

TRANSATLANTIC IDENTITIES



Thomas Jefferson

1. THE DECLARATION September 20, 2023

THE DECLARATION

THOMAS JEFFERSON'S PHRASE "All men are created equal," though not literally true at the time, did something unique: it proclaimed an idea that would become the founding principle of a new nation; it told Americans who they were. Britons had no need to define their national identity in this way; they could simply go on as they were. So unlike other classes, which will look at America and Britain in parallel during the 19th century, this introductory session will be driven largely by American history in the 18th. In particular, we shall examine how the youngest and the oldest of the authors of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, offered contrasting models of what it was to be an American. *rb.*

A. INSPIRATION

The creation of the Declaration of Independence and its meaning, both then and for the future.

Trumbull: *The Declaration of Independence* (1818, US Capitol)

♪ **Ken Burns:** *Benjamin Franklin* (PBS 2022; several clips in class)

♪ **Ancestry.com:** *Declaration Descendants* (ad, 2017)

B. TO DISSOLVE THE BONDS

The separation of the United States from Britain was by no means a simple binary. Britain was a combination of several different countries, and while Jefferson's ideas might not go down well in England, they were closely parallel to Scottish ones.

Alexander Stoddart: *David Hume statue* (Edinburgh, contemporary)

♪ **Robert Burns:** *A Man's a Man for a' that* (Midge Ure, 2016)

C. READING FACES

In this section, we shall compare later 18th-century portraits by both American and British artists to determine whether there is a specific American persona and presentation. As the pictures will be presented originally without labels, most will not be listed here.

Pratt: *The American School* (1766, NY Met)

Raeburn: *The Skating Minister* (1790, Edinburgh NGS)

Neagle: *Pat Lyon at the Forge* (1829, Philadelphia MFA)

Longfellow: *The Village Blacksmith* (1840)

D. SONGS OF WAR AND FREEDOM

Most songs of the Revolution were hijacked from England, and many of the painters memorializing its battles were working from London.

♪ **Traditional:** *To Anacreon in Heaven*

♪ **Billings:** *Chester* (my video)

Trumbull: *Battle of Bunker's Hill* (1786, Yale)

♪ **Warren:** *Free Americay*

E. RESIGNATION

Three figures at the War's end: Cornwallis, Washington, and George III.

Trumbull: *Surrender of Cornwallis* (1820, US Capitol)

Trumbull: *Washington Resigns his Commission* (1820, US Capitol)

♪ **Video:** Washington's farewell to his officers (reenactment)

Freneau: *George III's Soliloquy* (excerpt)

♪ **Bennett:** *The Madness of King George*, Pitt and the King

F. IDEAL AND EXPERIENCE

The contrast between Jefferson's idealism and Franklin's experience, as models of the American character.

♪ **Traditional:** *Robin Adair* (William Coulter and friends)

♪ **Edwards:** *1776*, the Egg

G. A FLIGHT OF FRANKLINS

A rapid survey of Benjamin Franklin's life of genius, highlighting his extraordinary capacity for repeated self-invention.

Houdon: *Franklin* (1779, Philadelphia MFA)

West: *Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky* (1816, Philadelphia)

West: *Treaty of Paris* (1783, Winterthur)

H. LATER VOICES

Some opposing voices to end with: two literary critics of Franklin (Mark Twain and DH Lawrence), and two musical works that present radically different images of America.

♪ **Loesser:** *How to Succeed...* (1971), "Brotherhood of Man"

♪ **Copland:** *Lincoln Portrait*, end (1942, Bernstein, Warfield)

Alan **Bennett** (b.1934, *English playwright*), William **Billings** (1746–1800, *American composer*), Ken **Burns** (b.1953, *American filmmaker*), Robert **Burns** (1759–96, *Scottish poet and composer*), Aaron **Copland** (1900–90, *American composer*), John Singleton **Copley** (1738–1819, *American painter*), Nathaniel **Dance** (1735–1811, *English painter*), Ralph **Earl** (1751–1801, *American painter*), Sherman **Edwards** (1919–81, *American composer*), Philip **Freneau** (1752–1832, *American poet*), John **Hoppner** (1758–1810, *English painter*), Jean Antoine **Houdon** (1741–1828, *French sculptor*), DH **Lawrence** (1885–1930, *English writer*), Frank **Loesser** (1910–69, *American composer*), Henry Wadsworth **Longfellow** (1807–82, *American poet*), John **Neagle** (1796–1865, *American painter*), Matthew **Pratt** (1734–1805, *American painter*), Henry **Raeburn** (1756–1823, *Scottish painter*), George **Romney** (1734–1802, *English painter*), Gilbert **Stuart** (1755–1828, *American painter*), John **Trumbull** (1756–1843, *American painter*), Mark **Twain** (1835–1910, *American writer*), Benjamin **West** (1738–1820, *American painter*)

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