

Primary Documents
The Declaration of Independence- 1776

Original Document

1) When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with one another, and to assume, among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

2) We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That, to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their Powers from the consent of the governed. That, whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such Principles and organizing its Powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is

Rephrased Document

1) As people live their lives, it may become necessary to go your separate way from the people who you lived with. Both nature and God allow people to move on. However, people must tell others the reasons why they must separate.

2) It is plain to see that all men are created equal and that God gave each man special rights (such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness). In order to protect these rights, governments are formed that receive their power from those who vote. Also, when a government does not protect these rights, it is right for voters to change or get rid of the government and start a new one. This new government must make sure that people are safe and happy. Be careful that you do not change governments for silly and selfish reasons. There are times when people continue to suffering while the government does nothing to help them. When this occurs, it is the job of the people to get rid of the government and start a new one. This is the situation that now faces the people living in the colonies. The King of England has repeatedly caused pain and suffering over and over again to the point where he has bullied his people in America. The facts that prove this to be true are:

judges shall adopt laws as hereinafter mentioned, estates in the said territory may be devised or bequeathed by wills evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to provide new Guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object to the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

1).He has refused to Assent to Laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

2) .He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

3) He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the right of Representation in the legislature; a right inestimable to them and formidable to the tyrants only.

4) He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

5) He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing, with

1) He (the king) refused to let people pass local laws.

2) He (the king) did not allow the governor to pass important laws unless he agreed to them first.

3) He refused to pass important laws that would benefit the people.

4) He (the king) made people travel far distances and made them work in uncomfortable places so that they (people) would give in to him.

5) He has shut down (closed) elected legislatures that disagree with him.

manly firmness, his invasions on the rights of the People.

6) He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise: the State of remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

7) He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws of Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

8) He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

9) He has made judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

10) He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance.

11) He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

12) He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

13) He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by

6) He refused, for a long time, to let anyone else make laws. This put people's lives in danger.

7) He has tried to prevent immigration. He refused to spend the money to protect people moving into new areas.

8) He has not allowed people to have a fair trial.

9) He has told judges to decide as the king wants or lose their jobs and paychecks. (you're fired)

10) He has hired people as tax collectors and taxed people to death.

11) Without any war going on, he has kept soldiers in America to intimidate us.

12) Soldiers can act any way they want and not answer to authority.

13) He has completely ignored our laws.

our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended legislation:

14) For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

15) For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States

16) For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

17) For imposing taxes on us without our Consent

18) For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

19) For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

20) For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

21) For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

22) For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever

23) He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

14) He told people that they must let soldiers in their homes without their permission.

15) Soldiers are protected from murder charges if they kill civilians.

16) For not letting businessmen make money.

17) Taxation without representation

18) For not letting people have a trial by jury.

19) For moving a person's trial to England for made up charges.

20) For taking away our permits to own land, our laws, and our choices of governments.

21) For sending our lawmakers home and creating a new government without our approval.

22) He has approved the killing of the American people

23) He disowned America by stating he will not protect it. He has decided to declare war on the people of the colonies

24) He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

25) He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy of the Head of a civilized nation.

26) He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

27) He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

28) In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People

29) Nor have We been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to

24) He has ruined our lives, burnt our homes, and stolen from us.

25) He has hired soldiers from other countries to kill and destroy Americans. He is not worthy of the title of king.

26) He has kidnapped Americans and forced them to kill their friends and family or be killed themselves.

27) He hired Native Americans who had a habit of destroying everything and everybody in sight. He put Americans in a position to fight each other.

28) After each injustice, we have tried to talk to him or write to him; each time he increased injustices. His actions make him unfit to govern a free people.

29) We have warned the people of England that these injustices have continued for some time. We have appealed to their sense of fairness. They have not listened to us at all. As a result we must hold them just as responsible as their king.

their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

30) We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

30) We, representing the people of the U.S. (assembled here in Philadelphia), appealing to God to understand our intentions, do by the authority of the good people of America, declare in writing our right to be free and independent (from England) and further, that we are no longer loyal citizens to England as we break all potential ties to from it. As a free and independent country, we have the power to wage war, make peace, enter into agreements with other countries, trade with anyone, and do what free countries are able to do. We state this with a firm belief that God will protect us. We swear to each other with our love, our money and our honor.

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Declaration of Independence
Key Vocabulary Words:

1. to dissolve: end
2. self evident: obvious to you
3. to impel: to make or to urge
4. unalienable: not transferable to another
5. instituted: started
6. deriving: receiving or getting
7. prudence: cautiousness
8. transient: lasting a short time
9. usurpations: unjust uses of power
10. evinces: show clearly
11. despotism: unlimited power
12. constrains: forces
13. tyranny: unjust use of power
14. assent: agree to
15. relinquish: give up
16. inestimable: cannot estimate the amount
17. annihilation: destruction
18. convulsions: violent disturbances
19. migration: the movement of people
20. standing army: soldiers actively in uniform
21. quartering: giving soldiers a place to live
22. arbitrary: an unsupported decision
23. plundered: robbed of your possessions
24. abdicated: given up
25. mercenaries: soldiers for hire
26. perfidy: violate our trust
27. insurrection: rebellion
28. unwarrantable: unjustifiable

Summary Of The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence is the document in which the thirteen colonies in North America declared themselves free from their mother country of Great Britain (England). Each colony sent delegates (representatives) to the Second Continental Congress, which met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1776. When the delegates decided to declare independence, they asked one member, Thomas Jefferson from Virginia, to write a document to send to the King. The document also explains the reasons for breaking away from England. The Declaration of Independence was approved by fifty-six delegates on July 4, 1776.

The opening paragraph (preamble) of the Declaration includes the ideas of natural law, self-determination, and God. Some of the ideas used by Jefferson were copied from another writer of the time named John Locke. Jefferson himself said that all he wanted to do was to give the people some "common sense" reasons for independence. His writings were very persuasive.

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The Declaration of Independence Multiple Choice Questions:

- 1) The unalienable rights are given to people from:
 - a.) Government
 - b.) God
 - c.) The king
 - d.) Laws

- 2) Governments get their power from:
 - a.) God
 - b.) The king
 - c.) The governed (voters)
 - d.) The lawmakers

- 3) When governments fail to protect people, the people must:
 - a.) Complain
 - b.) Accept their sufferings
 - c.) Change governments
 - d.) All of the above

- 4) Which is not a reason for the people to declare independence?
 - a.) He (the King) taxed people without their approval
 - b.) He waged war against the colonists
 - c.) He listened to the colonists' complaints
 - d.) He forced friends and neighbors to fight each other

- 5) The Declaration of Independence allows the United States to do all of the following except:
 - a.) Make treaties with other countries
 - b.) Start a war
 - c.) Trade with other countries
 - d.) Remain loyal citizens of England

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The Declaration of Independence Open Response Questions:

- 1.) Were the reasons given by the colonists to separate from England (the King) and start their own country right or wrong? Why?
- 2.) How religious do you think these colonists were? Explain your answer. Give two examples.
- 3.) Pick two reasons that would make you angry enough to support the American Revolution. Explain why you chose these two reasons.