

“The Fourth of July and the Declaration of Independence”

Directions: This listening guide provides analysis and comprehension questions for each of the three stories in this month’s episode. You can use all three parts or isolate a single guide for students.

PART 1: THE THREE FACES OF THE DECLARATION



1. What led to the creation of the Declaration of Independence?

2. Why can the Declaration of Independence be considered a declaration of war?

3. How does the Declaration of Independence act as a “statement to posterity?”

4. Why did the statement that “all men are created equal” become so central to our understanding of the Declaration of Independence?

5. Name at least one historical occurrence that has been directly informed by the ideas of equality first invoked in the Declaration of Independence.

EXTENSION QUESTION

To what extent has the Declaration's proposition that "all men are created equal" been achieved? To what extent, if any, does that proposition remain unfulfilled?

PART 2: WHAT TO THE SLAVE IS THE FOURTH OF JULY?



1. Despite being a slave, how was Frederick Douglass able to interact with free Black Americans?

2. From whom did Douglass learn to read? Why were his lessons stopped?

3. After escaping slavery, how did Douglass first rise to prominence as an abolitionist?

4. What was different about Douglass' experiences in England, Scotland, and Ireland? What insights did those experiences provide for him?

5. Why did the relationship between Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison break down?

6. What were Douglass' goals for his speech on the Declaration of Independence?

7. Why did Douglass proclaim to his audience, "The Fourth of July is yours, not mine"?

8. What objections did Douglass raise about the Fugitive Slave Act?

9. What was the impact of Douglass' speech in his lifetime and beyond?

EXTENSION QUESTION

Are there any groups today for whom the ideas presented by Douglass would resonate particularly well? If so, what are some of those groups? Why do you believe they would feel that way? Alternatively, if you do not think Douglass' arguments would apply, explain why.



1. What incident in Selma, Alabama, during the Civil Rights Movement is John Lewis famous for?

2. What criticism did Lewis echo from Frederick Douglass' speech?

3. Why was Lewis skeptical of aligning the Civil Rights Movement with one particular political party?

4. Why did Lewis argue that his people could no longer "be patient?"

EXTENSION QUESTION

What actions do you believe to be justified for individuals/groups to take if they feel that the powers that be are either unresponsive to their needs or too slow to change? What actions, if any, do you believe to be unjustified?