



Lesson Plan 1, Task 2 Close Reading Guide:

Ho Chi Minh "Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam"

Teacher KEY (NOTE: Since the "text under discussion" is abridged for space, make sure students have a copy of the original speech)

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Answers and Notes:
"All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness...Those are undeniable truths."	Why does the author choose to include this reference? What are the implications?	<i>Ho Chi Minh chooses to reference the American declaration of Independence and model his own after it in order to persuade the United States to support Vietnamese emancipation. He also included the reference to the French and American revolution because he genuinely appreciates the ideals on which they were founded.</i>
"Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens... they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty."	Why does Ho use the words "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity"? What is the "Fatherland"?	<i>This is the motto from the French revolution. Ho is using it to demonstrate how they have violated their own principles in his "Fatherland" of Vietnam.</i>
"They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three distinct political regimes in the North, the Center and the South of Vietnam in order to wreck our national unity and prevent our people from being United...To weaken our race they have forced us to use opium and alcohol."	In this section, what evidence does Ho give for the French government's violation of their espoused ideals?	<i>The separated the regions and set up three different regimes, they built many prisons but few schools, they killed resistant residents, they encouraged the sale of alcohol and opium. These actions violate liberty because the people are slaves to addiction. They violate equality because the people have become poorer. They violate fraternity because they have treated the people as subservient rather than as "brothers."</i>
"In the fields of economics, they have fleeced us to the backbone, impoverished our people, and devastated our land."	In this section, what does "fleeced" mean? What is Ho saying has happened between the French and Vietnamese in the exchange of goods and services for money?	<i>Fleeced is the past participle, past tense of fleece (verb). It means to obtain money by cheating someone by overcharging. He is referring to the fact that the French pay the Vietnamese less than their labor or produced commodities are worth.</i>

<p>"They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests, and our raw materials."</p>	<p>In this section, why does Ho say the French have "robbed" the Vietnamese of rice fields and raw materials?</p>	<p><i>Ho is suggesting that the French have stolen the raw materials because they are using them for export instead of returning them to the people.</i></p>
<p>"They have monopolized the issuing of bank-notes and the export trade."</p>	<p>What does the term "monopolized" mean? What is Ho's accusation?</p>	<p><i>Monopolized is the past participle, past tense of monopolize (verb). It means to have total control or the largest share of something.</i></p>
<p>"They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to a state of extreme poverty. They have hampered the prospering of our national bourgeoisie; they have mercilessly exploited our workers."</p>	<p>What does "bourgeoisie" mean? How have the French "hampered" their prosperity?</p>	<p><i>It is a French term meaning the wealthy middle class. Ho is referring to that fact that even the middle class became poor after French takeover, essentially going against the principle of the revolution to promote the bourgeoisie.</i></p>
<p>"In the autumn of 1940, when the Japanese Fascists violated Indochina's territory to establish new bases in their fight against the Allies, the French imperialists went down on their bended knees and handed over our country to them."</p>	<p>What important events were occurring in 1940?</p>	<p><i>The expansion of Japanese aggression in World War II including into Vietnam.</i></p>
<p>"Thus, from that date, our people were subjected to the double yoke of the French and the Japanese... The French colonialists either fled or surrendered, showing that not only were they incapable of "protecting" us, but that, in the span of five years, they had twice sold our country to the Japanese."</p>	<p>Why does Ho blame the French?</p>	<p><i>He is frustrated that a colonial power occupying his country could not protect it from foreign invaders when it was a foreign invader itself. As a result of being ruled both to the French and the Japanese, more than two million died from starvation.</i></p>
<p>"On several occasions before March 9, the Vietminh League urged the French to ally themselves with it against the Japanese. Instead of agreeing to this proposal, the French colonialists so intensified their terrorist activities... the Vietminh League help many Frenchmen to cross the frontier, rescued some of them from Japanese jails, and protected French lives and property."</p>	<p>How does Ho characterize the Vietminh as compared to the French?</p>	<p><i>Ho characterizes the Vietminh as a capable fighting force that has been tolerant and humane. He notes that they benevolently protected the French citizens, land, and property from the Japanese even though it had been terrorized by the French government. He characterizes the French as cowards who fled the Japanese.</i></p>
<p>"From the autumn of 1940, our country had in fact ceased to be a French colony and had become a Japanese possession."</p>	<p>Why does Ho include this political technicality of ownership through occupation?</p>	<p><i>He is preparing an argument for Vietnamese independence rightfully from the Japanese, who already surrendered it to the Allies. This negates any prior French claim to</i></p>

		<i>the territory.</i>
<p>"The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated. Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered them and have won independence for the Fatherland. Our people at the same time have overthrown the monarchic regime that has reigned supreme for dozens of centuries."</p>	<p>Why does Ho mention the history of their struggle under different rulers?</p>	<p><i>Rhetorically, he is setting the stage to show the country deserves independence since it has been fighting for it for so long through different regimes.</i></p>
<p>"we abolish all the special rights the French have unlawfully acquired in our Fatherland."</p>	<p>How does Ho use legal reasoning in this section?</p>	<p><i>First, with the legitimacy he has bestowed on himself by declaring independence, he is abolishing the rights of French colonists living in the country. Second, he points out that since the French were occupying his land through colonialism and not by the will of the Vietnamese people, they have not legal right to the land anyway.</i></p>
<p>"A people who have courageously opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the Fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent."</p>	<p>Why does Ho mention the Vietminh involvement with the Allies against the Japanese?</p>	<p><i>He is reminding the United States of their alliance with the Vietminh against the Japanese to persuade the U.S. to support them in independence now.</i></p>
<p>"For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country and in fact it is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty."</p>	<p>What seventeenth-century foundational U.S. document of historical significance does this conclusion reflect?</p>	<p><i>This loosely reflects the American Declaration of Independence.</i></p> <p><i>The conclusion of the Declaration states:</i> <i>"We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to</i></p>

		<p>the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. 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."</p>
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Note: The full text for the American Declaration of Independence can found at:
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html