

"I declare!"
Founding Fathers Sound Off on Contemporary Issues

Teacher Resources

Student Resources

Signing of the Declaration of Independence by John Trumbull (Library of Congress)

Scenario Task & Product Assessments Questions Gather & Sort Create Share Evaluate

Digital Learning Day Lesson in Action: ["I declare!" Founding Fathers Sound Off on Contemporary Issues](#)

A Baltimore County Public Schools [Online Research Model](#) ©2012

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URL: <http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/declaration/index.html>

Grade Level & Content Area: Grade 11 English Language Arts

Overview: This BCPS Online Research Model (ORM) was designed for a Grade 11 English Language Arts unit on 18th century foundational U.S. documents of historical and literary significance, including the *Declaration of Independence*. Students engage in sustained research and critical thinking in order to answer the Essential Question: ***How would a Founding Father respond to a contemporary American issue?*** They begin their inquiry by considering the enduring relevance of the *Declaration of Independence*. Each student then explores one of the Founding Fathers' views on freedom, citizens' rights, and the role of American government, by analyzing information from biographical sources and seminal primary source documents. Students use this new knowledge to investigate a contemporary American issue through the lens of the Founding Father's perspective, synthesizing information and insights from their research to compose a written argument that defends a stance the Founding Father would take on the issue. Finally, they assume the character of the Founding Father they researched to participate in a Socratic Seminar on contemporary American issues with other Founding Fathers.

Suggested Time Frame: Approximately eight 45-50 minute class periods for student research, collaboration, writing, and culminating Socratic seminar.

Learning Environment: Computer Lab, Mobile Laptop Lab, or Internet-connected devices are needed for access to ORM Web pages and embedded digital content and tools. Some activities may be implemented in the classroom or Library Media Center.

Learning Facilitators: English Teacher and Library Media Specialist

Standards Alignment: This ORM addresses multiple Common Core State Standards for Grade 11-12 English Language Arts in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language, integrated with Standards for the 21st Century Learner (AASL) and National Educational Technology Standards (ISTE). For a complete list of aligned curriculum standards, see the ORM's [Teacher Resources](#) page.

Online Research Model (ORM) Structure - All BCPS Online Research Models consist of three main Web pages: the **Teacher Resources** page, the **Home** page, and the **Student Resources** page. Twenty-first century skills, opportunities for student collaboration and direct instruction, and links to digital content, media, and tools are embedded throughout. ***NOTE:** ORM Web pages include links to BCPS-licensed digital content. Students from other schools should access these databases (or similar digital content) through their own school subscriptions, or substitute appropriate open Internet sources.

- The [Teacher Resources](#) page includes Tabs for the Essential Question, Common Core State Standards, and National Standards, as well as a Research & Investigation Guide, Differentiation notes, Suggested Time Frame, Notes to the Teacher, and Supplemental Teaching Resources. Links to the ORM **Home** page and **Student Resources** page are provided at the top of the page.
- The [Home](#) page is organized under the following Tabs to guide students through a structured research process: **Scenario**, **Task & Product**, **Assessments**, **Questions**, **Gather & Sort**, **Create**, **Share**, and **Evaluate**. Links to the **Teacher Resources** Page and **Student Resources** page are also provided at the top of the **Home** page.
 - **Scenario:** The **Open** stage of the Scenario is an invitation to inquiry which engages student interest in the research. Students view and listen to a music video “mash-up” of the popular contemporary song, “Too Late to Apologize” to recall the Founding Fathers’ motivations for declaring independence from the British. They use additional media to consider the enduring relevance of the *Declaration of Independence* for Americans today. The **Immerse** stage allows students to use a variety of sources to build background knowledge about one Founding Father and his views on freedom, citizens’ rights, and the role of government, discovering interesting ideas for further inquiry.
 - **Task & Product:** Students get an overview of the entire research task and the products and performances of learning. In the **Explore** stage of inquiry, they “dip in” to find interesting ideas in several primary source documents written by the Founding Father they chose. Then, they do a close reading to analyze one seminal document, recording examples and evidence of the Founding Father’s views on freedom, citizens’ rights and the role of government.
 - **Assessment:** Links to the assessment tools that will be used to evaluate students’ achievement of their learning goals and to help them reflect on content and process.
 - **Questions:** Includes the **Essential Question** guiding the inquiry (*How would a Founding Father respond to a contemporary American issue?*) and suggested **Subsidiary Questions** for the biographical research, examination of seminal documents, and investigation of a contemporary American issue. Students are encouraged to generate some of their own questions, and are provided with a link to a Questioning Toolkit.
 - **Gather & Sort:** Students view videos about the following contemporary American issues in order to select an issue about which their Founding Father might feel strongly: Censorship, Environmental Policy, Health Care Reform, Immigration, Same Sex Marriage, or Zero Tolerance Policy. Students then use the **Contemporary Issues Resources** tab on the **Student Resources** page to locate relevant information about the issue they selected. Tools and resources for note-taking, evaluating sources, avoiding plagiarism, and citing sources are also provided under the Gather & Sort tab.

- **Create:** Students **analyze** their research notes to identify information that establishes a connection among the biographical information, seminal document analysis and contemporary issue they researched. They **synthesize** their learning and new insights based on these connections to **write a thesis statement** for a written argument in response to the Essential Inquiry Question: *How would a Founding Father respond to a contemporary American issue?* They **organize** their research findings and conclusions to create an **outline** for a well-reasoned, logically structured argument. Finally, they **write** their research-based argument and **evaluate** it according to the provided rubric.
 - **Share:** Students present their research findings to their inquiry community by engaging in a class **Socratic Seminar**, engaging in a dialogue about contemporary American issues from the perspectives of their Founding Fathers.
 - **Evaluate:** Students evaluate the achievement of their inquiry-based learning goals using the scoring tools in the Assessments section, assessing their written argument and Socratic Seminar performance, and reflecting on their inquiry process. Students are invited to **Extend** their learning by writing a **Narrative** to tell the story of how the contemporary issue they researched has affected a fictional character they create. A narrative writing guide and rubric are provided.
- The [Student Resources](#) page for this ORM is divided into three Tabs: **Founding Fathers Biographical Resources**, **Founding Fathers Seminal Documents**, and **Contemporary Issues Resources**. Each tab includes a **Resources** column with links to licensed digital content, targeted Web sites, and search tools; and a **21st Century Skills** column with links to tips, tools, and tutorials for using those digital resources effectively. Students are directed to use the **Student Resources** page as they need these resources throughout the research process.
 - **Founding Fathers Biographical Resources:** Students are directed to use these resources during the **Immerse** stage of inquiry under the **Scenario tab** on the **ORM Home page**. Students are provided with a link to a biographical reference article about a Founding Father from the *World Book Student* encyclopedia database (subscription required). Then they locate and examine two additional biographical sources from licensed databases or authoritative Web sites. Tools for evaluating Internet sources are provided.
 - **Founding Fathers Seminal Documents:** Students are directed to use these resources in the **Explore** stage of inquiry under the **Task & Product tab** on the **ORM Home page**. Students are provided with direct links to several primary source documents written by the Founding Father to explore and analyze.
 - **Contemporary Issues Resources:** Students are directed to use these resources in the **Gather** stage of the inquiry process under the **Gather & Sort tab** on the **ORM Home page**. Students use licensed digital content including *Gale Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center: Critical Thinking*, *Gale Opposing Viewpoints in Context*, *SIRS Issues Researcher*, and *NBC Learn* to search for Web sites, articles, and media about a contemporary American issue that would interest the Founding Father they researched.