

# 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?**

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### **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.