



FAMILY SCHOOL
from AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL

CELEBRATE *Liberty*



Declaration of Independence Stories

Story 1

Have the children color the picture of Independence Hall while you read or tell them the first story.

The Second Continental Congress didn't stop working after the Revolutionary War started. The delegates met often and discussed things that needed to be done in order for the colonies to fight against the British. During this time people had very different opinions of what should happen. Some believed the king, George III, was right to treat them as he did. They wanted to just do what the king asked them to do. They were loyal to him. These people were called Loyalists or Tories. Some believed that the king was wrong, but they still wanted to be part of England. They wanted to talk to the king and write letters to him, trying to convince him to change his laws and treat them more fairly. Still others wanted to completely break away from England and become a separate country. People talked about their ideas and discussed them everywhere. The delegates did the same. As time went on, more and more of them felt it was time to declare their independence from England. In January of 1776 leaders in Massachusetts passed a resolution, calling for independence. Soon North and South Carolina, Rhode Island, Georgia, and Virginia did the same. But Pennsylvania and New York, two large colonies, still held back. (See David McCullough, *John Adams*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 107, and [The Heritage Family Series, Lesson 15](#)).

Day after day the delegates talked and argued, "Should we or should we not vote for independence?" John Dickinson from Pennsylvania led the fight against independence and John Adams led the fight for it.

Story 2

Have the children color the picture of Thomas Jefferson Writing the Declaration of Independence while you read or tell the following. (Jefferson had red hair.)

Finally on June 7, Richard Henry Lee, a delegate from Virginia, stood up and began to speak. Resolved, he said, "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." (David McCullough, *John Adams*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 118.) It was a

bold resolution. Lee was asking his fellow delegates to decide what they wanted to do, and to decide that they wanted independence. The delegates debated for hours, until after dark. But the delegates couldn't agree. Finally the next morning, the delegates who were against independence voted to postpone a vote on Lee's resolution for 20 days. But thinking that they might eventually vote for independence, the delegates appointed 5 men to write a declaration of independence. The five men were Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and Benjamin Franklin. John Adams suggested that Thomas Jefferson do the writing. Jefferson was a good writer. He could put ideas into words in a way that people remembered them. Jefferson began to write. He wrote in the second story parlor of a man who was a brick layer. He sat in a revolving Windsor chair and had a writing desk that he had designed on his lap. He wrote that all men are created equal and that God gave them certain rights that governments should not take from them. He said that all men had a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. He also made a list of the reasons America didn't want to be part of England. He ended it with these solemn words: "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." He trusted in the help of God and was willing to sacrifice his life, his fortune, and his honor for the support of liberty.

By the end of June, Jefferson had finished the document and submitted it to the Congress. (See David McCullough, *John Adams*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 1117–122.)

Story 3

Have the children color the picture of John Adams while you read or tell the following.

During the time Jefferson was writing the Declaration, more and more colonies favored independence, but the vote for independence had to be unanimous. That means every colony had to vote for independence. They had to show England that they were united. The last discussion and a vote on independence was set for July 1. That morning most of the delegates came to Independence Hall, then called the state house, thinking the vote would be taken with little fanfare. But John Dickinson had decided to plead one more time against independence. He knew, he said, that his ideas were unpopular, but his conscience would not allow him to sit still. He felt the move to independence

was too soon and that the colonies were unprepared to break with England. He said that to fight against England would be to “brave the storm in a [ship] made of paper.” John Adams said he spoke “not only with great ingenuity and eloquence, but with equal politeness and candor.” (David McCullough, *John Adams*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 126.) When he stopped speaking, it was silent. The only sound was the rain hitting the windows.

Finally John Adams stood. The storm grew worse. Thunder, lightning, and pounding rain beat against the walls of the state house. As a young boy, such storms had “unstrung him.” But this day, he spoke strongly in behalf of independence. He was logical and optimistic. He spoke of the future, when America would be a wonderful new nation. He spoke for two hours. Jefferson said that Adams “spoke with a power of thought and expression that moved us from our seats.” John Adams later became the 1st vice president and the 2nd president of the United States. But his greatest work may have been what he did in the beginning of the war: he nominated George Washington as general of the army, suggested Thomas Jefferson write the masterful words of the Declaration of Independence, and convinced the delegates to vote for independence.

However, in spite of Adam’s work, at the end of the day a first vote was taken. Each colony voted according to the way the majority of the delegates of that colony wanted to vote. Only 9 colonies voted for independence. South Carolina and Pennsylvania voted no. Delaware was tied and New York abstained. Although the vote for independence won, the delegates were not satisfied. They needed a unanimous vote on this serious issue. Every colony had to be for independence. So a final vote was postponed until July 2. (David McCullough, *John Adams*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 124–128.)

Story 4

Have the children color the Caesar Rodney picture while you read or tell the following.

The story of Delaware’s vote shows us what a true patriot is. Delaware had three delegates to the convention. Thomas McKean and Caesar Rodney were for independence but George Reed was against it. However, Caesar Rodney was not in Philadelphia to vote. He was a brigadier general in his own colony and had been called home to put down loyalist riots. Thomas McKean sent a desperate note to Rodney, begging him to return to Philadelphia as soon as he

could. Rodney received the note on the evening of July 1. He was exhausted and ill. He suffered from asthma. And he had a painful cancer that afflicted his face. It was so painful and unsightly that he often wore a green silk scarf wrapped around his head so that it covered the cancerous part of his face. The cancer slowly ate away at both Caesar's face and his energy. He called his cancer a "horrid and most obstinate disorder" ([Founding Father Caesar Rodney: Who He Was and Why He Matters Today](#)). Doctors had advised him to go to England for treatment, but Rodney wanted to stay and work for his country.

He was a funny looking man. John Adams described him, saying, "Caesar Rodney is the oddest looking man in the world; he is tall, thin and slender as a reed, pale; his face is not bigger than a large apple, yet there is sense and fire, spirit, wit and humor in his countenance" ([DSDI: Caesar Rodney](#)). In spite of his sickness and pain, Caesar Rodney decided to do what he could. Just as the day was ending, he jumped on a horse and in a heavy rainstorm he rode the 80 miles between Delaware and Philadelphia. With thunder crashing around him, he rode through the night, stopping only to change horses. Thomas McKean wrote that Rodney arrived at the door of the state house in "his boots and spurs," just in time to cast his vote for independence. As he voted he said, "As I believe the voice of my constituents and of all sensible and honest men is in favor of independence, and my own judgment concurs with them, I vote for independence" ([Their Sacred Honor](#)). With his vote Delaware could vote for independence. When Rodney signed his name to the Declaration of Independence, he knew he was giving up all hope of going to England to receive treatment for his cancer. He knew he probably did not have long to live. And in fact, he died just after the Revolutionary War ended, on June 29, 1784 ([Independence Hall Association: Caesar Rodney, Their Sacred Honor, Declaration Signers, Caesar Rodney](#)).

Story 5

Have the children color the *Signing of the Declaration of Independence* coloring page while you read or tell the following.

The next day, July 2, a new vote was taken. Because Rodney was back in Philadelphia, Delaware's vote was now for the Declaration. South Carolina changed their vote in order to be united with the other colonies. In Pennsylvania, John Dickinson and Robert Morris, who were still against independence decided not to attend that day's session. They didn't want to vote for independence, but they also didn't want to have Pennsylvania cast the

only no vote. So they stayed away. With those two gone, the majority of the delegates from Pennsylvania voted yes. New York continued to abstain or cast no vote at all. Their instructions from the people in New York were that they could not vote for independence. Rather than vote against the Declaration, they refused to vote at all. (When they finally received permission to stand for independence, the New York delegates signed the Declaration.) The vote passed, 12 colonies to 0. A new country had been created—the United States of America. (David McCullough, *John Adams*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 128–129.)

Story 6

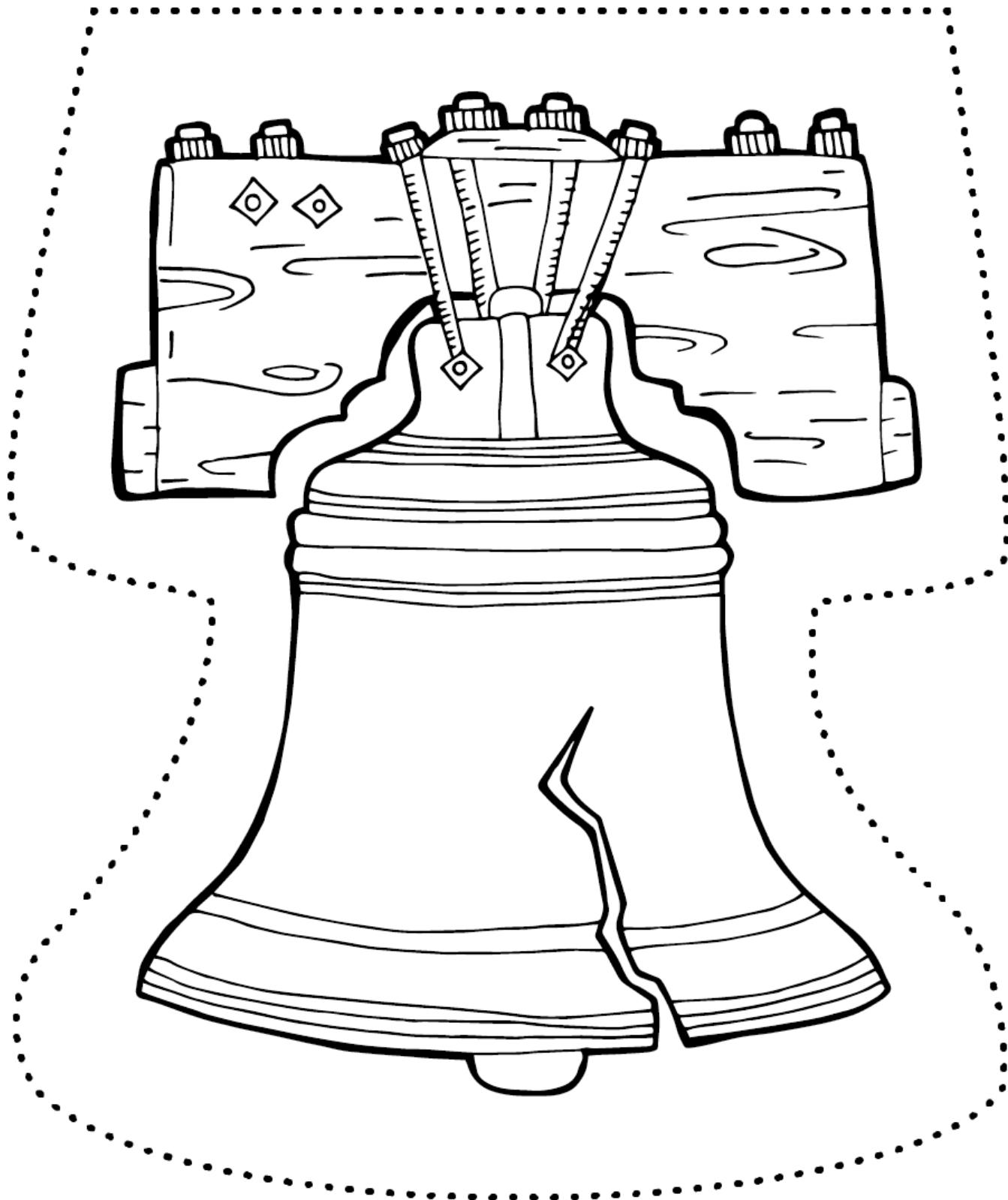
Have the children color the fireworks page while you read or tell the following.

John Adams was ecstatic about the results. He wrote home to his wife, Abigail, that “the second day of July 1776 will be the most memorable...in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the Day of Deliverance by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other from this time forward forever more.” (David McCullough, *John Adams*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001, 130.)

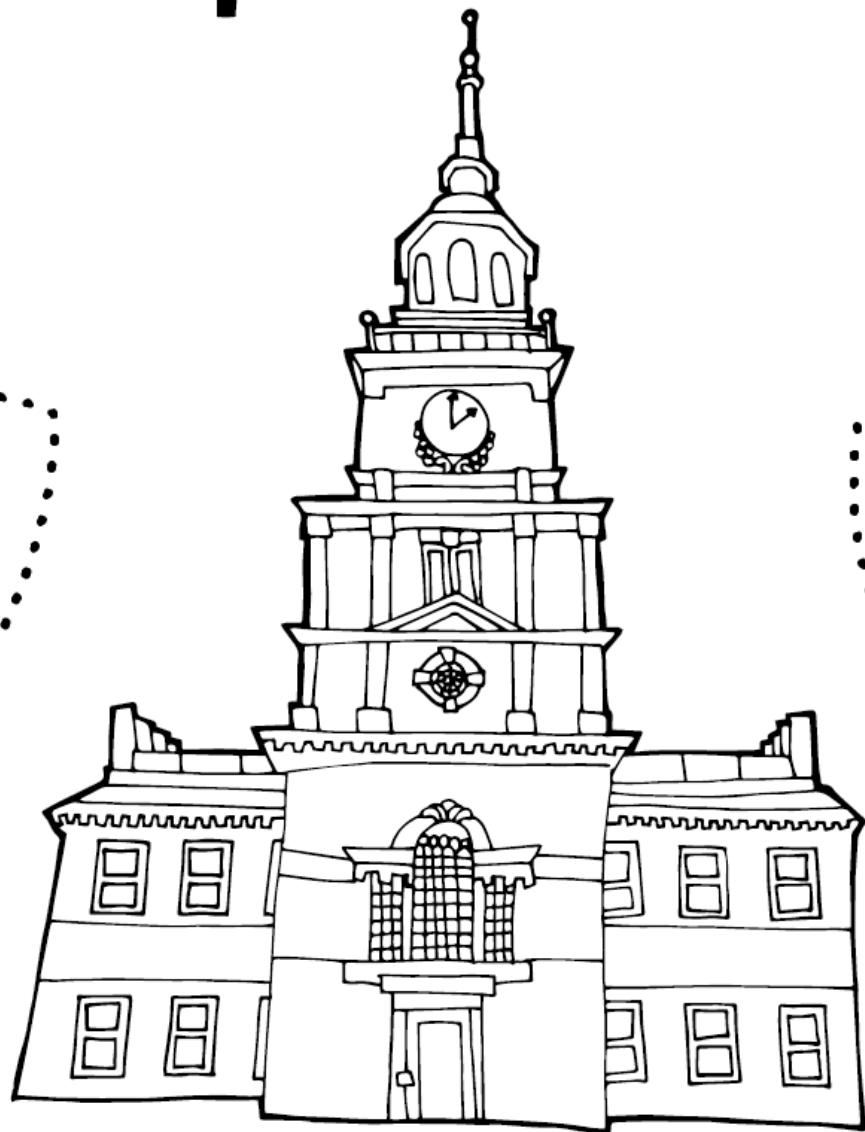
John Adams was almost right. We do celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence, but we celebrate it on the 4th of July, not the 2nd. Although the delegates voted for independence on July 2, it was on July 4 that they accepted Thomas Jefferson’s declaration. That day John Hancock and his secretary signed the document. John Hancock signed it in large letters. Legend says that he signed his name so large so that the king of England would not need glasses to read it.

Independence Coloring Pages

Color the pages and cut them out in the bell shape. Staple them together at the top of the bell shape.



Independence Hall



Thomas Jefferson writing the Declaration of Independence



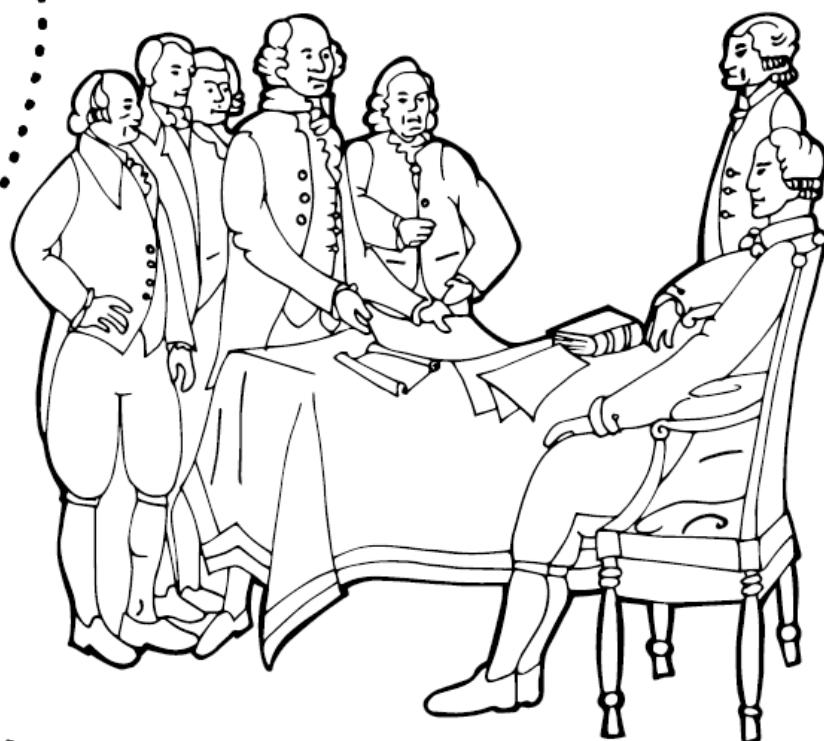
John Adams



Caesar Rodney



Signing the Declaration of Independence



Fireworks



Printable Pinwheel



Cut out the pinwheel. Cut along the small dotted lines, stopping before you reach the center. Using a thumb tack secure the corners that are marked with large black dots to the center black dot. Press the pushpin into the top of a pencil eraser. For a two-sided print, print the pattern on the front and back of a paper or paste two printed templates together before cutting. You can also create your own pattern with the blank template on the next page.

