

Name _____
Date _____

The Declaration of Independence Study Guide

Introductory Information:

1. The Declaration of Independence was written for two purposes:
 - A.
 - B.
2. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence? _____
3. What did the delegates from Georgia and South Carolina insist that Jefferson leave out of the Declaration? Why do you think they wanted this part left out?
4. How have the principles of the Declaration of Independence affected history since 1776?

The Body of the Declaration:

5. What does Jefferson mean by "unalienable rights"?
6. How do people secure these rights, and what should they do if the government tries to take them away?

7. From where or from whom does Jefferson say that government derives its power?
(Hint: the statement begins, "...That to secure these rights...")

8. What does Jefferson mean by the statement beginning, "Prudence, indeed, will dictate...."?

9. What does Jefferson mean by the statement beginning, "The history of the present King of Great Britain..."?

10. Most of the Declaration is a list of grievances against King George. Summarize five grievances that the colonists have against the monarchy. (Use your textbook)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Conclusion of the Declaration:

11. The last section states the main objective of the Declaration of Independence. Read over this section and give the main objective.

5. There were several reasons for the 13 colonies becoming independent. What are they?

~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~

Reading the Declaration of Independence

Read this part of the Declaration of Independence. Then answer the questions that follow it.

The Declaration of Independence
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.

—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,

The Declaration of Independence
On July 4, 1776, the 13 states all agreed to what is said here.

Why declare independence?
There are times when one group of people needs to be free from the government of another group. It is only right at such a time that they should tell the world why this had to be.

What rights do all people have?
We believe that some things are always true. Everyone was made to be equal to everyone else. God has given all people some rights that cannot be taken away. Some of these rights are the rights to life, liberty, and the chance to look for happiness.

Why do governments exist?
It is to get these rights that people make governments. It is people who give governments their power.

— 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 shown, 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.

When can a government be changed?

A bad government is one that destroys those rights. People have the right to change or end a bad government. They have the right to set up a new government. The new government should be made in a way that will make the people safe and give them happiness. Of course, no government should be ended for little reason. People usually put up with bad governments rather than change what they are used to. But over a long period of time, a bad government may take more and more of their rights away. At such a time, it is the people's right and duty to overthrow that government. Then they need to set up a new government to be sure their rights are safe.

Understanding What You Have Read

Choose the words that best complete each statement. Write the letter of your answer in the blank next to the number.

- _____ 1. The Declaration states that people who make themselves free from a government should
 - a. tell how they will govern themselves.
 - b. do nothing else.
 - c. tell why they had to set themselves free.

- _____ 2. According to the Declaration, there are three rights no one can take away. These are life, liberty, and
 - a. safety.
 - b. voting.
 - c. the chance to look for happiness.

- _____ 3. According to the Declaration, people make governments to
 - a. make sure their rights are safe.
 - b. gain as much power as possible.
 - c. collect taxes and run for office.

- _____ 4. According to the Declaration, governments get their power from
 - a. the armed forces.
 - b. help from other countries.
 - c. the people they govern.