign students to work either individually or in groups to create GIST statements, summarizing a few paragraphs or an entire reading. IF student groups compose GIST statements, the teacher might wish to display their results and conduct a class discussion evaluating their strengths and weaknesses in including major, pertinent elements of the reading.



Cornell Note Taking Method

The Cornell note taking system, developed by former Cornell professor Walter Pauk features three areas. One area is for note taking, one for review notes, and one for summarizing.

Many times note taking is one of the most difficult things for a student to do effectively. It can be difficult for students to know what to write down, what is important or pertinent information, or how to structure their notes so they are easy to study from in the future. By taking the time to understand why we take notes, how best to do so, and how to use them, we are able to improve our ability to make them truly useful. Notes can be one of the strongest tools a student has in their academic experience.

Before attempting to take notes, consider the following questions:

What is effective note taking?

How can I take good notes in class or from written texts? Is it different for each?

What is the overall goal of my note taking?

How do I study and what should I include in my notes to help this process?

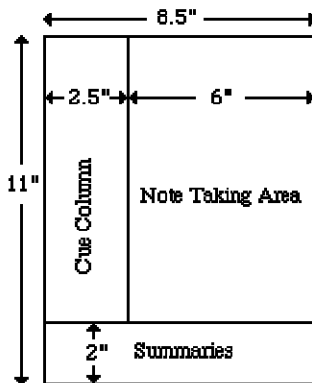
How is the class that I am taking taught and how should I take notes based on this?

Why do we take notes?

To summarize.

To highlight important information.

Most importantly, to review and study from later.



This format provides the perfect opportunity for following through with the 5 R's of note-taking:

Record

During class, record in the main "note-taking" column as many meaningful ideas as you can.

Reduce

As soon after as possible, summarize these facts and ideas concisely in the Cue Column. Summarizing clarifies meanings and relationships, reinforces continuity, and strengthens memory.

Recite

Cover the Note Taking Area, using only what you can see in the Cue Column, recite and explain the information in your own words. Then, verify what you have said by looking at the Note-taking column.

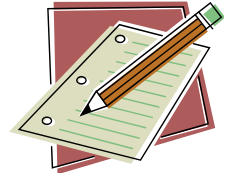
Reflect

Reflect about the information by summarizing the contents of each page. Write your summary in the space at the bottom of each page of notes. Reviewing through summarizing will help prevent information from being soon forgotten.

Review

Spend a few minutes each day to quickly review your notes; you will retain most of what you have learned

Formal Outlines



Summarizing information takes a more rigid in a “formal outline”. The formal outline actually VISUALLY displays the relationships among ideas in an orderly fashion. A formal outline can be a topic outline (incomplete thoughts and passages or key words) or a sentence outline. (Using a sentence outline format is a stronger instructional strategy to reinforce reading comprehension in the content areas!)

Formal Outline Pattern

Topic : _____

I. First main (central) idea

A. First subdivision of the main (central) idea

1. First fact, example, or reason used to support the main (central idea)
 - a. One additional supporting detail
 - b. Second additional supporting detail
2. Second fact, example, or reason used to support the main (central idea)
 - a. One additional supporting detail
 - b. Second additional supporting detail

B. Second subdivision of the main (central) idea

1. First fact, example, or reason used to support the main (central idea)
 - a. One additional supporting detail
 - b. Second additional supporting detail
2. Second fact, example, or reason used to support the main (central idea)
 - a. One additional supporting detail
 - b. Second additional supporting detail

II. Second main (central) idea

A. First subdivision of the main (central) idea









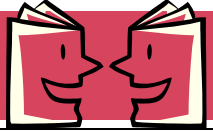



1. First fact, example, or reason used to support the main (central idea)
 - a. One additional supporting detail
 - b. Second additional supporting detail
2. Second fact, example, or reason used to support the main (central idea)
 - a. One additional supporting detail
 - b. Second additional supporting detail

B. Second subdivision of the main (central) idea

1. First fact, example, or reason used to support the main (central idea)
 - a. One additional supporting detail
 - b. Second additional supporting detail
2. Second fact, example, or reason used to support the main (central idea)
 - a. One additional supporting detail
 - b. Second additional supporting detail

SIX-STEP PAIRED NOTE-TAKING



STEPS:	TIPS:	Student Responsibility:	Textbook:
1. READ 	Students silently read small “chunk” of text. (Teacher calls “time” after 1 minute.)	Independent 	OPEN
2. SUMMARIZE 	Partner # 1 verbally summarizes all he/she remembers of importance from the “chunk” of text. (Teacher calls “time” after 1 minute.)	Partner # 1 	CLOSED
3. ADD 	Partner # 2 may access text to verbally add important information omitted by Partner # 1. (Teacher calls “time” after 30 seconds.)	Partner # 2 	OPEN
4. NOTE 	Individual students jot down all important information he/she recalls from the “chunk” of text. (Teacher calls time after 1 minute.)	Independent 	CLOSED
5. SHARE 	Partners share notes, discussing commonalities. (Teacher calls time after 1 minute.)	Partners 	CLOSED
6. CHECK 	Partners may access text to identify any remaining important information they wish to include in their notes. (Teacher allows for time, as needed before repeating the process for next “chunk” of text.)	Partners 	OPEN

Effects of the Declaration of Independence

Where better to begin analyzing the impact of the United States than at the beginning, with the Declaration of Independence? No document is as familiar to students or so deeply entwined with what it means to be an American. The "self-evident truths" it proclaimed to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" have guaranteed it a significant place in our culture; a testament to the special qualities of our people. Little wonder, then, that it stands as a cornerstone of Americans' sense of uniqueness.

In the latter half of the 18th century, the Age of Reason, as it was called, was spreading rapidly across Europe. Scientists and writers like John Locke were challenging the old order. Newton's laws of gravity and motion described the world in terms of natural laws. In the wake of political turmoil in England, Locke asserted the right of a people to change a government that did not protect natural rights of life, liberty and property. In America, intellectuals were reading these ideas as well.

However, it is the Declaration of Independence which remains the one document that frequently served as the inspiration for most all other anti-imperial and anti-colonial independence movements for over two centuries. The Declaration was quickly translated into major languages and immediately sparked serious discussion in Europe and Latin America about the legitimacy of empires. By 1826, fifty years after the drafting, twenty nations already had declarations of independence modeled on it.

The great majority of the declarations of independence issued after 1776 made direct reference to the American Declaration. For example, a great admirer of the American Revolution, Francisco de Miranda, proclaimed on July 5, 1811, that the United Provinces of Venezuela now stood "among the sovereign nations of the earth the rank which the Supreme Being has assigned us" as "Free, Sovereign and Independent States". Likewise, the Texas Declaration of Independence of 1836 affirmed the necessity of "severing our political connection with the Mexican people, and assuming an independent attitude among the peoples of the earth". Similarly, The Declaration of Sentiments, 1948, mirroring both the language and ideals as claimed in the American Declaration, was the first summary of the complaints and agenda of what has become known as the woman's rights movement.

*David Armitage, Harvard University,
William and Mary Quarterly (January 2002):*

Central Idea Summary:

Paragraph Topic Sentence:

Paragraph Topic Sentence:

Paragraph Topic Sentence:

Paragraph Topic Sentence:

Summarize details supporting
topic sentence:

Summarize details supporting
topic sentence:

Summarize details supporting
topic sentence:

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topic sentence:

