

## Today Is Independence Day | Lesson Plan

What is the significance of Independence Day?

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Through *Otto's Tales: Today Is Independence Day*, students will learn how America was founded on the ideals of liberty and courage, and explore why we celebrate the 4th of July as a reminder of the freedom and values we share.

### Learning Objectives:

- Explain the historical and moral importance of Independence Day.
- Identify core ideas from the **Declaration of Independence**, including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."
- Describe how the **Founding Fathers** worked through compromise to establish a new, free nation.
- Reflect on the meaning of **freedom**, **sacrifice**, and what makes America unique.
- Identify the main characters and setting in *Otto's Tales: Today Is Independence Day*.
- Identify and begin to use key vocabulary related to America's founding.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **4th of July:** The day Americans celebrate the birth of the United States. It marks the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.
- **Founding Fathers:** The leaders who helped create the United States by writing important documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.
- **Independence Day:** Another name for the 4th of July. It celebrates America's independence from Great Britain in 1776 and reminds us of the freedom we have today.
- **Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness:** A famous phrase from the Declaration of Independence, meaning everyone has the right to live, make their own choices, and seek happiness.
- **Compromise:** A way of solving disagreements where everyone gives up a little to work together fairly.
- **Declaration of Independence:** A historic document written in 1776 that announced the 13 American Colonies' decision to be free from British rule.
- **Liberty:** The freedom to live and make choices without unfair control from others. A core American value.
- **Civil War:** A war fought in the U.S. from 1861–1865 between the Northern and Southern states, mainly over slavery. It ended with slavery being abolished.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.RL.1, CCRA.RL.2, CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.6, CCRA.SL.1

**Academic Subject Areas:** America, U.S. Holidays, American Values



## What You'll Need

- Video: *Otto's Tales: Today is the 4th of July* (Watch [Here](#))
- Book (Optional): *Otto's Tales: Today is the 4th of July* (Purchase [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Otto's Tales: Today is the 4th of July* (Click [Here](#))
- Construction paper and art supplies

## Lesson Plan (45-50 mins.)

### Warm-Up: (15 mins.)

1. Begin with a class discussion:
2. Ask students what they know about **Independence Day** and how people celebrate it. Many may mention fireworks, parades, or barbecues—use these familiar ideas as a bridge to deeper learning.
3. Teach that Independence Day is more than just a fun holiday—it marks the **birth of the United States** and the **signing of the Declaration of Independence** in 1776.
4. On the board, write: “Why We Celebrate America.” Invite students to share ideas about what makes America special or different from other countries (e.g., freedom, rights, history).
5. Steer the conversation toward deeper ideas by introducing key concepts in age-appropriate terms:
  - We have the **freedom to make choices**.
  - In America, people have the right to **life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**.
  - Remind students that **freedom isn't free**—it took hard work, courage, and sacrifice to build our country.
  - The idea that America was built on courage and sacrifice
6. Prompt students to reflect on how people celebrate the 4th of July (e.g., parades, fireworks, flags), and how those celebrations can help us **remember what the holiday stands for**, not just what we do for fun.
7. Let students know they'll be watching a story where Otto and his friends **travel back to 1776 to meet the Founding Fathers** and learn more about America's fight for freedom.

### Watch and Complete: (15 mins.)

1. *Show the video Otto's Tales: Today Is Independence Day to the students.*
2. After viewing, lead a class discussion to help students reflect on the story's key messages about history, freedom, and unity.
3. Ask guiding questions such as:
  - **Why did Dennis, Otto, and Smidge go back in time?**  
(*They couldn't agree on how to celebrate the 4th of July and wanted to find out what it really means.*)
  - **What question were they trying to answer?**  
(*What is the best way to celebrate Independence Day—and why do we celebrate it in the first place?*)

- **Who did they visit in 1776?**  
*(Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, who helped write the Declaration of Independence.)*
  - **What important ideas did they learn from the Founding Fathers?**  
*(That America was founded on freedom, and that the Declaration of Independence is about life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.)*
  - **Who did they meet later in Washington, D.C.?**  
*(President Ulysses S. Grant, who helped make the 4th of July a national holiday.)*
  - **What did President Grant say was the best way to celebrate?**  
*(By being grateful and sharing with others what makes America special.)*
4. Transition to the next part of the lesson; understanding the holiday on the calendar and connecting to what students learned in the story.

#### Wrap-Up: (20 mins.)

1. Distribute individual copies of the **“Today Is Independence Day” Worksheet** and guide students through the following:
  - In the **Calendar Area**, ask students to draw a picture of their favorite part of the story or something that shows why we celebrate Independence Day.
  - Have students write the name of the month (**July**) and fill in the calendar grid by numbering the days, starting from the correct day of the week. Remind them that **July has 31 days**.
  - In the **Month Section**, direct students to read aloud or sing the months of the year song. Then, have them color in the correct month.
  - In the **Seasons Section**, ask students to read aloud the four seasons, then color the appropriate season.
  - In the **Weather Section**, instruct students to circle or color the character that correctly displays today’s weather.
  - In the **Telling Time Section**, guide students to write the current time in both analog and digital formats.
  - In the **Temperature Section**, have students color today’s temperature.
2. Conclude the lesson by revisiting the key concepts discussed. Invite a few students to share what they drew or one thing they learned about the meaning of Independence Day.

#### **Don’t have time for the complete lesson? Quick Activity (15-20 mins.)**

After watching the video, distribute the coloring page *Otto’s Tales: Today is Independence Day*, and allow students to discuss their favorite character or part of the story.