



Declaration Resources Project
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What is the Declaration Resources Project?

The Declaration Resources Project was established at Harvard University in 2015. The mission of the project is to create innovative and informative resources about the Declaration of Independence. Our goal is to encourage and equip individuals to engage with the text and context of the Declaration in new ways. One of our current projects is the development of an educational game focused around the Declaration of Independence, called “Portrait of a Tyrant”. For more information about the Declaration Resources Project, visit our website.

What is the Teacher Advisory Board?

Our Teacher Advisory Board will include about 20 teachers, representing a wide geographic and institutional range, all passionate about teaching the Declaration of Independence in new and exciting ways, and preferably with interest and/or experience in educational gaming and technology. The board will meet by conference call/video every few months. There will be an in-person meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts next summer for all teacher advisors (date and travel stipend TBA). The Teacher Advisory Board will be informed of their selection in October 2016, with a 15-month term ending December 2017.

What are the responsibilities of the Teacher Advisory Board?

Teacher advisors will be responsible for providing feedback on the preliminary prototype of our game, and formulating strategies for classroom play and curriculum integration. Teacher advisors will be given access to the prototype for play testing, and ideally would be able to play test in the classroom with their students, as well. Teacher advisors will also provide insights for the game narrative, characters, primary sources integration, and supplementary materials to ensure the game will be appropriate, approachable, and fun for students. In exchange for their input, teacher advisors will have early access to the first chapter and full video game, and will receive a letter of recognition from Principal Investigator Danielle Allen and the Declaration Resources Project at Harvard University.

Portrait of a Tyrant Summary

The Declaration of Independence is among the most important texts in the American tradition. It is a high-efficiency text – relevant across multiple disciplines and short, a mere 1337 words. It can and should be at the center of middle school and high school pedagogy for civic education, history, social studies, and English Language Arts. Yet pedagogic resources to support teaching around the Declaration of Independence are less rich and plentiful than they should be. Our video game, Portrait of a Tyrant, will contribute to improving this situation.

Portrait of a Tyrant is a 2D point-and-click adventure game centered on the grievances and rights articulated in the Declaration of Independence. Our target audience is 6th-12th grade

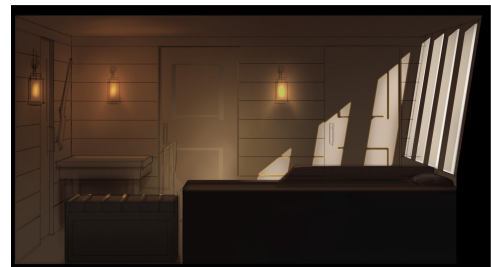
students, and our goal is for the game to teach humanities content and critical thinking and to cultivate civic readiness. The starting point for this video game concept was Danielle Allen's 2014 book *Our Declaration*.



The main character is a teenaged genius named Briana, who has time-travelled from the year 3000 to the years leading up to the Declaration of Independence. Briana comes from a theoretical future United States of America that has lapsed into a tyrannical monarchy. The Declaration of Independence and other foundational documents have been lost, both physically and ideologically. In her future world, revolution is stirring and people are trying to recover a long-lost understanding of how to move from tyranny to democracy.

Briana's goal is to travel to the last time Americans achieved independence from their king, and learn from them, talk to them, and find out how they would transition into a new form of government. Through seven chapters of gameplay, Briana uses her wits and charms to stay alive as she travels throughout the colonies looking for answers. To begin the game, Brianna finds herself in the year 1772 (four years too early), aboard a ship in the harbor outside Providence, Rhode Island. From there, she travels to a Vice-Admiralty Court in Annapolis, Maryland; an Assembly meeting in Salem, Massachusetts; a tavern in Savannah, Georgia; a private home in Albany, New York; and a print shop in Norfolk, Virginia. Briana's adventure concludes with a stop in her intended destination: Philadelphia, just as the Declaration of Independence is presented for debate in Congress.

In each chapter, Briana encounters a different aspect of tyranny through grievances pulled directly from the Declaration of Independence. The colonists she encounters tell the real historical context of these grievances, allowing her (and the player) to empathize with their situations. Once a grievance is matched to a character's predicament, Briana responds with a right they should be entitled to, pulled from the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Briana also solves contextual puzzles to help the people she meets, and learns logic through syllogistic riddles, allowing her to better understand the syllogism of the second sentence of the Declaration:



Premise 1: All people have rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

Premise 2: Properly constituted government is necessary to their securing their rights

Conclusion: All people have a right to a properly constituted government.

Briana becomes renowned for her capacity to match wits with anyone that crosses her path and for her ability to talk her way out of tricky situations. She also grows older, beginning the game as a 12-year-old and finishing the seventh chapter as a more confident and more persuasive 16-year-old. As the game comes to a conclusion, she returns to her future time, only a moment after she originally left. With her new insights, the complete set of grievances, rights, and a command

of syllogistic logic, she tackles the same decision the Founding Fathers faced in the Declaration of Independence: “alter or abolish”?

Currently, we have a preliminary prototype of the first chapter, set aboard the *Gaspée* near Providence, which our teacher advisors will be able to play test. The narrative elements and characters for this chapter as well as the full game will continue to be written and revised over the next eighteen months, and we welcome our teacher advisors as part of that process. We will also work with the teacher advisors to develop classroom integration and dissemination strategies, and to ensure our curricular goals for the game are being met at every stage of development.

Timeline

- ☞ September 15: Applications Due
- ☞ October 1: Applicants notified. Applicants chosen for Teacher Advisory Board will need to submit a letter of support by October 15.
- ☞ November: First Virtual Meeting
- ☞ February: Second Virtual Meeting
- ☞ May: Third Virtual Meeting
- ☞ July: In-Person Meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1.5 days)
- ☞ October*: Fourth Virtual Meeting
*At this point, teacher advisors will decide whether to recommit for the next term of the project

Game development began in Fall 2016. We intend to have a polished prototype of the first chapter completed by the end of 2017, with a polished prototype of the full game completed during the following year. The full game will likely be released to the public, free of charge, in three to four years.