



## **NEW DECLARATIONS**

### **Writing Activity**

From Monday 6 April 2020 and throughout the next few weeks people can take part in a collective writing activity. This is part of the Arbroath 2020 online programme to mark the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of The Declaration of Arbroath.

Watch the introduction video on [www.arbroath.com/](http://www.arbroath.com/) and then be guided through the activity through this worksheet. You will be creating your own New Declarations, and sharing them with us to form a new collective written work.

The activity has been devised for Arbroath2020 by writer **Rebecca Sharp**, as part of a longer project with local Arbroath schools. Rebecca will be gathering the *New Declarations* statements to create a collective text to be performed during 2020+1 Festival. Your contributions will form part of this larger work, however individual names will of course be credited wherever the work is shown.

*Right now, we're living in times of dramatic change – climate crisis, political and economic uncertainty... so now is the time to create your own Declaration.*

You will be writing **3 statements/sentences**, which put together will create your

**NEW DECLARATION**. Your 3 statements can be about different issues or ideas.

Aimed at secondary school age, anyone is welcome to take part.

**Below is the worksheet that will guide and instruct you through the writing activity.**

## **NEW DECLARATIONS**

### **Introduction and Background info**

The Declaration of Arbroath is one of the most famous documents ever produced in Scotland. It was a statement written to make the case for a nation's claim to freedom. Dated 6 April 1320, it is 700 years old in April 2020.

The Declaration of Arbroath was written when the Scots wanted to stop King Edward II of England trying to rule over Scotland. It was sent as a letter from some of the most powerful people in Scotland to Pope John XXII. They wanted him to recognise Robert the Bruce as their king. As the Head of the Catholic Church, the Pope could help sort out disagreements between countries.

In 1320 most people could not read and write, but the monks who lived in the Abbeys could – as well as producing official documents they wrote, copied and illustrated books. Arbroath Abbey was more than just a building – it contained a large and active community, and many facilities including a library (or scriptorium) where monks transcribed, wrote and illustrated documents and books. Monasteries were great repositories of knowledge. The ability to read, write and convey information was as powerful then as it is today. In fact, it could be argued that access to education and written material, and the right to freedom of expression among all people is one of the most significant features of a healthy democratic society.

### **Scottish PEN**

Scottish PEN is the Scottish Centre of PEN International, founded in 1927 as a not-for-profit organisation that champions freedom of speech and literature across borders. Scottish PEN campaigns on behalf of writers and readers both at home and abroad, ensuring writers can fully express themselves free from the threats of violence, censorship, intimidation and interference.

To mark the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath, Scottish PEN has created an anthology of new poetry and prose inspired by the Declaration and ideas about freedom of expression: *Declarations on Freedom for Writers and Readers* (Scotland Street Press, 2020).

From Scottish PEN: *'The need to hear and understand each other is as urgent now as it ever was, for the nourishment of open minds and healthy democracies. Today, an issue vital for democracy that concerns the whole world is freedom of expression.'*

**Rebecca Sharp** is a writer of plays, poetry and prose, with a specialism in interdisciplinary and collaborative projects. She is a Trustee of Scottish PEN. Rebecca has devised this activity and will be gathering the *New Declarations* together to create a collective text to be performed during 2020+1 Festival.

[www.rebeccajoysharp.com](http://www.rebeccajoysharp.com)

[www.scottishpen.org](http://www.scottishpen.org)

## **NEW DECLARATIONS – Guidance / Instructions**

Please see the end of the document for how to submit your work.

The Declaration of Arbroath text that is referred to and quoted can be found here:  
[https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//research/NRS\\_DoA\\_English\\_booklet\\_700\\_Spreads\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//research/NRS_DoA_English_booklet_700_Spreads_WEB.pdf)

You will be writing **3 statements/sentences**, which put together will create your *New Declaration*. Your 3 statements can be about different issues or ideas. You can send your Declarations in Scots, Gaelic or English: translations will be included where appropriate.

We will use the 1320 Declaration as a reference and source of inspiration. Tips for how to construct effective statements follow below. Read through the whole document before you start writing. We'll all be using a 3-part structure of Past / Present / Future. Here's how...

### **PAST:**

The 1320 Declaration talks about Scotland's past, and how it got to be the nation it was then – so for the people who wrote and signed the Declaration, the past clearly played a role in the point they were making: *“we know and from the chronicles and books of the ancients we find that among other famous nations our own, the Scots, has been graced with widespread renown.”*

Remember that this is an historical document – written at a time when the context and *expression of ideas* was very different to the ways we think today. But what the Declaration gives us is a window into the complex power struggles, violence and injustices that people were living under at that time.

So let's start by looking back...

- Your first statement is something you would like to leave in the past. It might be something very specific to your own experience, that you can do; or something you might want to see governments and society at large leave behind. It could be a way of thinking, or else a particular behaviour or activity.
  
- Another option is if there is something from the past that you feel was a *good thing* – that you'd like to honour and take forward. This might be something that you think humankind has moved too far away from, that would be good to get back – perhaps a way of thinking or living our lives that we could recover from the past.

## **PRESENT:**

The Declaration goes on to describe the current situation that the signatories want to preserve – as they see it, the Scottish people have been saved by Robert Bruce from oppressive forces, and they want peace to last: *“But from these countless evils we have been set free, by the help of Him who though He afflicts yet heals and restores, by our most tireless prince, King and lord, the lord Robert.”*

Let’s step into the here and now...

- What do you see today that is *working*? What is happening that offers hope, good sense, justice and peace? Think big – it might be a large-scale way of thinking that affects large numbers of people. Think small – it might be something you’ve experienced or witnessed first-hand, or something that might only show small effects to begin with. Is it a way of thinking, or a way of doing – or is it both?

## **FUTURE:**

The 1320 Declaration had hopes for the future. That most famous line: *“It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honours that we are fighting, but for freedom alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.”* Its aspirations were bold and forward-thinking for the time, in several ways – but importantly because it highlighted the role of the people in *choosing* who should be in power.

Right now, we’re living in times of dramatic change – climate crisis, political and economic uncertainty... so *now* is the time to create your own Declaration. The future isn’t really for me and you, or is it? Well maybe a little... but mostly it’s for the benefit of those who come after us, for *all* people, *all* species and for the very survival of the planet itself.

We can’t control time, and we can’t control most things that happen – but we *can* Declare our intentions. Go for it...

- What world can you imagine? What core values and ideas does it run on? Don’t panic! It’s easy to get overwhelmed. The 1320 Declaration narrowed it all down to *‘freedom alone’* – because they must have felt that all good things would flow from that single state of being. What would you choose?

## **WRITING TIPS FOR ALL STATEMENTS (Past, Present, Future):**

1. **Write in the present tense.** This might seem like an odd suggestion, since we’ve just been thinking about different points in time... but this technique makes statements much more powerful and will weave your intentions together into a coherent whole. Treating the past and future on the same level as the present can also have a wonderfully empowering effect, possibly even helping to calm anxiety when things seem out of control. Imagine these things are *already here*:  
cont.

Example: **Past** Financial gain does not influence the design of our societal structures.

**Present** We share resources easily, wherever there is need.

**Future** Compassion is the core principle of government.

Your ideas can be longer and more developed than these examples – or you might prefer short, neat statements. These examples are also quite broad concepts – your statements might be more specific or personal. Let's look at phrasing...

2. **Refine your phrasing.** Try out different ways of stating your intention until it feels just right.

*Past example: "I would leave behind inequality and undemocratic systems of government."*

This example is written in the *conditional* – 'I would' – which suggests '...if only I could'.

So let's rephrase in the present tense, as a statement of fact:

*"There is no inequality and no undemocratic systems of government."*

OK, but what happens when we change a *negative* ('There is no...') to a *positive* affirmation:

*"There is equality between all people, and systems of government are democratic."*

Getting better – but oops! There's a *passive voice*, which is weakening things a bit: '*There is equality between all people...*'. Change to: '*All people are equal...*'. See that? Fixed.

I also noticed a bit of confusion around the middle of the sentence, where the two ideas meet ('people, and systems'). Let's try switching them round:

*"Systems of government are truly democratic, and all people are equal."*

Rhythmically, that works better.

You'll also notice I added a 'truly'. Someone might say 'Hey, governments are already democratic, what are you complaining about?' *Are they?* All over the world? You sure about that? I wanted to punch that point up a bit, for the avoidance of doubt. You might also put '*All systems of government...*' – or '*Systems of government throughout the world...*' to really nail your point.

You might be interested in legislation – so let's look at that...

*"Electoral processes are fair, open to all people and protected by law, ensuring democratic systems of government."*

Or you might prefer to describe more a *state of being*...

*"Governments exist to serve the people and protect the planet, as there is a deep understanding that we are all connected."*

It's up to you to decide what works best for what you are wanting to say.

### 3. Language

The language of the 1320 Declaration is very much of its time – the original version was written in Latin – and definitely sounds like a formal document. But your *New Declaration* doesn't have to sound like this. The examples shown above also sound quite formal – but feel free to use your own expression; make your statements sound the way you want them to.

- One tip to test how the language is working is to practice *saying your statements out loud*.

Listen out for moments when you stumble or get stuck on a word – if the sound gets stuck, the meaning will too! Is your statement too long and complicated, are you trying to fit too much in? Try changing the order of your ideas, changing words, or editing down to a more focused statement.

Or maybe it just sounds a little flat. If you don't feel inspired when you read your statements, neither will your audience! Could you use more powerful language? Could you expand the statement to create more rhythm or sense of urgency?

### ***How To SUBMIT:***

Type out your three completed statements simply copy your statements into the body of an email and send to us.

Email to Team Arbroath 2020

[contact@arbroath2020.com](mailto:contact@arbroath2020.com)

Please include your name and the town where you are from.

Deadline for submitting your statements is 4 May 2020