

CONSTITUTION 101

Module 2: Principles of the American Revolution

2.1 Activity Guide

QUOTE ANALYSIS

In this activity, you will explore the ideas that shaped the American Revolution and read several prompts to engage in a conversation with your classmates. Together, you will discuss how ideas are shared, modified, and reused over time to build arguments.

Read the following quote by a key Founding Father, Thomas Jefferson.

“This was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before, but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take. Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, not yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All it’s [sic] authority rests on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, & c.”

—Thomas Jefferson to Henry Lee, May 8, 1825

Answer the following questions:

3	Highlight three words or phrases that stand out to you.
2	Identify two questions that come to mind.
1	Summarize the quote in one sentence.