

Declaration of Independence

Name: _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

An Abridged Interpretation of the
Declaration of Independence
 by Thomas Jefferson
 edited by Benjamin Franklin and John Adams

1. What does the Preamble say the colonies should do? (circle one)

- f. seek peace with Britain
- g. separate from Britain
- h. surrender

In Congress, July 4, 1776. The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

Preamble

When in the Course of human events, it sometimes becomes necessary for one people—the colonies—to end their connection with another people—Great Britain. When this occurs, it should be stated to the rest of the world why this separation is necessary.

Original Text Excerpt:

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with 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....

2. Natural rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. (circle one)

True or False

3. What is the purpose of government? (circle one)

- f. to protect/guarantee natural rights
- g. to control its citizens
- h. to start wars

Declaration of Natural Rights

We believe that all people are created equal, that they are given by their Creator certain natural Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

To guarantee these rights, Governments are created by People, and these governments get their power from the approval of the people they govern.

Whenever any Form of Government abuses its responsibility to protect the natural rights of its citizens, it is the Right of the People to change or destroy that government, and create a new Government that will protect the Safety and Happiness of the people. Governments should not be changed for simple reasons. History has shown that people will suffer rather than change the government that causes their injuries. But when a long series of abuses is committed by a government wanting to create a tyranny, it is the right of the people, it is their duty, to destroy that government and replace it with a new one.

Original Text Excerpt:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed 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 just powers from the consent of the governed....

4. The Social Contract means government protects natural rights and people agree to obey government. When government breaks the social contract, what should happen? (circle one)

- f. people should change or replace their government
- g. people must give up their natural rights
- h. government needs to create a dictatorship to keep the peace

List of Grievances

The colonies have suffered and now it is necessary to change their Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of injuries and abuses with the intent of creating an absolute dictatorship over the States. To prove this, here are the facts—

- He has refused to support laws necessary for the public good.
- He has prevented his Governors from passing important Laws or refused to approve these laws.
- He has refused to pass other Laws unless the people are willing to give up

5. This statement refers to: (circle one)

- f. the Boston Massacre
- g. the Stamp Act
- h. the Coercive Acts
- r. the Intolerable Acts

6. Britain's statement that they had a right to legislate for the colonies "in all cases whatsoever" refers to: (circle one)

- f. the Stamp Act
- g. the Townshend Acts
- h. the Boston Tea Party
- r. the Declaratory Act

7. In this statement, "Mercenaries" refers to: (circle one)

- f. British soldiers
- g. Hessian soldiers
- h. Minutemen
- r. French soldiers

Representation in the Legislature.

- He has called legislatures together at far away places forcing lawmakers to agree to his demands because they cannot reach the far away places.
- He has dissolved legislatures that opposed his attacks on the rights of the people.
- He has prevented new legislatures from being formed preventing the State from protecting itself from dangers outside and inside.
- He has prevented foreign-born people from becoming citizens and he has changed the laws preventing settlement of new lands. He has prevented laws giving power to the courts.
- He has controlled judges.
- He has created offices that bring swarms of Officers to harass and abuse citizens.
- He has kept, in times of peace, standing armies without the consent of our legislatures.
- He has allowed the military to act on its own and control the legislatures.
- He has worked with others to control us under a system foreign to our constitution and not recognized by our laws:
 - For quartering large bodies of troops among us.
 - For protecting them from punishment for any Murders they might commit.
 - For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world.
 - For Taxing us without our consent. **[see problem 5]**
 - For removing, in many cases, our right to Trial by Jury.
 - For removing citizens to foreign lands to be put on trial for false reasons.
 - For removing English Laws in a neighboring Province and expanding its borders as an example of what will happen to these Colonies.
 - For changing the basic Forms of our Governments.
 - For suspending our legislatures and declaring that he has the power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. **[see problem 6]**
- He has ended Government here so that he can wage War against us.
- He has robbed our seas, attacked our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the Lives of our people.
- He is at this time sending large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death and tyranny that have a cruelty seldom seen in the most barbarous times. He is totally unworthy to be the leader of a civilized nation. **[see problem 7]**
- He has drafted our fellow Citizens and forced them to attack us.
- He has encouraged Indian Savages on our frontier to attack us.

In every stage of these Abuses We have asked for a change in policy. Our requests have been met by more injuries. A King who acts like a tyrant is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

We have warned the British people that their legislature is unlawfully trying to control us. The British people have ignored our pleas of justice. Having no choice, we must then Separate, and hold the British people, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

8. When Jefferson discusses making alliances, what audience is he trying to reach? (circle one)

- f. Patriots
- g. Loyalists
- h. British citizens
- r. France and Spain

Statement of Independence by the United States

We, the Representatives of the united States of America, declare, That these United Colonies are Free and Independent States. As Independent States, we can declare war, make peace, create Alliances, establish trade, and do all Things that other countries can do.

And for the support of the Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honour.