

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.


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.

# The Declaration of Independence

## Workbook Level 2

Exploring the “Why” Behind America’s Revolution.  
Questions, Context, and Critical Thinking for the Next Generation.

By Traci Hanks



“When bad men combine, the good must associate;  
else they will fall, one by one,  
an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.”

— Edmund Burke, Thoughts on the  
Cause of the Present Discontents, 23 April 1770



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Created by Traci Hanks  
Design by Marcia Harris



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# Historical Overview



By July 4, 1776, the **Revolutionary War** had been raging for 442 days, starting with the "Shot Heard Around the World" at the Battles of Lexington and Concord. The British and the colonists had fought at least 27 face-to-face battles. Over 4,000 lives had been lost.

One month prior, on June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee, a Virginia delegate, introduced the **Lee Resolution** to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia:

**"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.

"That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign Alliances.

"That a plan of confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation."

Many of the delegates at the Continental Congress had received no instructions from their state legislatures on how to vote on the issue of independence. The debate was **postponed** until **July 1** to allow them to obtain this information.

With the potential for independence in the air, the Continental Congress decided to plan ahead. On June 11, the **Committee of Five** (John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman) was tasked with drafting a **declaration of independence**.



**Adams**



**Franklin**



**Jefferson**



**Livingston**



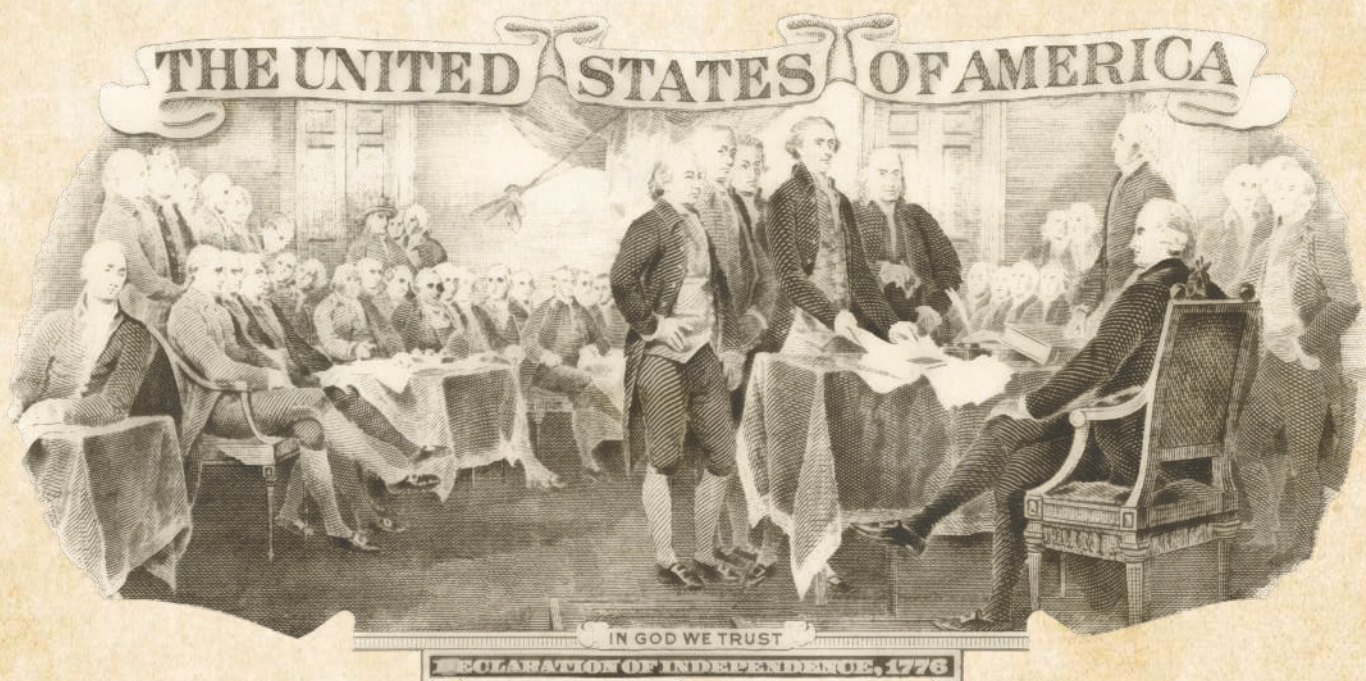
**Sherman**

On July 1, the delegates debated and **voted** on whether or not to declare independence from Great Britain. By the end of the day, **nine colonies** had voted **FOR** independence. Over the next 24 hours, miraculous events occurred that changed the course of American history forever.





# Introduction



**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.





WORDS TO CLARIFY OR DEFINE:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to write words to clarify or define.

REWRITE THE INTRODUCTION IN YOUR OWN WORDS:

A series of horizontal lines for writing, intended for students to rewrite the introduction in their own words.



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,

**WORDS TO CLARIFY OR DEFINE:**

Blank area for writing words to clarify or define.

**DO YOU AGREE WITH THE "SELF-EVIDENT" TRUTHS LISTED IN THE PREAMBLE? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

Five horizontal lines for writing a response to the agreement question.

**ACCORDING TO THE PREAMBLE WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT?**

Five horizontal lines for writing the purpose of government.



**~PREAMBLE CONTINUED~**

—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.

**WORDS TO CLARIFY OR DEFINE:**

Blank area for writing words to clarify or define.

**WHAT DO THE COLONISTS FEEL THAT PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO DO IF THEIR GOVERNMENT IS NOT FULFILLING ITS PURPOSE?**

Four horizontal lines for writing the answer to the question above.

**DO YOU AGREE WITH THE COLONISTS? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

Five horizontal lines for writing the answer to the question above.



# List of Grievances

**GRIEVANCE:** [from grief.] That which causes grief or uneasiness; that which burdens, oppresses or injures, implying a sense of wrong done, or a continued injury, and therefore applied only to the effects of human conduct; never to providential evils. The oppressed subject has the right to petition for a redress of grievances.

— Websters 1828 Dictionary



**GRIEVANCE #1**

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

**WORDS FOR CLARIFICATION:**

**WHAT PROBLEMS CAN HAPPEN WHEN ONE GROUP OF PEOPLE OVERRIDES THE OTHER GROUP'S DECISIONS?**

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**WHAT PROBLEMS COULD HAPPEN IF ONE PERSON HAD THE POWER TO BLOCK ANY LAWS PASSED BY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES?**

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## GRIEVANCE #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.

WORDS FOR CLARIFICATION:

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU HAD TO WAIT ON SOMEONE ELSE TO MAKE AN URGENT DECISION, AND THAT PERSON WASN'T IN A HURRY TO DECIDE?

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WHY DO YOU THINK THE KING SHOWED SUCH DISREGARD FOR THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENTS?

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**GRIEVANCE #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 tyrants only.

**WORDS FOR CLARIFICATION:**

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to write words for clarification.

**WHAT IS THE KING REQUIRING THAT THE PEOPLE GIVE TO HIM, BEFORE HE WILL APPROVE LAWS FOR THE THE LESS-POPULATED (FRONTIER) AREAS?**

Five horizontal lines provided for writing the answer to the question above.

**DO YOU FEEL THAT PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO BE REPRESENTED IN THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

Five horizontal lines provided for writing the answer to the question above.



**GRIEVANCE #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.

**WORDS FOR CLARIFICATION:**

**WHY WOULD IT BE IMPORTANT FOR THE COLONISTS TO HAVE ACCESS TO THEIR PUBLIC RECORDS WHEN HOLDING LEGISLATIVE MEETINGS?**

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**WHEN LAWMAKERS ARE FORCED TO TRAVEL LONG AND COSTLY DISTANCES FOR MEETINGS, HOW COULD THIS AFFECT THEIR ABILITY TO GOVERN?**

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**GRIEVANCE #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.

**WORDS FOR CLARIFICATION:**

**WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF SOMEONE IN YOUR COMMUNITY INTENTIONALLY SENT PEOPLE TO ATTACK YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?**

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**WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF A DISTANT RULER ENCOURAGED VIOLENT UPRISINGS IN YOUR TOWN, IN ORDER TO SCARE YOU INTO OBEDIENCE?**

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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.

**WORDS FOR CLARIFICATION:**

**HOW DID THE COLONISTS TRY TO RESPOND TO THESE GRIEVANCES?**

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**WHAT WAS THE KING'S RESPONSE TO THEIR EFFORTS?**

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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.**

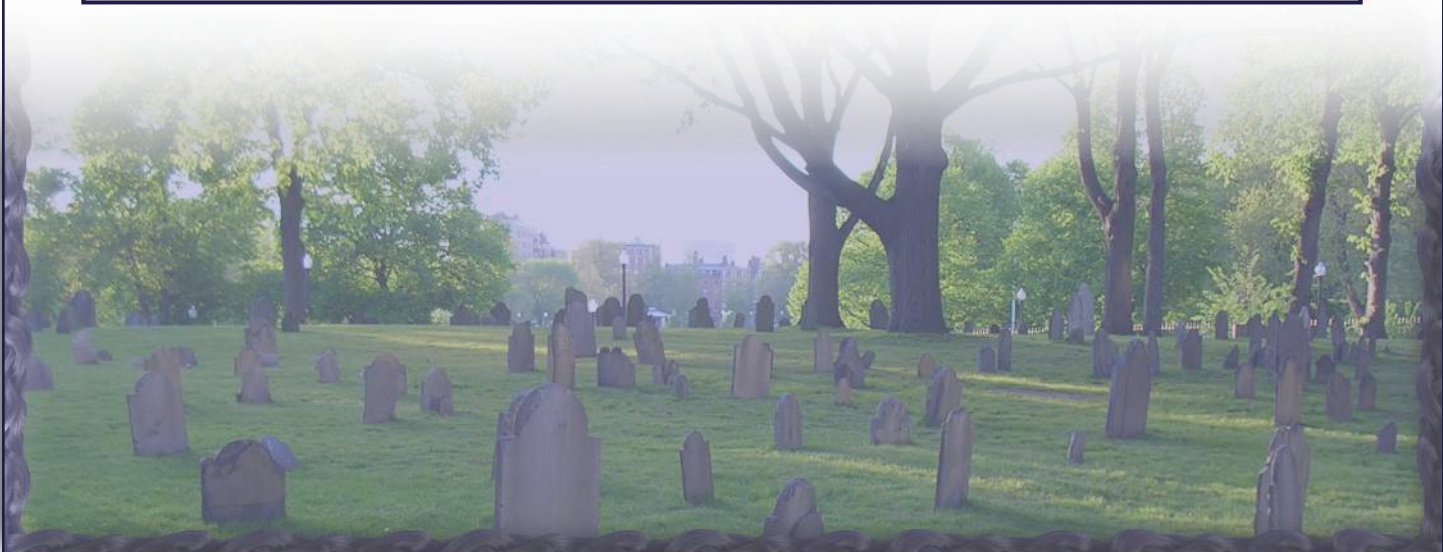
WORDS FOR CLARIFICATION:





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.**

WORDS FOR CLARIFICATION:







# The 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence

## CONNECTICUT

- Samuel Huntington
- Roger Sherman
- William Williams
- Oliver Wolcott

## DELAWARE

- Thomas McKean
- George Read
- Caesar Rodney

## GEORGIA

- Button Gwinnett
- Lyman Hall
- George Walton

## MARYLAND

- Charles Carroll of Carrollton
- Samuel Chase
- William Paca
- Thomas Stone

## MASSACHUSETTS

- John Adams
- Samuel Adams
- Elbridge Gerry
- John Hancock
- Robert Treat Paine

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

- Josiah Bartlett
- Matthew Thornton
- William Whipple

## NEW JERSEY

- Abraham Clark
- John Hart
- Francis Hopkinson
- Richard Stockton
- John Witherspoon

## NEW YORK

- William Floyd
- Francis Lewis
- Philip Livingston
- Lewis Morris

## NORTH CAROLINA

- Joseph Hewes
- William Hooper
- John Penn

## PENNSYLVANIA

- George Clymer
- Benjamin Franklin
- Robert Morris
- John Morton
- George Ross
- Benjamin Rush
- James Smith
- George Taylor
- James Wilson

## RHODE ISLAND

- William Ellery
- Stephen Hopkins

## SOUTH CAROLINA

- Thomas Heyward, Jr.
- Thomas Lynch, Jr.
- Arthur Middleton
- Edward Rutledge


## VIRGINIA

- Carter Braxton
- Benjamin Harrison
- Thomas Jefferson
- Francis Lightfoot Lee
- Richard Henry Lee
- Thomas Nelson, Jr.
- George Wythe



# British Response





The colonists never sent a copy of the Declaration of Independence directly to King George III. However, copies of the declaration reached London through various channels, and in early August 1776, Lord George Germain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, informed the king of its contents. The declaration was widely circulated among British officials and was printed in the London Gazette on August 17, making the official separation between the two countries public.

The first public statement from King George III about the Declaration of Independence came in his Speech from the Throne on October 31, 1776, delivered in the House of Lords, as he opened a new session of Parliament.

## In the words of George III, by the Grace of God, King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith:

"My Lords and Gentlemen, Nothing could have afforded me so much satisfaction as to have been able to inform you, at the opening of this session, that the troubles, which have so long distracted my colonies in North America, were at an end; and that my unhappy people, recovered from their delusion, had delivered themselves from the oppression of their leaders, and returned to their duty: but so daring and desperate is the spirit of those leaders, whose object has always been dominion and power, that they have now openly renounced all allegiance to the crown, and all political connection with this country; they have rejected, with circumstances of indignity and insult, the means of conciliation held out to them under the authority of our commission; and have presumed to set up their rebellious confederacies for independent states. If their treason be suffered to take root, much mischief must grow from it, to the safety of my loyal colonies, to the commerce of my kingdoms, and indeed to the present system of all Europe. One great advantage, however, will be derived from the object of the rebels being openly avowed, and clearly understood; we shall have unanimity at home, founded in the general conviction of the justice and necessity of our measures.

"I am happy to inform you, that, by the blessing of Divine Providence on the good conduct and valour of my officers and forces by sea and land, and on the zeal and bravery of the auxiliary troops in my service, Canada is recovered; and although, from unavoidable delays, the operations at New York could not begin before the month of August, the success in that province has been so important as to give the strongest hopes of the most decisive good consequences: but, notwithstanding this fair prospect, we must, at all events, prepare for another campaign. I continue to receive assurances of amity from the several courts of Europe; and am using my utmost prospect, we must, at all events, prepare for another campaign. I continue to receive assurances of amity from the several



# End of the War

The war against Great Britain continued for seven years after the Declaration of Independence was signed.

The last major battle was at Yorktown, Virginia, where the British surrendered on October 19, 1781.

The Treaty of Paris was signed on September 3, 1783, legally ending the war.

The last of the British troops left American soil on November 25, 1783.

