

Assessment: The Declaration of Independence

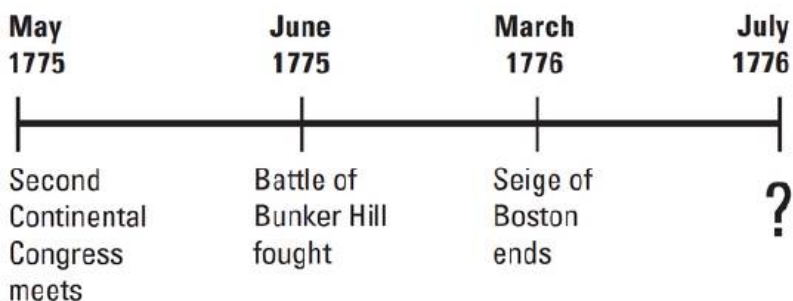
1. The Continental army was composed of
 - A. troops from all the colonies.
 - B. troops from throughout Great Britain.
 - C. only troops from the New England colonies.
 - D. only troops from Virginia and Massachusetts.

Mastering the Content

Circle the letter next to the best answer.

2. Which of these describes the mood in the colonies immediately following the events at Lexington and Concord?
 - A. Most of the colonists were reluctant to start a war.
 - B. Most of the colonists were eager to declare war against the British.
 - C. Most of the colonists sided with the Loyalists against the Patriots.
 - D. Most of the colonists wanted to move to Great Britain.
3. Which of these best describes the outcome of the Battle of Bunker Hill?
 - A. The British won decisively.
 - B. The militia won by a narrow margin.
 - C. The militia surrendered to the British.
 - D. The British won but suffered many losses.
4. Patrick Henry gave a famous speech that ended with the words “give me liberty, or give me death!” With which group did he identify himself?
 - A. Patriots
 - B. Loyalists
 - C. British citizens
 - D. members of Parliament
5. Why was George Washington chosen to be a military leader?
 - A. He had experience.
 - B. He wanted the role.
 - C. He was very wealthy.
 - D. He was highly educated.

6. What effect did Common Sense have in the colonies?
 - A. It instilled fear of war in the colonists.
 - B. It convinced the colonies to remain loyal to Great Britain.
 - C. It persuaded many colonists that America should be independent.
 - D. It petitioned the king to end the quarrel between the colonies and Great Britain.
7. Why was the Declaration of Independence written?
 - A. to start the American Revolution
 - B. to offer a peace settlement to Great Britain
 - C. to instruct how a country wins its freedom
 - D. to explain why the colonies were separating from Great Britain
8. According to Thomas Jefferson, the power to rule comes from
 - A. God.
 - B. the king.
 - C. Parliament.
 - D. the citizens.
9. In a draft of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson charged the king with violating the “sacred rights of life and liberty . . . of a distant people [by] carrying them into slavery.” This passage was removed for all of these reasons except
 - A. it might lead to demands to free slaves.
 - B. it was an unimportant issue in the colonies.
 - C. it was unfair to blame the king for enslaving Africans.
 - D. it might offend merchants who profited from the slave trade.
10. Why did Thomas Jefferson say that King George III was an unfit ruler?
 - A. He was not born in Great Britain.
 - B. He denied the colonists their rights.
 - C. He was not elected by Parliament.
 - D. He lived far away from the colonies.
11. How do natural rights, as described in the Declaration of Independence, differ from other rights?
 - A. People are born with natural rights.
 - B. People can vote to choose natural rights.
 - C. Natural rights are given only to citizens.
 - D. Natural rights come from the government.
12. Look at the timeline. Which of these belongs in place of the question mark on the timeline?



- A. Common Sense published
- B. Olive Branch Petition sent
- C. American Revolution ends
- D. Declaration of Independence signed

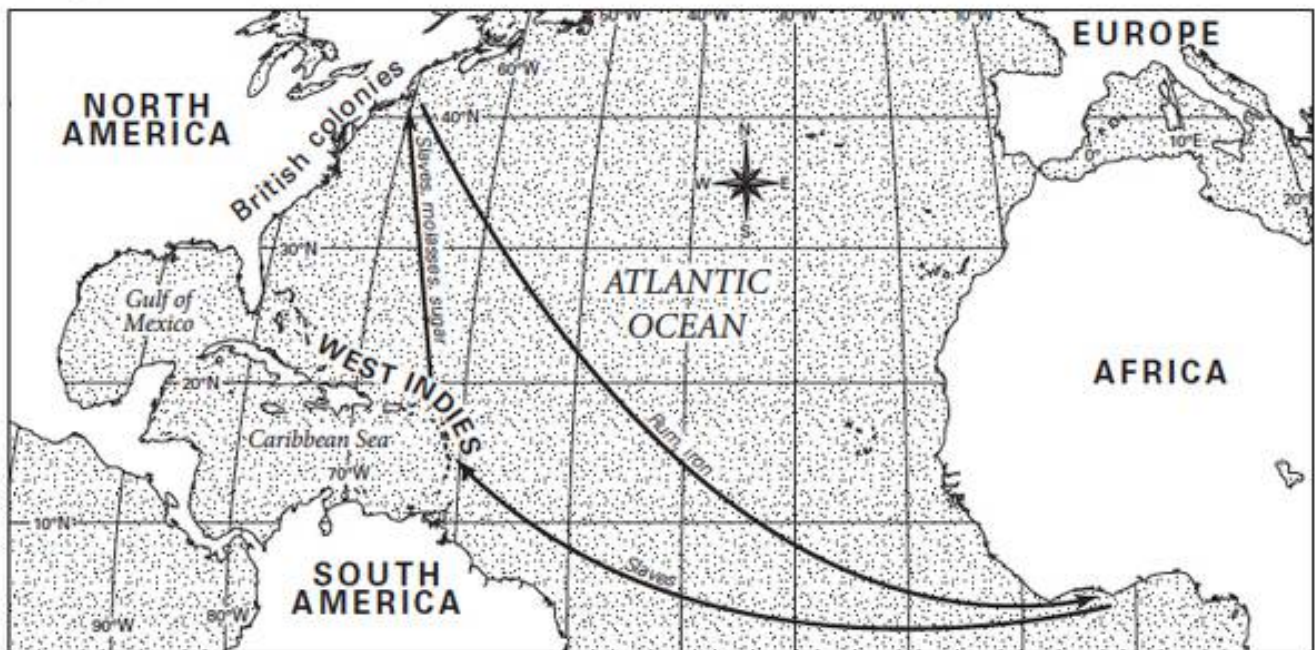
13. What was the purpose of the Olive Branch Petition?
 - A. to persuade British troops to leave Boston
 - B. to encourage colonists to join the army
 - C. to convince Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act
 - D. to ask King George to make peace with the colonies
14. Which of these shows cooperation on the part of the colonies?
 - A. They came together to form one army.
 - B. The Loyalists and Patriots made peace.
 - C. They all believed in the goal of independence.
 - D. They all opposed the Declaration of Independence.
15. What decision was made at the Second Continental Congress?
 - A. to form an army
 - B. to make a gesture of peace
 - C. to declare war on Great Britain
 - D. to demand a repeal of the Tea Act
16. To Great Britain, the signing of the Declaration of Independence was
 - A. an act of loyalty.
 - B. an act of treason.
 - C. an act of bravery.
 - D. an act of insanity.

17. What were slaves traded for in the West Indies?

Applying Social Studies Skills

Use the map and your knowledge of history to answer these questions.

Triangular Trade and the Enslavement of Africans



18. What was shipped from the British colonies to Africa?

19. Who benefited from the trade shown on the map?

Exploring the Essential Question: What principles of government are expressed in the Declaration of Independence?

Follow the directions to complete the item below.

20. The Declaration of Independence states that the purpose of government is to secure and protect the natural-born rights of citizens: the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Write a three-paragraph essay that answers these questions:

- What did Thomas Jefferson mean by the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?
- How does our government protect our rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?
- What actions can our government take to better protect these rights or to assure that all U.S. citizens have these rights?

Make sure to convey your ideas clearly, using standard English.

Question Sheet for the Declaration Activity (with answers)

1. Jefferson chose to begin the Declaration with the words, “The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.” Do you feel this was necessary? Why or why not? Could the 13 colonies have declared independence if they were not unanimous? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. Most students might note that it was necessary for Jefferson to prove that the Continental Congress presented a united front to the world in order to prove that independence was the true goal of the colonies. Others may state that since each state provided signers to the document, it was obvious that all thirteen colonies accepted it.

As to the question of whether the 13 colonies could have declared independence if they weren't unanimous, answers will vary. Most students might state that independence would be difficult without the support of all thirteen colonies, but some might say independence without consensus was still possible. For instance, colonies that objected could be absorbed into Canada or find a way to peacefully co-exist with those that seceded.

2. How does Jefferson explain the reason for a formal declaration of independence? Why do you think it was necessary for Jefferson to state the “causes which impel them to the separation”?

Answers will vary. However, some students may note that other nations, such as France and the Netherlands, also had colonial interests in North America and may have been concerned if British colonists declared independence for groundless reasons. Also, because of Jefferson's background as a lawyer, it might have also been true that he was building his case for independence before the world community, similar to what he might do if he were pleading a case before a jury.

3. Next, review the two sections of John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*. In your own words, how does Jefferson use Locke's ideas in the preamble of the Declaration?

Students will note similarities between Locke's thoughts on natural rights and Jefferson's mention of “inalienable rights, including “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” They may also note Jefferson's view that “all men are created equal.”

4. According to Jefferson, what was the purpose of government? What does Jefferson suggest should happen whenever government becomes “destructive of the ends for which it was created?” According to Jefferson, how do governments derive their powers?

Jefferson would note that the purpose of government was to protect the “inalienable rights” that man received from “their Creator.” In his view, if government became

“destructive,” it was the right of the citizens to “alter or abolish” that form of government and replace it with a better one. Jefferson believed that governments derived their power “from the consent of the governed.” In other words, the citizens of the nation permitted the government to rule.

5. Jefferson noted that “all men are created equal,” suggesting that this was “self-evident.” Speculate as to what he meant by that statement. What sorts of conflicts and misconceptions may have stemmed from this statement?

Answers will vary as to what Jefferson meant by the “all men are created equal” statement. Some students may note that Jefferson made this statement as a slave owner and had no intention of granting citizenship status or equality to his black slaves. Other students might speculate that Jefferson believed in a literal interpretation of this phrase and had no intention of granting equality or the right to vote to women. Also, students may note that some white men (if they were not property owners) did not have the right to vote.

6. Next, look at the list of grievances that Jefferson lists as reasons that the King has violated the natural rights of the colonists. Below, list the three grievances that you feel are the worst violations. Explain why you believe them to be important. Also, note that Jefferson points to King George III in his list of grievances despite the fact that Parliament passed the acts and approved the taxes that led to the colonists calling for independence. The King, on the other hand, was a monarch with limited power. Why would Jefferson blame the King for the problems leading to the Declaration? Explain your view.

Answers will vary. Based on their study of the American Revolution and viewing of the series, many students may point to grievances that allowed the British military occupation of colonial cities (for example, the Boston Massacre), imposing taxes without consent (a grievance that is typically mentioned in textbooks), grievances that limit self-government and possibly grievances that caused insurrections of Native Americans.

Most students would probably note that it would be easier for the colonists to focus their anger on one individual, King George, than on the Parliament. His likeness was on colonial money, so he was known by all the colonists, while most members of Parliament were not known to the average colonist. Focusing anger and displeasure on one individual could provide a great psychological boost to the independence movement.

7. In the summer of 1776, Jefferson may not have recognized that his declaration would be studied and revered by generations. However, the Declaration *has* gained that status over time. Write a paragraph that explaining your view of why that has happened. If you do not feel that the Declaration is revered, explain why.

Many students who feel that the Declaration is revered will probably note that Jefferson’s statements regarding fundamental rights are representative of our government’s foundation today. In addition, they may also note that the Declaration is displayed in a

similar manner (and in a similar location) as the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights, thereby giving it the same status. Other students may note that the document helped unite various factions in the Continental Congress, paving the way for independence.

Some students may note that in 21st Century America, the Declaration has no legal “force,” and therefore while it is an important historic document, its importance is significantly overstated.

8. The colonists had been fighting British soldiers for over a year before the Declaration was written and the formal declaration of war against Britain was announced. Why do you feel it took so long for the colonists to formally announce a declaration of war against the British?

The length of time between the fighting at Lexington and Concord and the actual declaration of war probably occurred because most colonists (and many delegates to the Continental Congress) hoped for some sort of reconciliation with Britain. They felt that a declaration of war might antagonize the British and make reconciliation difficult, if not impossible.

Answers will vary.

9. John Locke died in 1704, over 70 years before Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. In your estimate, would Locke be happy with the way Jefferson used his *Two Treatises* to justify independence from Britain, which was Locke’s native country? Below, either write a fictitious letter from Locke to Jefferson critiquing his use of *Two Treatises* in the Declaration of Independence or a fictitious letter from Jefferson to Locke explaining how he adapted Locke’s theory in writing the Declaration.

Answers will vary.

The Declaration of Independence Study Questions

1. List the "Unalienable Rights"

- a. Life
- b. Liberty
- c. Pursuit of Happiness

2. According to the first paragraph, why do the writers of the Declaration feel obliged to declare the causes for separating from the English government?

They feel obligated to state the causes because when the Form of Government becomes destructive the Right of the People can abolish it and form a new government to effect their safety and happiness.

3. Paragraph 2 states that we have certain rights. How are those rights "secured"?

Providing new guards for thier future security.

4. Define "redress" The setting right of what is wrong

5. Define "abdicated" To renounce or relinquish a throne, right, power, claim, responsibility, or the like, especially in a formal manner

6. Write down Jefferson's completion of this sentence:

"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.

7. Fill in **with your own words** Jefferson's completion of the above sentence:

When the government is not doing it's job, the people the right to revolt and change the government into a form in which they approve of and fits their needs.

8. What is the "direct object" of the King of Great Britain and his treatment of the colonies?

The establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states.

9. Define “rectitude” Morally correct behavior or thinking. Righteousness.

10. Define “formidable” Inspiring fear or respect through being impressively large, powerful, intense, or capable.

11. How many abuses by the King of Great Britain are listed in the Declaration ?

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12. According to the Declaration, what have the colonists already done to try to improve their relationship with Great Britain?

The colonists stated that they have warned the British of their unwarrantable jurisdiction over them, they have reminded the British of their circumstances of their emigration, and appealed to their native justice.

13. Since those steps have not produced positive results, what are the colonists now publishing and declaring about their colonies?

The colonies are now publishing and declaring their right to be an independent party from Britain, that all political connections between the two should be dissolved, and the independent states have the right to levy war, to conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, etc.

14. Define “prudence” Caution with regard to practical matters

15. Define “tyranny” Tyranny is oppression under a government

16. List the four parts of the Declaration. Explain the purpose of each part:

Part I The Preamble

Purpose:Tells why the continental congress drew up the declaration

Part II A declaration of rights

Purpose:declares the rights that they think the people should have

Part III A Bill of Indictment

Purpose:what England has done wrong and explains why they are demanding their independence

Part IV a statement of rights

Purpose:final warning and explanation of why they are declaring independence

17. At the end of the Declaration of Independence, list the four things that, according to Jefferson, "Free and Independent States" should be able to do.

Full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, and establish commerce.

18. How does the opening paragraph reflect the philosophy of The Age of Reason?

"dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another", meaning that people should think by themselves for themselves instead of listening and obeying others. They should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

19. Define "usurpation" to seize or exercise authority or possession wrongfully.

20. Define "despotism" a system of government in which the ruler has unlimited power

The Olive Branch Petition Study Questions

1. What type of source is this? What person or group produced this document?

This is a primary source. Main author was John Dickinson and representatives from New Hampshire, Massachusetts bay Colony, Rhode Island and Providence, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, counties of New castle, kent, and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

2. What person or group produced this document?

Main author was John Dickinson and representatives from New Hampshire, Massachusetts bay Colony, Rhode Island and Providence, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, counties of New castle, kent, and Sussex on Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

3. When and where was this document created? What context or situation encouraged the creation of this document?

The Olive Branch Petition was created after the Battles of Lexington and Concord a year before the colonies declared dependence. The battles between colonists and British soldiers such as the Battle of Bunker Hill encouraged the colonists to create this document as a last ditch attempt to bring peace between the colonies and great Britain.

4. Who would be expected to see or read this piece of evidence? What was this document intended to accomplish?

The Olive Branch Petition was written to the King of England and his Parliament. The document was intended to make peace between Great Britain and the Colonies. The colonists were trying to gain relief from the British.

5. Paine wrote "Common Sense" after the release of the "Olive Branch Petition." What specific references from the piece in read in class respond to ideas from the petition?

Both pieces are referencing the blood being shed in America, but the Olive Branch Petition is written for the king and Common Sense was written for the people. Both pieces interpreted and reacted to the events in different respects and looked for different results.

6. Based on the tone and language of the Olive Branch Petition, what assumptions can we make about the writers regarding their desired relationship with England?

They wanted to avoid war and keep their ties with Great Britain. By the polite and respectful language used in the letter, we can tell the writers want to be careful not to hurt the king's feelings or upset him.