Equality Rewritten

Trace how three declarations adapt a shared ideal.

11-12.RC.10 "Analyze and synthesize foundational U.S. and world documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the equality claim quoted from each document, circle words that describe each document's purpose, and draw a line connecting the shared "He has" wording in the first two paragraphs.

Who Is Included in Equality?

1. In 1776, the American colonies' Declaration of Independence announced that "all men are created equal." Its writers used that sweeping claim to justify a particular political break: independence from Britain. The document moves from general principles to a list of charges against King George III, repeatedly beginning accusations with "He has." That repetition makes the complaint feel less like one isolated quarrel than a sustained pattern of abuse. Yet the language of universal equality stood beside a narrower reality. Enslaved people remained in bondage, and women had no equal political standing in the new nation.

2. In 1848, the Declaration of Sentiments declared that "all men and women are created equal." It also repeats "He has" to introduce grievances, this time charging men with denying women rights such as voting. By echoing the earlier document's words and structure, its authors turn a revered argument for political freedom toward those excluded from it. The borrowed form does more than honor the 1776 text. It asks readers who accept the first declaration's principles to confront the gap between those principles and women's treatment in the United States.

3. After the devastation of World War II, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Its first article declares, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Rather than addressing one king or one nation's voters, it offers a standard for people across national borders. The phrase "human beings" names its subjects without the gendered wording of the earlier declarations. Still, a declaration alone cannot make its promises real. Read together, these documents show writers returning to equality not because the question was settled, but because each era found a new reason to demand that public ideals reach actual lives.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does repeating “He has” support the Declaration of Independence's purpose? Use evidence from the passage.

2. Why does the Declaration of Sentiments echo both the equality claim and the grievance structure of the 1776 declaration?

3. How does the wording “all human beings” fit the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' intended reach?

4. What tension links all three documents? Support your interpretation with details from at least two paragraphs.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences to a present-day school board arguing for student input in school policy, combining rhetorical moves from two of the documents. Then write two sentences explaining how each move served its original document's purpose and how your new audience changes its effect.

ANSWER KEY

Equality Rewritten

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.RC.10

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the equality claim quoted from each document, circle words that describe each document's purpose, and draw a line connecting the shared “He has” wording in the first two paragraphs. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does repeating “He has” support the Declaration of Independence's purpose? Use evidence from the passage.	**It makes the charges against King George III sound like a sustained pattern of abuse, strengthening the case for independence from Britain.**
2	Why does the Declaration of Sentiments echo both the equality claim and the grievance structure of the 1776 declaration?	**It uses a respected argument for political freedom to expose the gap between that argument and women's exclusion from rights such as voting.**
3	How does the wording “all human beings” fit the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' intended reach?	**It avoids the earlier declarations' gendered wording and supports a standard meant for people across national borders.**
4	What tension links all three documents? Support your interpretation with details from at least two paragraphs.	**Each declares equality, but declaring it does not ensure people experience it. The 1776 claim coexisted with enslavement and women's unequal political standing; the 1848 declaration challenged women's exclusion, while the passage notes that the 1948 declaration could not make its promises real on its own.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Every student deserves a voice in decisions that shape the school day. The board writes rules without hearing students; the board changes schedules without asking them. My broad opening echoes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' claim about equal dignity, which offered a worldwide standard, but here it asks a local board to include students. My repeated “the board” echoes the Declaration of Sentiments' list of grievances, which pressed for women's rights, and directs that pressure toward specific school decisions.

Accept interpretations grounded in the passage that distinguish each document's historical purpose from its rhetorical choices. For the open task, look for two identifiable moves, an explanation of each move's original purpose, and attention to the school board as a new audience.