

American Literature: Rhetoric of Foundational Documents



Use the matching sheet ID when checking answers.

Read the primary source excerpt below from the Declaration of Sentiments (Seneca Falls Convention, 1848). Analyze how the authors adapt Thomas Jefferson's 1776 prose.

1. What is the primary rhetorical purpose of Elizabeth Cady Stanton deliberately mirroring the exact syntax and opening cadence of Thomas Jefferson's 1776 Declaration of Independence?

Answer: B. To legitimize women's suffrage by framing it within America's sacred founding creed and exposing the hypocrisy of excluding half the nation

By intentionally borrowing Jefferson's revered revolutionary prose, Stanton forces the audience to recognize women's civil rights as an overdue fulfillment of the nation's core founding promises.

2. In the famous sentence 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal...', what critical word addition transforms the political scope of the text?

Answer: B. The addition of 'and women', expanding natural rights theory to universal gender equality

Adding 'and women' explicitly challenges the historical patriarchal assumption that Enlightenment rights belonged exclusively to property-owning males.

3. In paragraph 3, the authors substitute King George III with 'man' as the perpetrator of 'repeated injuries and usurpations.' This rhetorical substitution serves to:

Answer: A. Condemn the systemic, structural disenfranchisement of women throughout history as an ongoing form of political tyranny

By adopting Jefferson's formal indictment of imperial tyranny, Stanton frames patriarchal legal disenfranchisement (denial of the ballot, property confiscation upon marriage) as an unconstitutional tyranny.