Historical Documents as Literature

As discussed in class, literature – especially political writings – not only reflects the time period during which it is written but also strives to influence the people of the time. Sometimes, it even continues to influence people (and other literature) long after it was published.

The U.S. Declaration of Independence is certainly an important document for our country, but it is not the only document of its type. Other governments – both before and after the United States – crafted their own pieces of writing declaring their rights and responsibilities as independent people.

For this project, your group will be looking at the Declaration of Independence and another country’s document AS LITERATURE. You will be examining HOW they are written, and you will be explaining how one was potentially (or obviously) influenced by the other. You will present your findings to the rest of the class.

Requirements:

- Your presentation should include the following information:
  - Historical background on the other country
  - Brief explanation of the CURRENT status of the other country’s government
  - Observations about the writing style and techniques used in the other country’s document
  - Comparison of the writing style and techniques between the other country’s document and the Declaration of Independence
  - Brief explanation of how the older document did influence or may have influenced the newer document in terms of themes, content and/or writing style.
- Every person in your group should participate in the development of AND the presentation of your information. Participation should be relatively equal, but you may determine the specific distribution of work for your group.
- You MUST cite your sources using APA style.

Format:

Your presentation must AT LEAST be in the form of a PowerPoint. If your group chooses to use a different format (Prezi, Moviemaker, etc.), please get prior approval from your teacher.

Due Dates:

- See the due dates for the individual steps within the rest of this document
- The final presentations will be given Oct. 3 and Oct. 4. Your teacher will determine which of these two days you MUST present.
Day One and Two – Historical Research

Due Date: Tuesday, Sept. 27

As we will be in the library, make sure to use BOTH print and online resources to find information about your country and the events leading up to its declaration of independence.

REMEMBER TO CITE YOUR SOURCES. You may use Noodle Tools to do so, in order to make sure the format is correct.

Potential Questions to answer (you might not be able to find answers to all of them, but TRY):

✓ What form of government did the country have prior to the document?
✓ What circumstances led up to the document (war, protests, executions, etc.)?
✓ Who were the key people involved?
  o Writers of the document?
  o Instigators of rebellion/ war/ protests?
  o Leader(s) who were being rebelled against?
✓ What was the initial reaction to the document after its publication?
✓ What were the long term effects of the document?
  o For example, what is the current status of the government in that country?

Brainstorm other potential questions for your group to answer (especially AFTER you’ve done some preliminary research with the additional information provided on the web page):

*Decide who will be researching what BEFORE you start...that way, people will not be duplicating the work done by someone else. In other words, use your time wisely!
Day Three – Compare/ Contrast Documents AS LITERATURE

We will have dedicated work time on this IN CLASS on Wednesday, Sept. 28. However, please feel free to start working on it early or continue working on it after Wednesday, depending on your group’s needs.

First, re-read (or read…) the other country’s document. Summarize it. For example, what are they asking for (above and beyond independence)? What specific reasons do they give to justify their independence? Etc.

Second, analyze the other country’s document. Potential areas to examine:

✓ The author’s/ authors’ tone and purpose
✓ The intended audience
✓ The use of figurative language (simile, metaphor, etc.)
✓ The use of imagery/ description
✓ Word choice/ Diction

* Make sure to give examples AND explain WHY it is an example of that technique.
* You will get a sheet in class on Wednesday to help you organize your thoughts on this topic.

Next, BRIEFLY analyze the United States’ Declaration of Independence, using the same criteria.
Finally, determine how the older document did or may have influenced the newer document...

Which was published first? _______________________

What similarities do you see between the two? (In theme, writing style and content)

What differences? (In theme, writing style and content)

Do you think the SIMILARITIES were *INTENTIONAL* on the part of the later document? Why/ why not? Give textual evidence to support your answer.

Do you think the DIFFERENCES were *INTENTIONAL* on the part of the later document? Why/ why not? Give textual evidence to support your answer.
**Day Four and Five – Create Presentation**

Determine a brief outline for the order and content of your slides:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide Number and Brief Explanation of Content</th>
<th>Who will present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*Remember, a GOOD presentation leaves something for the speaker to say. Therefore, don’t put ALL of your information on the slides. Use bullet points and key words to REMIND yourself of what to say in addition to what’s written on the slide.*

*If time, make it visually appealing with transitions, colors, fonts, etc. However, your primary grade will come from the content, so focus on that first.*