

The Methodology is the Message: Citations, Sources, and Memory in Revolutionary Unessays

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When Marshall McLuhan wrote that the “medium is the message,” he was not, per se, talking about unessays.¹ Essentially arguing that forms of communication and technology rather than their content were the source of audience engagement, *Understanding Media* was published more than fifty years ago, generating debate ever since.² Like countless scholars across disciplinary boundaries, as an early Americanist who specializes in histories of copyright, I am deeply interested in the broad relationship between media and messages in my research and pedagogy. But like so many others, I did not anticipate how relevant they would become to my every-day circumstances since March of 2020. Over the last year in particular, I began to think about this relationship directly in my teaching by incorporating unessays. Layered in the format of a course with dual in-person and virtual components, unessays simultaneously embodied multiple aspects of the themes we studied, particularly in subjects of memory, digital history, and revolution, while also providing students with tangible, wide-ranging ways in which to express historical knowledge and interpretation.

Amidst the abrupt expansion of virtual and hybrid teaching brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, educators continue to confront benefits and challenges of learning across different mediums. I was no exception and spent the 2021 – 2022 academic year remotely teaching a class focused on historical memory in the age of revolutions and digital humanities where my students gathered physically in a classroom. For this special issue on “Teaching History with the Unessay,” I considered multiple ways in which I could discuss my experiences, not least of all by incorporating some aspects of what I learned through unessays myself! What follows is a reflection on how my use of unessays was dually grounded in this interest in the relationship between forms and content of expression alongside the complex circumstances of trying to be an effective and supportive educator in a virtual format. Ultimately, I found teaching with unessays to be as much about the wide-ranging, innovative, and creative forms that students crafted as the learning process in which they were made, a process deeply embedded in the work of history and of forming clear understanding the past.

Over the last several years, I learned about unessays largely through social media. Historians like Cate Denial and Christopher Jones wrote movingly about their experiences with the format, and in turn referenced other scholars from multiple disciplines who inspired the practice.³ While I was intrigued by what sounded like a creative and versatile option for students, I was not sure if such a project would fit within the structures of the classes I was teaching at the time: a 300 level seminar; “From Hamilton to Mickey Mouse,” a class on the history of copyright and politics; and a survey-style introductory course, “Timeless Issues in History.” But by the fall of 2021, two sets of circumstances came together where I felt reasonably confident to try unessays out.

The first circumstance was an exciting one. After several years of planning at my institution, a liberal arts institution in the north east, myself and several colleagues began moving forward with digital humanities

¹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964).

² For examples of studies that engage with McLuhan in wide-ranging ways, see: Rianka Singh and Sarah Sharma, *Re-Understanding Media: Feminist Extensions of Marshall McLuhan* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2022); Alan Galey, “Imagining Marshall McLuhan as a Digital Reader: an Experiment in Applied Joy,” in “Reading McLuhan Reading,” ed. Paula McDowell, special issue, *Textual Practice*. 35. 9 (2021): 1525–49; Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as An Agent of Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). For discussion of Eisenstein and McLuhan’s scholarly dynamic, see: Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin, eds., *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

³ For Cate Denial’s reflections on using un-essays, see: Catherine Denial, “The Unessay,” [CatherineDenial.org](https://catherinedenial.org), April 16th, 2019, <https://catherinedenial.org/blog/uncategorized/the-unessay/>. Christopher Jones shared his experiences as well: Christopher Jones, “Assigning the Unessay in the US Survey,” on *The Junto: A Group Blog on Early American History*, June 26th, 2018, <https://earlyamericanists.com/2018/06/26/assigning-the-unessay-in-the-u-s-survey/>. Jones cites Emily Suzanne Clark, Ryan Cordell, and Daniel Paul O’Donnell and the links to their work are available through his essay.

and public history curriculum this past academic year.⁴ As a centerpiece to those efforts, in the fall of 2021 I began teaching a course called “The Age of Revolutions and Historical Memory,” which had both digital and public history components. “The Age of Revolutions and Historical Memory” is organized around three units, with unit focused on the American revolution, unit two on the Haitian and French revolutions, and unit three considering how each movement is connected and remembered through the present day. Rather than a midterm or final exam, the central project of the course has four parts: a topic proposal; a bibliography; a digital component; and a final essay.

Given the incorporation of public history elements, including discussions of commemoration, museum studies, and history media and communication, an unessay where students could consider so many mediums, from curating an exhibit to gaming, seemed an intuitive option. Many students in my classes are not history majors but the fundamental skills that history education, public and academic, provides are relevant to so many aspects of intellectual and pre-professional development. The unessay option empowers students to play to their strengths and hone skills that are at once grounded in critical thinking and contextual understanding that also relate to their specific interests and goals. However, for students who were intimidated or uninterested in an unessay, they also had the option to complete a traditional research paper.

Similarly, the digital humanities emphasis in “The Age of Revolutions and Historical Memory,” provided tremendous opportunities for unessays amidst scholarship at the “intersection of humanities and technology.” Not only does digital history evoke relevant, timeless questions over what role mediums, methods, or tools of communication play in how we understand and interpret both our past and present, we took a very ‘big tent’ approach to digital work. Students included digital platforms from social media and podcasting to DH and data science methods like data visualization and computational analysis.⁵ Importantly, digital tools were not solely for students using the unessay option, but for those invested in research papers as well.

The second circumstance, however, was more difficult. Although the majority of my colleagues resumed in-person instruction last fall, for medical reasons I am still unable to be in the classroom even though my students meet together on campus. With the support of a classroom assistant and a combination of zoom and OWL projectors, I taught virtually through a large screen while my students were physically in the room together.⁶ It was a surreal experience where one can both marvel at the technology that facilitates such connection while also struggling under the limitations of separation. On the one hand, moving forward with unessays for the first time when I was not able to be in the classroom was a risk: I had limited experience teaching the assignment and was nervous that I would inadvertently confuse or create more work for my students as I navigated the unusual format.⁷ But on the other hand, because I was relying on more digital components due to the themes of the course and my own teaching situation, there was a broader foundation for unessays than in any class I had previously instructed.

I taught “The Age of Revolutions and Historical Memory” with unessays in the fall of 2021 and the spring

⁴ See: Edward L. Ayers, “The Pasts and Futures of Digital History,” www.vcdh.virginia.edu/PastsFutures.html (Virginia Center for Digital History); Daniel J. Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig, *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Jeff McClurken, “Digital Literacy and the Undergraduate Curriculum,” in *Hacking the Academy: New Approaches to Scholarship and Teaching from Digital Humanities*, eds. Daniel J. Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

⁵ For this definition of digital humanities and other resources, see the Digital Humanities Literacy Guidebook: <https://cmu-lib.github.io/dhlg/what-are-dh/>. The DHLG is offered through Carnegie Mellon University as part of a grant from the Mellon Foundation. It is overseen by Scott B. Weingart, Program Director of Digital Humanities at Carnegie Mellon University, with key contributions from Susan Grunewald, Matthew Lincoln, Agile Humanities Agency, and many other community contributors. Please see the site for a full list of contributors. Thank you to Micki Kaufman for recommending this resource.

⁶ Many thanks to Alban Rama and Elijah Williams for their work as course assistants and to my students in HST 316 for their patience with the dual virtual and in-person formats of the class.

⁷ See: Rikke Toft Nørgård, “Theorising hybrid lifelong learning,” *British Journal of Educational Technology*. (2021): 1-15. Thank you to Kevin Gannon and the 2022 Bright Institute for this recommendation.

of 2022 Rather than a preassigned subject, students selected any aspect of the Age of Revolutions – event, actions of an individual or group, or an issue, debate, or circumstance that speaks to a theme or idea of interest – and built on that topic in each assignment. I provided an overview of more than twenty ideas for an unessay but students could interpret those options as widely as they wished or come up with a concept of their own altogether. Drawing on unessay reflections, conversations, and feedback, it seems a large reason why students selected the unessay option was because it afforded them the opportunity to express their historical findings in a creative way, especially when they had concerns about their ability to produce a traditional essay. Conversely, those who chose the traditional essay option found themselves intimidated by the open-endedness of the unessay, unsure of what medium they could use that would come across clearly and effectively.

In addition to the focus of the course and the technological circumstances, another part of what drew me to unessays were the specific learning goals around which the class was oriented. As a centerpiece for digital humanities, the course emphasizes digital skills: students needed to come away from the class with an introductory understanding of what DH is and how it relates to their individual studies, so a range of assessment made sense. Similarly, students also needed to gain a degree of content knowledge about the American, French, and Haitian revolutions, and how each movement was remembered over time.

Other learning goals were university wide. As part of its core curriculum, Iona University has signature learning outcomes in each class, and for “The Age of Revolutions and Historical Memory,” those outcomes were grounded in critical thinking. A broad yet essential skill, I framed critical thinking in terms of several aspects of what historians do, specifically understanding chronology, or the order in which things happen, and context, or what particular circumstances shape a given event, individual, or idea. Doing so not only supports students in their work as developing historians but also in honing their awareness and skills in media and information literacy, civic engagement, and other personal or professional interests.

With these tools in place, students then considered what has changed over time and what issues remain constant, similar, or unresolved. For a course that considered the memory of the Age of Revolutions today, and indeed, the benefits and challenges of framing the late eighteenth century as an “age of revolutions,” the ability to consider effectively and substantially what is similar about the past, what is different, and how both impact the present-day was the central outcome of the class. Doing so, I’d argue, encourages students to think confidently because they know their perspective is grounded in deeply researched and solidly based evidence.

This benchmark was achieved in the unessay project. It was evident in student feedback alone, not to mention the range and depth of the unessays themselves, that students formed grounded interpretations of connections and change over time that spoke to their specific perspective. Most clearly, students felt confident to think critically and expansively, particularly involving digital media. One student observed that “deciding to do the podcast format felt super freeing,” especially because they were “able to incorporate some non-traditional sources.”⁸ Frequently, students who opted to proceed with the traditional essay option – and these were excellent, compelling papers as well – referenced feeling unsure that they would be able to do a “good job” as the reason for not selecting the unessay. Another student, a future educator, wrote that “as an adolescent education major concentrated in history, I think that many students would appreciate, as I did, the chance to present and share their historical findings in a way that helps showcase their artistic [skills] as some many not feel confident in their essay writing abilities.”⁹ “I can see myself using this method in my own future classroom,” they concluded.

While there are innumerable benefits and (perhaps a few challenges) with unessays, I came away with three central observations that related to the goals of “The Age of Revolutions and Historical Memory.” The first involves citation practices. One of my initial concerns with assigning unessays had to do with citations, and concerns that students would miss out on the related engagement with historiography, the peer review process,

⁸ Anonymous, “HST 316 in-class evaluation,” May 4th, 2022.

⁹ Anonymous, “HST 316 in-class evaluation,” May 4th, 2022.

and most specifically, the importance of giving credit to others. Citations are, as Karin Wulf and others have noted, essential to information and media literacy, and part of this is due to the methodical nature of tracing where evidence comes from, from primary sources to secondary analysis.¹⁰ Yet another element of citation practice is the unpacking and clarification of which sources are which, a critical skill that teachers, myself included, overlook as we wrongly assume that students are clear on what sources come from the evidentiary record and what are analyses of them.¹¹

While students produced bibliographies and companion reflections to their unessays, where citation practices most clearly came to bear was in the actual composition of the projects themselves. In several podcasts, for example, students referenced primary artifacts and interdisciplinary scholars, explaining in their narratives –sometimes fictional, others non-fiction—how these references formed the foundation for their own interpretations. To be sure, in other unessay formats this was a bit more challenging: detailed illustrations or artwork relied more on the supporting pieces (bibliographies and reflections) to explain the influence more directly on their pieces, but even the brief paratext that accompanied portraits and designs provided references.

In a similar vein to citation, I want to take a moment here to thank all the Iona students who kindly agreed to share images of their unessays, included in the appendix, and gave their permission to reference their work. To respect their privacy and that of their classmates, all students referenced in this article will remain anonymous, but I do want to highlight their generosity. Moreover, in providing generative and good-faith feedback about the unessay assignments, I was able to better understand what worked well about the project, and where I might make improvements.

Unessays proved extremely effective at getting at the many stakes of who, how, and why we cite the intellectual labor of others. As I considered why, my speculation is that this may lie in the independent nature of the work. Rather than each student responding to an identical or uniform assignment, an approach that I also think has tremendous value and one I've used in plenty of pedagogical settings, the unessay asks students to do a lot of deliberation on their own. Realities that historians frequently face, such as archival silences or gaps in evidence, ensuring multiple voices and perspective, and recognizing the work of others, became more immediate in unessays because not only did students have to select their own topic – students writing research papers did this as well – but they also had to create their own format and structure. The additional layer, I believe, rendered the stakes of citations more immediate.¹²

In selecting what they found to be the most effective medium of communication, students also considered the impact of their historical analysis. Each unessay took into account the value and relationship between accurate information and thoughtful research. As I read, viewed, and listened to various unessays, nearly each student addressed to some extent the connection between the primary and secondary sources they consulted and media and information literacy. Given the thematic focus of the course, students also observed parallels between contemporary discussions about citation practices, and how those discussions involving knowledge production stretched back to the eighteenth century relationship between enlightenment and empire.¹³

¹⁰Karin Wulf, “Could footnotes be the key to winning the disinformation wars,” *The Washington Post*, August 29th, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/08/29/could-footnotes-be-key-winning-disinformation-wars/>.

¹¹The weekly readings for the class were broken down into primary, secondary, and contemporary sources. My goal was to reinforce and clarify each week the fundamental differences between sources in the historical past, historiography and scholarly publications, and contemporary resources, from present-day news articles, documentaries, podcasts, and other mediums. The goal was and is to model effective citation practices and clarify the different ways in which one can determine reliability and relevance of sources.

¹²To contextualize some of the stakes involving citations, students read contemporary essays and listened to podcasts which focused on practices. For examples, please see: Anne Bailey, “Citations Are a Metaphor for Erasure in American History,” *History News Network*, October 22nd, 2019, <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/173358>; Michael Hattem, “The Historiography of the American Revolution,” *Journal of the American Revolution*, August 27, 2013, <https://allthingsliberty.com/2013/08/historiography-of-american-revolution/>.

¹³Students often used the free online textbook, *The American Yawp*, as a reference. Available via: <http://www.americanyawp.com/>.

For many students, their consideration of the evidence at hand, or what was left behind in relation to their given topic, was echoed in the making of their unessays. For example, while some students focused closely on the physical expressions in which revolutionary thought was disseminated, from a detailed illustration of a printing press to propaganda depictions in the French revolution, others focused on deeply personal experiences, from a YouTube documentary on enslavement in Saint Domingue to a one-act play described an enslaved person's point of view on American independence (see appendix one).¹⁴ Even with such varied approaches, each student was aware of the gaps in that record, and deployed specific elements of their unessay medium to address them, incorporating, as for example in the one-act play, sources directly into the narrative.

In considering the impact of sources and recognition on their research, I observed a second aspect of working with unessays: a process of linking sources of the past to mediums of the present. In this sense, unessays, not unlike historical writing, are also a process rather than a singular product.¹⁵ As students crafted their unessays over the course of a four-part scaffolded project, they created unessays that analyzed the Age of Revolutions infused with contemporary components. For example, while one student created a physical story board of the legacies of the Stamp Act, others crafted a virtual exhibit of Washington memorabilia, a revolutionary Jeopardy, and a YouTube mini documentary on the interconnectivity of the origins of revolution in Haiti, France, and the United States (see appendix two). Not only did these unique interpretations of the assignment reflect individual arguments and interpretations, but they themselves became artifacts of the past year, incorporating technologies of the current moment. While all work, including traditional essays, are of course products of their time, the material presentation of unessays only further emphasizes that context.

To this end, each unessay either emphasized contemporary connections between revolution and today or key changes, and presented their historical knowledge as deeply relevant to other interests and concerns. One student, for example, considered the figures of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Jean Jacques Dessalines in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement while another contrasted the use of specific language and texts in the late eighteenth century with nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century protest movements.¹⁶ Regardless of whether students observed connections or changes, they considered how the composition of their unessays related to the historical subject. Such a connection did not mean that this particular student viewed the two movements as the same, far from it, but rather made the compelling case that better understanding anti-slavery, anti-imperialist struggles helped them to better understand their contemporary moment.

The unessays students created resulted in artifacts of 2021 and 2022 that in turn embodied a central tenant of our course and my third observation: levels of historical memory. In one sense, as Michelle Miller states, "questions about memory go to the heart of who we are and how we see the world" whether it is about the process of remembering or the subject of memory itself.¹⁷ Creating unessays emphasized for students how historical memory is both a product of the past and of the present, a reflection of their subjects of study and of the contemporary context in which they created them.

Unessays in "The Age of Revolutions and Historical Memory" were akin to mousetraps, plays within plays of how unique aspects of the Age of Revolutions relate to (or sharply differ from) issues today. By choosing an interview with the Marquise de Lafayette, one student keenly juxtaposed how people from the past might experience current tensions, particularly around commemoration, while another used their skills as an artist to distinguish the political choices of different leaders in revolutionary France (see appendix three). Not only

¹⁴ All student references throughout this essay are kept anonymous to protect their privacy and no grades are referenced. Images in the appendix are used with permission.

¹⁵ See: Genesee M. Carter and David Korostyshevsky, "Valuing Process Over Product: Using Writing to Teach History in the Undergraduate History Classroom Authors," *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods* 46 (1):10-22.

¹⁶ Students relied specifically on Marlene Daut, *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015) and Chelsea Steiber, *Haiti's Paper War: Post-Independence Writing, Civil War, and the Making of the Republic, 1804-1954* (New York: NYU Press, 2020).

¹⁷ Michelle D. Miller, *Remembering and Forgetting in the Age of Technology* (West Virginia University Press: Morgantown, 2014), 14.

did the process help students to better understand the relevance of history to today and the importance of change over time, but how their unessays are a product of this specific period as well. As a result, both the thematic goals of the course as well as critical thinking via context and chronology were equally and fully addressed.

This brings me to the only challenge I encountered with the unessay, one that involves assessment and reinforced the value of interdisciplinarity to historical pedagogy.¹⁸ Ultimately, it became clear to me that unessays are, in many respects, a quintessential interdisciplinary methodology as well as assignment. While the goals of the assignment, scaffolded and unfolding over a full semester, were clearly framed, there was not as self-evident a grading structure as with a traditional essay. I have grappled with the use of rubrics in the past, choosing not to use one with the unessay but still providing a break-down of different components each project needed to address. If all components – engaging with the prompt and central questions of the course, completing each step, and presenting a clear and persuasive interpretation of the assignment – were met, then that earned high marks. I was fortunate that in my first year of unessays all students met those standards. That may not always be the case, as some students may need more precise metrics. I will personally benefit from becoming more informed on scholarship of teaching and learning that considers how to most effectively and inclusively evaluate (and support) interdisciplinary student scholarship that brings together historical work with creative and other disciplinary tools.

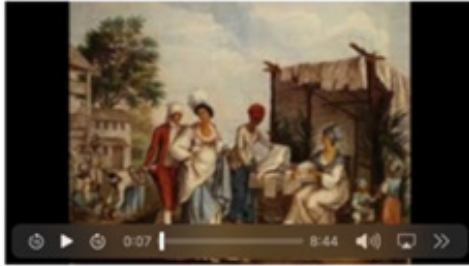
There were and are many moving parts in my experience with unessays which made them tremendously valuable both for myself and my students. As an educator, they allowed me to experiment with historical and contemporary stakes of communication in my own unique situation and to support my students doing the same. When it comes to unessays, there is no dichotomy between tools and ideas, learning content or critical thinking, or even, I'd argue, between “traditional” and “new” media. Foundational research and historical methods are just as essential, and in fact reinforced, in unessays, particularly when the subjects are as complex as revolutions and how they are remembered.

With contentious “history wars” occupying news headlines and the approaching 250th anniversary of American independence, the scaffolded process of unessays puts digital history directly in conversation with continuous debates in the study of the history of the United States and the very immediate circumstances of 2022.¹⁹ Citation practices, media and information literacy, primary and secondary sources, interdisciplinary engagement, and the forms that they take are foundational to the study of history. Through their unessays, students produced outstanding, wildly creative, and inspiring scholarship which emphasizes how relevant communicating historical knowledge is.

¹⁸ See: James Grossman and Julia Brookins, “Assessment Is What We Make of It,” *The Journal of American History* 103, no. 4 (2016): 1132-1137; Ryan Jopp and Jay Cohen, “Choose your own assessment – assessment choice for students in online higher education,” *Teaching in Higher Education: Critical Perspectives*. 27.6 (2022): 738- 755.

¹⁹ For examples of the term, see: David W. Blight, “The Fog of History Wars,” *The New Yorker*, June 9th, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/the-fog-of-history-wars>.

Appendix 1



The French Revolution (1789-1799)

King Louis XVI
Queen Marie Antoinette

Selfish & Careless Tyrants

Common enemy
wrote and
the third
estate

George and her
herald
class
enrage
France

The tyrannical
relationship of the King
and Queen results in
their beheadings

Marat (left) and
Robespierre (right) lead
France in a bloody Reign
of Terror (Sept. 1793-Jul. 1794)

Remembered As:
The Reign Queen
Marie Antoinette
A The Pig King Louis
XVI

George Washington: American Revolution
Difficult Success into the End

A brief overview:
George Washington was seen as the leading help of the American Revolution. Although the war is not there on the public lighting, the general help and support to George Washington's troops. She played a big part during the American Revolution and considered to be an ideal woman during the Revolution thanks to her leadership skills. What do you, the character "Elizabeth" will portray. Elizabeth and represent the responsibilities, duties, and roles of women during the war.
Being seen as a vital component in the war. Many young boys were drafted and fought in the war, which helped give the numbers of George Washington's troops and control them to become men in a short amount of time. The character "John" will represent as the leading role for young boys who were drafted during the war and when their skills didn't work out of the time.
When American slaves also play an important role and just like the young boys during the war, the slaves also helped increased the number of troops to win the war. The character "James" will represent as the leading role for slaves.

Elizabeth: "What should we do? How can we help? We are just women!"
Elizabeth: "Yes! We are just women! Women who are determined to help our men win this. Every single one of us have different talents and skills that we can put to use."
Elizabeth: "I'm only a wife. The most I can do is take care of my family. I only sew, cook, clean."
Elizabeth: "Perfect! The more you do on hands-on projects. You can help equip and provide resources for the soldiers. You can also help build new tools and fix weapons."
Elizabeth: "What about if I'm another mother out with I'm empty a girl? I've been treated with kindness. I don't do the traditional women responsibilities."
Elizabeth: "But that means you can fight. If you can't have a husband or live there your brothers. No one has to know. Keep your hair closely a secret. You can fight alongside your brothers on the field. As every battle goes, more men die. The greater number of soldiers mean we have a greater chance of winning."
Elizabeth: "I am familiar with medicine and hermetic sciences. What can I do?"
Elizabeth: "Right during the war is a top priority. Someone needs to be there to tend to the soldier's wounds as well as keep their health in check. Men are too inexperienced, "ignorant", and "hesitant" to do these tasks. So, it is up to us to take on these responsibilities. In the end, we must all do our part, and we must all show our greatest talents on coming in order to win the war and give our independence."

Appendix 2



PROPERTY
Use in your presentation only

NAME

PEOPLE	DATES AND NUMBERS	PERSONNEL	PRODUCTS OF VICTORY	BATTLES METHODS	CONNECTION TO HISTORY AND TODAY
\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$400
\$600	\$600	\$600	\$600	\$600	\$600
\$800	\$800	\$800	\$800	\$800	\$800
\$1000	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000	\$1000

Appendix 3

A DECLARATION
IN THE REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.
IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED,
September 17, 1776.

RHETORIC IN REVOLUTIONS:

An analysis of the impact of the Declaration of Independence.

The declaration of Independence was written at a time when the only people who were worthy of rights were straight white landowning men. Issues of equality regardless of one's gender, race, or sexual orientation were not sought under the original Declaration. The Declaration itself did not ask for the end of imperial and monarchical rule for everyone, everywhere. Nevertheless, across the world and across time periods, the Declaration of Independence would be used to establish self-rule and expand democratic participation, as well as fight for equal protection and social change.

Start Exploring

[Interviewer]
That truly is an amazing thing. I think that the fact that, so long after the war had ended, people still wanted you to travel back to spend the anniversary of Yorktown with them just goes to show you how big of an impact you had on those people. So, what about recently? Have there been any initiatives to remembering the great things that you did during the revolution closer to 2022?

[Lafayette]
Actually, yes! There was a more recent movement to naming a park area after me. Back in 2020, the Black Lives Matter Movement petitioned to have President's Park renamed to Lafayette Park. Their reasoning behind it was that they were fighting for justice for their community and that they share many of the same ideals and beliefs that I have. I think that it is really cool, and a really big honor to continue to inspire people down to the present to fight for what they believe in with the goal of justice in mind.

[Interviewer]

Geldberg, Sarah. "Setting the Past: Revolutionary Memory and the Civil War in Yorktown." The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 122, no. 2 (2014), 101.

Neoclassicism in the arts and society