

## DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

[Watch it! – What you might not know about the Declaration of Independence \(Ted-Ed\) \(3:38\)](#)

**SWKT: The Declaration of Independence provides a foundation for popular sovereignty.**

### Question 1-2

Slightly more than a year after the American Revolution began, Virginia's Richard Henry Lee proposed to the Second Continental Congress: *Resolved, 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.*

As debate on Lee's resolution began, Congress named a committee of five—Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and Thomas Jefferson—to prepare a proclamation of independence. Their momentous product, the Declaration of Independence, was primarily written by Jefferson.

Thomas Jefferson, as a lawyer, had gained early notoriety through an essay he wrote in 1774 in which he argued for colonial independence. He spoke rarely but nonetheless impressed his colleagues with his passionate belief in the cause of independence. The document he crafted drew from the political philosophies of Enlightenment thinker John Locke. Locke believed that people have natural rights—rights that belong to them simply because they are human, not because kings or governments have granted them these rights. He also put forward his own view of the social contract theory. According to Locke, people form governments to protect their natural rights, but they do not surrender control over their government. If a government fails to act in the best interests of the people, the people have the right to revolt and replace that government with a new one.

Many colonists had serious doubts about the wisdom of a complete separation from England. Could the colonies survive on their own? Others had grave reservations about remaining British subjects. They believed that the British government clearly did not have the best interests of the colonies at heart. The delegates finally reached a decision. They agreed to Lee's resolution and quickly took up consideration of Jefferson's work.

Spirited debate again ensued. Should Jefferson's lines criticizing the English people remain? Many delegates feared that such language would offend those they still considered friends, and it was removed from the first draft. So too were the lines condemning the slave trade, in deference to the southern States. The debates continued for more than two days, but on July 4, 1776, in one of the most historic votes of all time, the Congress adopted the revised Declaration of Independence.

<http://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/declaration-of-independence>

## The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

**Preamble: the reasons for writing down the Declaration**

### Question 3

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, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

**Statement of beliefs: specifying what the undersigned believed, the philosophy behind the document**

### Question 4

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.

### Question 5-6

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just 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 shewn, 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 their duty, to throw off such Government, and 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 the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

**List of complaints: the offenses that impelled the declaration**

**Question 7**

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

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.

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 tyrants only.

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.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

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 remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

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

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

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

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

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

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

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

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

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

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

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring 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:

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

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

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

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

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 the Head of a civilized nation.

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.

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.

**Statement of prior attempts to redress grievances: Explains that the colonists have complained many times to Great Britain**

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.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions 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 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.

**Declaration of independence: What will change in the colonies as a result of the Declaration**

**Question 8**

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 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.

# The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

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## A HIGH SCHOOL BREAK-UP LETTER

<p><b>Preamble:</b> the reasons for writing the letter</p>	<p>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, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.</p> <p><b>We have known each other for years now. Things used to be so great – it was like we were MFEQ. I mean everyone said it was perfect. I really thought we would be together forever, but things just aren't working for me.</b></p>
<p><b>Statement of beliefs:</b> specifying what you believe</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just 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. . . .</p> <p>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 the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.</p> <p><b>We are supposed to be in this relationship together, but sometimes I feel like you don't listen to me. That really hurts my feelings. I think that you should listen to my feelings, ask me how I'm doing, and tell me you love me every day. I just really feel like you've been doing a lot of things that are not very nice. If you don't know what they are, I'll tell you.</b></p>
<p><b>List of complaints:</b> the offenses that impelled the declaration</p>	<p>He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.</p> <p>He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.</p> <p>He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people . . .</p> <p>He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.</p> <p>For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:</p> <p>For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:</p> <p>For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:</p> <p>For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences</p> <p>For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:</p> <p>He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.</p> <p><b>You don't tell me how you're feeling. You said something mean to your friends about me. You lied about where you were. You hardly ever listen to my side of a story. Your friends are more important to you than I am. You don't think my jokes are funny. Sometimes I feel like you're using me. You didn't notice my new haircut and outfit. You bring me down.</b></p>
<p><b>Statement of prior attempts to redress grievances:</b> explains that one party has complained many times to the other party involved</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Nor have We been wanting in attentions 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 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.</p> <p><b>I have told you over and over that I hate it when you do all those things and you never do anything to change. It just seems like I am annoying you when I tell you how I feel.</b></p>
<p><b>Declaration of independence:</b> explains what will change as a result of the declaration</p>	<p>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 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.</p> <p><b>I think that it would be better for both of us if we broke up. I have made my decision, so from now on please do not try to call me or text me. It will be better for us if we are alone and can spend more time on school and our own lives.</b></p>

## **DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

**[Watch it! – What you might not know about the Declaration of Independence \(Ted-Ed\) \(3:38\)](#)**

*SWKT: The Declaration of Independence provides a foundation for popular sovereignty.*

1. Who was the primary writer of the Declaration of Independence? When was the document adopted? (month/day/year)
  
2. Which country were the colonies declaring their independence from?
  
3. What was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence?
  
4. Identify the three natural or unalienable rights of individuals (written in the 1776 context as men) as stated in the Declaration of Independence?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  
5. According to the Declaration of Independence, from whom do governments get their power?
  
6. According to the Declaration of Independence, what should people do when the government abuses its power?
  
7. List 3 of the grievances by the colonists that are identified in the Declaration of Independence. (Hint: There are a lot of them.)
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  
8. As a show of support to the Declaration, what did the signers pledge to each other? (Last paragraph)