

SELF-EVIDENT

The Truths That Built a Nation

Young Explorers Edition • Grades Three through Six

LESSON ONE

“We Hold These Truths”

The Words We Are Studying

“We hold these truths to be self-evident . . .”

The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

The Big Idea

Some things are true whether we like them or not. The Founders started America by saying, “These things are true, and we will stand on them.”

Words to Know

Truth. Something that is real and does not change, even if people wish it were different.

Hold. To grab onto something and not let go. When you hold a truth, you believe it and stand up for it.

Opinion. What someone likes or thinks. Opinions can change. Truth does not.

What It Means

The most important sentence in American history starts in a surprising way. It does not start with people yelling or complaining. It starts by talking about truth. The Founders said, “We hold these truths.”

To hold a truth means you believe it so much that you will stand up for it, even when it is hard. It is different from an opinion. Your favorite color is an opinion; it can change. But two plus two equals four is a truth. It does not change no matter how you feel about it.

The Founders were not making up brand new truths. They were pointing to things that were already true, and saying, “We will build our whole country on these.”

A Picture to Help You Remember

Imagine you are building a treehouse. Before you nail up a single board, you need a strong branch to build on. If the branch is weak, the whole treehouse will fall, no matter how nice it looks.

Truth is like that strong branch. The Founders knew that if they wanted to build a country where people are free, they had to start on something strong and true. So the very first thing they did was point to the truth and say, “We will build right here.”

What a Founder Said

“The Revolution was in the Minds of the People . . . before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington.”

— John Adams, in a letter, 1815

In plain words: The real change happened in what people believed and knew was true, even before anything else happened.

Why It Matters for You

You get to decide what kind of person you will be. Will you be someone who stands up for what is true, even when it is not easy? Or will you change your mind whenever it is easier to go along with the crowd?

The Founders showed us that strong people and strong countries are built on truth. You can start building on truth right now, today.

Let’s Talk About It

1. What is the difference between a truth and an opinion? Can you name one of each?
2. Have you ever had to stand up for something you knew was true, even when it was hard? What happened?
3. Why do you think the Founders started with truth instead of just making rules?
4. What is one true thing you believe that you would never stop believing?

Try This

Make two lists on a piece of paper. On one side, write three opinions (like a favorite food). On the other side, write three truths (like something that is always true no matter what). Talk about how they are different.

A Verse to Remember

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)