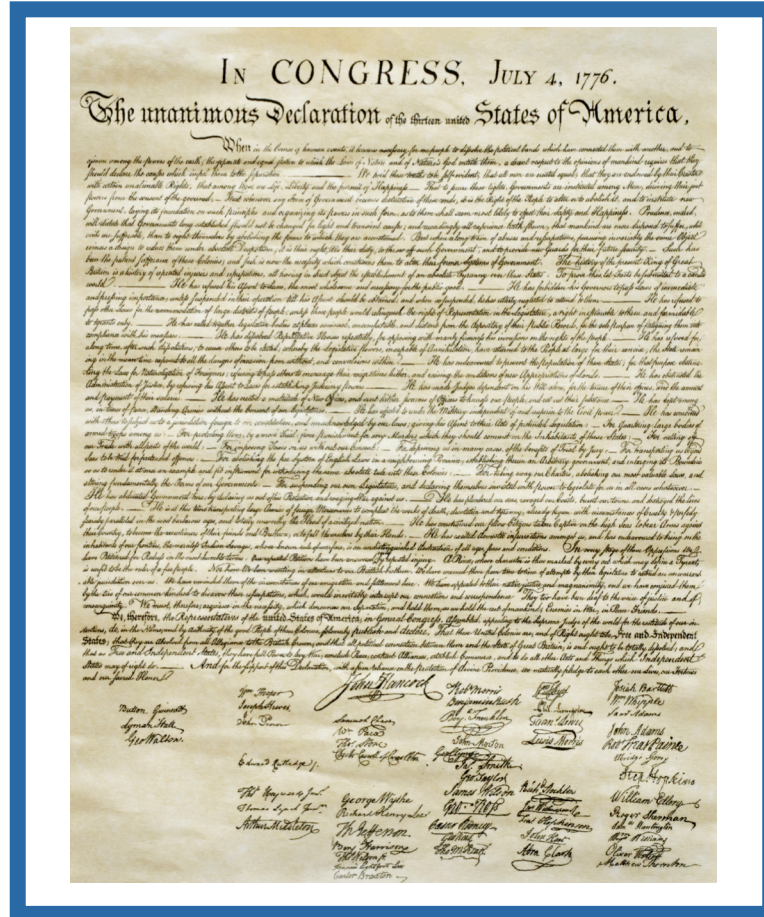




5th Grade Declaration of Independence Inquiry

Why Do Countries Declare Independence?



Second Continental Congress, The Declaration of Independence, 1776. © istock / © lawcain.

Supporting Questions

1. What are the two big philosophical ideas in the Declaration of Independence?
2. What grievances did the colonists have with King George III?
3. How does the Declaration of Independence make an argument for independence?
4. How do declarations of independence from other places in the Western Hemisphere compare with the United States Declaration of Independence?



5th Grade Declaration of Independence Inquiry

Why Do Countries Declare Independence?

New York State Social Studies Framework Key Ideas & Practices

5.6 GOVERNMENT: The political systems of the Western Hemisphere vary in structure and organization across time and place.

✓ **Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence** ✓ **Comparison and Contextualization**

Staging the Question

Part 1: Teacher facilitates a breakup letter activity and discussion to introduce the three-part structure of the Declaration of Independence.

Part 2: Students complete pre-read predictions in a think-pair-share activity.

Supporting Question 1

What are the two big philosophical ideas in the Declaration of Independence?

Formative Performance Task

Summarize the two big philosophical ideas of national sovereignty and natural rights as described in part 1 of the Declaration of Independence.

Featured Sources

Source A: Part 1 of the Declaration of Independence: Preamble

Supporting Question 2

What grievances did the colonists have with King George III?

Formative Performance Task

Rank the grievances that colonists described in part 2 of the Declaration of Independence.

Understand

List the grievances of an independence movement happening in the world today.

Featured Sources

Source A: Part 2 of the Declaration of Independence: Grievances

Supporting Question 3

How does the Declaration of Independence make an argument for independence?

Formative Performance Task

Rewrite the argument made by the colonists in the Declaration of Independence.

Assess

Make a T-chart with reasons for and against independence in a place seeking independence today.

Featured Sources

Source A: Part 3 of the Declaration of Independence: Conclusion

Supporting Question 4

How do declarations of independence from other countries in the Western Hemisphere compare with the United States Declaration of Independence?

Formative Performance Task

Compare the approaches used in one or more countries in the Western Hemisphere to declare independence with the approach used in the United States Declaration of Independence.

Featured Sources

Source A: Table of independence declarations in Latin America
Source B: Source packets: Declarations of independence material for Haiti, Venezuela, and Mexico

Summative Performance Task

ARGUMENT Why do countries declare independence? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, or essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources.

EXTENSION Create a comic strip that adapts the argument for why countries declare independence.

Taking Informed Action

ACT Hold an open forum focused on a present-day independence movement.



Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry asks why countries declare their independence. As an integral early step in the process of becoming independent, a declaration of independence functions as an argument for why people should be free. This inquiry focuses on the argument made in the United States Declaration of Independence. With a firm understanding of the American colonists' argument for independence, the inquiry shifts to students conducting research on declarations of independence in other parts of the Western Hemisphere.

Through this inquiry, students learn about one of the most important political arguments ever made as they compose their own argument for why the United States and other countries declared independence. In the first three formative performance tasks, students examine the American colonists' argument in depth. The first supporting question and related formative performance task focus on the first part of the United States Declaration of Independence. Students read the text of the philosophical justifications for independence. The second supporting question and formative performance task focus on the grievances the colonists had with the British as they were laid out in the second part of the declaration. Students read the grievances and rank them according to perceived level of influence on the colonists' decision to declare independence. The third supporting question and formative performance task move to the actual statement of independence. Students read this statement and rewrite it in their own words. The fourth supporting question and formative performance task provide students with an opportunity to examine other declarations of independence in the Western Hemisphere. The related task is structured as a research opportunity where students gather, use, and interpret evidence about declarations of independence in the Western Hemisphere other than the United States Declaration of Independence.

The Taking Informed Action activities have been embedded alongside two of the formative performance tasks and give students an opportunity to engage in a parallel examination of the United States Declaration of Independence and a modern-day independence movement.

It is important for students to understand that independence declared is not the same as independence obtained. This inquiry focuses on how groups of people made arguments for why they should be independent. Teachers will need to expand this inquiry if they want their students to learn about how independence was actually realized.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take four to six 40-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Inquiries are not scripts, so teachers are encouraged to modify and adapt them to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Content Background

Few documents in world history rival the Declaration of Independence in the power of its ideas. From the opening phrase, "When in the course of human events," to the universal claims that all people are born equal with inalienable natural rights and that governments that violate these rights forfeit their claim to rule, the authors of the Declaration of Independence set forward a principled argument that is universally recognized and emulated throughout the world that the original 13 colonies "are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States."



Many view the Declaration of Independence as a quintessential American document and a reflection of the genius of its author, Thomas Jefferson. While Jefferson's rhetorical and philosophical contributions and the timeless influence of his words are not in doubt, the intellectual origin of the ideas and words in the Declaration of Independence are more wide ranging. Jefferson borrowed heavily from a variety of philosophical and political documents. Thus, the Declaration of Independence serves as an excellent intermediary through which students can learn more about how ideas spread, evolve, and are adapted across time and cultures. Furthermore, the influence of the Declaration of Independence extends well beyond the shores of North America. David Armitage, in his book *The Declaration of Independence in the World*, describes a letter Jefferson wrote in 1826, the year of the 50th anniversary of the declaration, in which he stated that it was "an instrument, pregnant with our own and the fate of the world." Armitage argues that the declaration has served as a model for other people around the world as they contemplated independence. In investigating the philosophical influences of the Declaration of Independence and viewing it in the context of the Western Hemisphere, students will develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Declaration of Independence and, more importantly, see its relevance as a living document throughout the world today.

The ideas within the Declaration of Independence did not appear out of thin air, but they were in the air. Thomas Jefferson, taking pen to paper for the five-person committee selected to draft the declaration, drew upon the Enlightenment ideas of British thinkers such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. Closer to home, Jefferson was likely influenced by the writings of Thomas Paine and the dozens of statements of sentiment and declarations issued by towns, counties, colonial governments, and even public and private organizations in the years leading up to July 4, 1776.

In the years following the signing of the Declaration of Independence, countries around the world used the basic American model of declaring independence, asking for, or in some cases demanding, recognition by European sovereign powers and then defending the newly constituted nations. Dozens of countries in the Western Hemisphere gained their independence from European powers in a similar fashion, beginning with Haiti in 1804 and continuing through the first half of the 19th century. Colonies in the Spanish Empire followed this path beginning in 1808. In relatively quick fashion, more than a dozen countries in Central and South America declared their independence. Colombia was the first country in the Spanish Empire to declare independence on July 20, 1810, but it was Venezuela's declaration on July 5, 1811, that most closely parallels the ideas and rhetoric of the United States Declaration of Independence.

It should be noted that independence for many Latin American countries was a much longer and more complex process than it was in the United States. New national boundaries formed out of the fragments of imperial Spain only to be quickly jettisoned and redrawn each time new national identities and political factions clashed. For instance, the short-lived Gran Colombia consisted of present-day Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador, in addition to parts of modern-day Peru, Brazil, and Guyana. Teachers may want to emphasize the notion that independence declared is rarely the same as independence obtained, especially as evidenced in parts of Latin America. Colombia declared independence in 1810. Venezuela declared independence in 1811. Although both would be free from Spanish rule by 1819, Venezuela would not become its own country until 1830. The Republic of Colombia was not established until after the successive collapses of Gran Colombia in 1830, the Republic of New Granada in 1858, the Granadine Confederation in 1863, and the United States of Colombia in 1886. Moreover, Panama's separation from Colombia would not occur until 1903, nearly a century after Latin American independence movements began.

NOTE: This inquiry uses the term "Latin America" to refer to areas in the Western Hemisphere where Romance languages (French, Portuguese, and Spanish) are spoken. Terms used in this inquiry to describe the four regions of



the Western Hemisphere are taken directly from the 5th Grade New York State Social Studies Framework: North America (Canada and the United States), Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America), the Caribbean, and South America.

Content, Practices, and Literacies

A strong inquiry interweaves factual content with the social studies practices and skills students must use in order for meaningful learning to occur. The formative performance tasks in this inquiry are designed to build students' content knowledge about the Declaration of Independence and other such declarations in the Western Hemisphere. Collectively, the four formative performance tasks call on students to work with a variety of social studies practices as they deepen their understanding of the Declaration of Independence and other such declarations in the Western Hemisphere. All four formative performance tasks call on students to engage in the social studies practice of Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence as they examine the structure and ideas within the Declaration of Independence. The fourth formative performance task also prompts students to use the practice of Comparison and Contextualization as they examine other declarations of independence in the Western Hemisphere and consider the similarities and differences between those declarations and the United States Declaration of Independence.

Teaching with complex primary source documents requires a balancing act between historical authenticity and relevance to students' lives, especially in elementary classrooms. The Declaration of Independence as the source for these formative performance tasks puts that balancing act in stark relief. The words in the Declaration of Independence are inspirational and iconic. However, the text is intellectually dense and includes words and phrases students might not understand on a first read. Complicating matters, classroom teachers must deal with a wide range of student skills, background knowledge, and reading levels. The words in the Declaration of Independence matter, but if the complexity of those words prevents students from understanding the ideas, little is gained. Thus, while this inquiry includes the full text of the Declaration of Independence in its original form, teachers are encouraged to consider modifying text to meet the needs of their students.

Evident across the formative performance tasks is increasing complexity of thinking. The first task prompts students to describe the philosophical ideas of national sovereignty and natural rights found in part 1 of the Declaration of Independence. The second task asks students to rank the grievances found in part 2. In the third formative performance task, students deepen their understanding again, this time by rewriting the argument made in part 3 of the Declaration of Independence in their own words, while incorporating the basic structure and key ideas from the original text. The fourth formative performance task asks students to apply what they have learned about the United States Declaration of Independence in an examination of other independence declarations in the Western Hemisphere.

The New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy offer social studies teachers numerous opportunities to integrate literacy goals and skills into their social studies instruction. The Common Core supports the inquiry process through reading rich informational texts, writing evidence-based arguments, speaking and listening in public venues, and using academic vocabulary to complement the pedagogical directions advocated in the New York State K–12 Social Studies Framework. At the end of this inquiry is an explication of how teachers might integrate literacy skills throughout the content, instruction, and resource decisions they make.



Staging the Compelling Question

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Compelling Question | Why do countries declare independence? |
| Featured Source | Source A: Breakup letter from the American colonists to King George III |

This staging activity requires a bit of playful subterfuge on behalf of the teacher. To introduce students to the notion of independence as a breakup of sorts, the teacher may write out a fake handwritten breakup letter modeled after the three-part structure of the Declaration of Independence (the text of such a letter is supplied as Featured Source A). The letter will likely grab students' attention and get them thinking about the act of breaking up.

Before students enter the room, the teacher should crumble up the handwritten letter and place it inconspicuously on the floor as if it were accidentally left by a student. After the students arrive, the teacher should then pretend to discover the note and then read it aloud as if a student in the class wrote it. After reading the note to the class, the teacher can then reveal the real author of the note—the American colonists—and explain the nature of the Declaration of Independence as the most notorious and influential breakup letter ever written. Teachers may encourage students to view the document through the context of this breakup letter throughout the inquiry.

As an additional staging, the teacher may have students complete a pre-reading guide to the Declaration of Independence. The guide (found in Appendix C) makes use of a think-pair-share structure to activate students' knowledge through the use of prediction.



Staging the Compelling Question

Featured Source

Source A: Eric Langhorst, a fabricated breakup letter from the American colonists to King George III, "Teaching the Declaration of Independence as a Break Up Letter - Podcast and Video," Speaking of History blog, October 30, 2008.

I'm not sure how to start this letter but I feel we need to talk. I've been thinking about us a lot lately. Things used to be so great—it was like we were M.F.E.O. I mean everyone said it was perfect. I really thought we would be together forever but then things changed.

I feel like you started to take me for granted. You just started to do whatever you wanted and never even asked me about anything or how I felt.

I've been thinking about this for a while and I don't want to hurt you but I think it is time we broke up. I mean it's just not going to work. I need some time by myself to see what it is like on my own. I'm sorry things didn't work out but I do think YOU are the one to blame. Sorry but "US" is over.

The American Colonies

Used by permission of Dr. Eric Langhorst. <http://speakingofhistory.blogspot.com/2008/10/teaching-declaration-of-independence-as.html>.



Supporting Question 1

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Supporting Question | What are the two big philosophical ideas in the Declaration of Independence? |
| Formative Performance Task | Summarize the two big philosophical ideas of national sovereignty and natural rights as described in part 1 of the Declaration of Independence. |
| Featured Source | Source A: Part 1 of the Declaration of Independence: Preamble |
| Conceptual Understandings | (5.6a) Government structures, functions, and founding documents vary from place to place in the countries of the Western Hemisphere. (5.6b) Legal, political, and historic documents define the values, beliefs, and principles of constitutional democracy. |
| Content Specifications | Students will examine the foundational documents of the US government for evidence of the country's beliefs, values, and principles. Students will examine the Declaration of Independence in terms of key values, beliefs, and principles of constitutional democracy. |
| Social Studies Practice | ✓ Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence |

Supporting Question

This question prompts students to investigate the preamble of the Declaration of Independence in order to learn more about the philosophical ideas of national sovereignty and natural rights. National sovereignty refers to the power of a nation to form a government and rule. The Declaration of Independence put forward new philosophical ideas about national sovereignty and about the concept of natural rights. In responding to this supporting question, students will become familiar with the colonists' thinking about these concepts and why they should declare independence. By answering this question, students will begin the process of learning why countries declare independence, in this case focusing on the United States.

Formative Performance Task

In this task, students conduct a two-part close reading of the six sentences in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. First, they read the text of the sentence and record one idea mentioned in the text. Next, students read an explanation of the sentence and write their own description. As students read these six sentences, they will use the social studies practice of Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence. By completing this task, students will be prepared to complete the additional formative performance tasks, as the inquiry builds toward students composing an argument in response to the compelling question.

A close-reading guide for the preamble is available in Appendix D. Teacher's notes are also available in Appendix D.

Featured Source

The featured source is the first part of the Declaration of Independence. Part 1 is a philosophical rationale for independence framed by two big philosophical ideas—national sovereignty and natural rights. The first idea of national sovereignty is the notion that it is the “Right of the People to alter or to abolish [an existing government],



and to institute new Government.” Shaping the actions of such governments is the second idea that citizens have natural rights, including those of “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”



Supporting Question 1

Featured Source

Source A: Second Continental Congress, part 1 of the Declaration of Independence, “Preamble,” July 4, 1776

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 inalienable 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. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or 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.

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.

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Supporting Question 2

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Supporting Question | What grievances did the colonists have with King George III? |
| Formative Performance Task | Rank the grievances colonists described in part 2 of the Declaration of Independence. |
| Featured Source | Source A: Part 2 of the Declaration of Independence: Grievances |
| Conceptual Understandings | (5.6a) Government structures, functions, and founding documents vary from place to place in the countries of the Western Hemisphere. (5.6b) Legal, political, and historic documents define the values, beliefs, and principles of constitutional democracy. |
| Content Specifications | Students will examine the foundational documents of the US government for evidence of the country's beliefs, values, and principles. Students will examine the Declaration of Independence in terms of key values, beliefs, and principles of constitutional democracy. |
| Social Studies Practice | ✓ Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence |

Supporting Question

This question asks about the 27 grievances the colonists had with King George III. The inclusion of this list of grievances in the Declaration of Independence provides students with an opportunity to examine firsthand the motivations of Founders. This supporting question extends the inquiry as students begin to examine the historical roots of the actions taken in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence.

Formative Performance Task

This formative performance task gives students an opportunity to read each of the 27 grievances so they may better understand the motivations of the American colonists and then to rank the complaints found in the grievances in terms of their severity. Teachers may support students by using the close-reading guide for the grievances that is available in Appendix D. The guide includes helpful hints for students and prompts students to write each grievance in their own words. Teachers may also support students' contextual understanding by providing the information contained in the Reasons for the Grievances handout in Appendix D.

Concurrently, teachers may begin the Taking Informed Action task for this inquiry by having student list the grievances of a group fighting for independence in the world today. This will help students *understand* issues related to independence in the world today. Teachers may wish to draw from the following list of modern-day independence movements.

| | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|-----------|------------|--------|
| Ahwazi Nation | Catalonia | Kashmir | Shan State | Tibet |
| Andalusia | Chechen Republic | Kurdistan | Tamil | Yoruba |
| Basque Country | Igbo | Palestine | Taiwan | |



In their examination of a modern independence movement, students can take advantage of what they are learning about the United States Declaration of Independence to consider such issues as the following:

- Violations of human or civil rights
- Economic exploitation
- The ability to be recognized by the international community

Featured Sources

Part 2 of the Declaration of Independence includes the 27 grievances against King George III. These grievances represented a wide range of complaints, the first of which was that King George had “refused his Assent to Laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.” This grievance replied to a rule that some colonies were required to submit laws to the king for approval; a process that the colonists thought was fundamentally unfair and was exercised inconsistently. Other grievances focused on specific complaints, such as the quartering of British troops in colonists’ homes and the denial of trial by jury. Thomas Jefferson wrote the grievances in a way that would appeal to everyday colonists. Following Thomas Paine’s example in *Common Sense*, Jefferson wanted to convey the complaints that everyday people had as a way to build up support for the revolutionary act that the Declaration of Independence represented.

According to “The Stylistic Artistry of the Declaration of Independence,” an analysis of the Declaration of Independence by Stephen Lucas (see Appendix B), the grievances fall into three categories. Teachers may use these three categories to organize students’ work in smaller groups.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Grievances 1–12 | Grievances on abuse of power by King George III |
| Grievances 13–22 | Actions by the king and Parliament that violated the British Constitution |
| Grievances 23–27 | Charges against the king for making war on the colonists |



Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source A: Second Continental Congress, part 2 of the Declaration of Independence, "Grievances," July 4, 1776.

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 harrass 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.

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Supporting Question 3

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| Supporting Question | How does the Declaration of Independence make an argument for independence? |
| Formative Performance Task | Rewrite the argument made by the colonists in the Declaration of Independence. |
| Featured Source | Source A: Part 3 of the Declaration of Independence: Conclusion |
| Conceptual Understandings | (5.6a) Government structures, functions, and founding documents vary from place to place in the countries of the Western Hemisphere. (5.6b) Legal, political, and historic documents define the values, beliefs, and principles of constitutional democracy. |
| Content Specifications | Students will examine the foundational documents of the US government for evidence of the country's beliefs, values, and principles. Students will examine the Declaration of Independence in terms of key values, beliefs, and principles of constitutional democracy. |
| Social Studies Practice |  Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence |

Supporting Question

This supporting question is focused on the third and final part of the Declaration of Independence. The last three paragraphs of the declaration functioned as a conclusion to the argument for independence. This supporting question gets at the notion of an argument by asking how Thomas Jefferson and the other authors of the Declaration of Independence brought their argument to a close. While this question, along with Supporting Questions 1 and 2, is focused on a specific part of the Declaration of Independence, it also pulls the three parts together by asking about the overall argument made by the colonists.

Formative Performance Task

By this third formative performance task, students have read two-thirds of the text of the Declaration of Independence. They have closely examined the six sentences that constitute the preamble and have parsed the 27 grievances to determine their meaning and relative importance. In this third formative performance task, students learn about the conclusion and will draw upon what they have learned to examine the totality of the argument made within the Declaration of Independence.

This third formative performance task involves two parts. First, students will read part 3 of the Declaration of Independence. Teachers may support students' reading by using the close-reading guide to part 3 available in Appendix D. After they have read the conclusion, students will rewrite the concluding argument. Rewriting historical text requires knowledge of the subject at hand, a good vocabulary, and an expressive way of thinking.

Teachers may continue supporting students in the Taking Informed Action activity by having them *assess* a modern independence movement. To support students, teachers may have them make a T-chart with reasons for and against independence in a place that is seeking independence today.



Featured Sources

The featured source for this formative performance task is the conclusion to the Declaration of Independence. This conclusion was a critically important part of the declaration as it brought the argument that the colonies should be free together by describing what the colonists had done previously to try to solve their problems. With the pieces of the argument in place, the conclusion crescendos to the actual statement of independence. That sentence, all 127 words, contains some of the most famous words in world history, “That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES.” But that was just the penultimate claim. The Declaration of Independence closes with what historian Carl Becker, in his *The Declaration of Independence: A Study in the History of Political Ideas* (1922), called “perfection itself,” where the colonists pledged “to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”



Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source A: Second Continental Congress, part 3 of the Declaration of Independence, “Conclusion,” July 4, 1776

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 our 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.

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 the 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 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.

Public domain.



Supporting Question 4

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Supporting Question | How do declarations of independence from other countries in the Western Hemisphere compare with the United States Declaration of Independence? |
| Formative Performance Task | Compare the approaches used in one or more countries in the Western Hemisphere to declare independence with the approach used in the United States Declaration of Independence. |
| Featured Source | Source A: Table of independence declarations in Latin America Source B: Source packets: Declarations of independence material for Haiti, Venezuela, and Mexico |
| Conceptual Understandings | (5.6a) Government structures, functions, and founding documents vary from place to place in the countries of the Western Hemisphere. (5.6b) Legal, political, and historic documents define the values, beliefs, and principles of constitutional democracy. |
| Content Specifications | Students will examine the foundational documents of the US government for evidence of the country's beliefs, values, and principles. Students will examine the Declaration of Independence in terms of key values, beliefs, and principles of constitutional democracy. |
| Social Studies Practice | ✔ Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence |

Supporting Question

This last supporting question looks past the Declaration of Independence to events after 1776 and asks about declarations of independence in other countries in the Western Hemisphere. The question focuses students on independence from European colonial rule in the Caribbean and Central and South America. In doing so, it provides students with a glimpse into the scope and sequence of independence movements throughout Latin America. By comparing declarations of independence, this supporting question extends the inquiry outside the experience of the North American English colonies to examine why other colonies in the Western Hemisphere declared independence.

Formative Performance Task

Formative Performance Task 4 is a research opportunity where teachers may support students as they examine declarations of independence from one or more Latin America countries and compare those declarations to the United States Declaration of Independence. Beginning with Haiti in 1804 and accelerating across Latin America after the fall of the Spanish monarchy in 1808, independence swept across the Western Hemisphere. This wave of independence lasted into the late 1830s and was characterized by Enlightenment demands for political rights and social equality. These ideas were often exemplified in the successive declarations of independence. Soon, a total of 18 new nations would emerge throughout Latin America and a new age had begun.

To set up students' research, teachers may have them work with the table that shows when Latin American countries declared their independence. Following the successes of the American and French revolutions, colonies in the Western Hemisphere became immersed in their own independence struggles.



To initiate the research, teachers may assign students, individually or in groups, a declaration of independence to explore from one country in Latin America. Teachers may provide students with one of the three source packets included in this inquiry (for Haiti, Venezuela, and Mexico) or may open up the research and support students as they search more broadly online or in print sources for information on another independence movement in the Western Hemisphere.

Featured Sources

Featured Source A includes a table listing the dates of the initial declarations of independence in the Western Hemisphere. Featured Source B includes source packets for three Western Hemisphere countries: Haiti, Mexico, and Venezuela. Each packet includes the following.

1. A summary of the independence movement in the country.
2. An excerpt from the country's declaration of independence.
3. A map of the region before and after independence.



Supporting Question 4

Featured Source**Source A:** Table, dates and locations of independence declarations in Latin America, 1776–1838

| Country | Date of the Declaration | Region |
|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| United States | July 4, 1776 | North America |
| Haiti | January 1, 1804 | Caribbean |
| Colombia | July 20, 1810 | South America |
| Venezuela | July 5, 1811 | South America |
| Argentina | July 9, 1816 | South America |
| Chile | February 12, 1818 | South America |
| Peru | July 28, 1821 | South America |
| Guatemala | September 15, 1821 | Central America |
| El Salvador | September 15, 1821 | Central America |
| Nicaragua | September 15, 1821 | Central America |
| Costa Rica | September 15, 1821 | Central America |
| Mexico | September 28, 1821 | Central America |
| Panama | November 28, 1821 | Central America |
| Brazil | September 7, 1822 | South America |
| Bolivia | August 6, 1825 | South America |
| Uruguay | August 25, 1825 | South America |
| Ecuador | May 13, 1830 | South America |
| Honduras | October 26, 1838 | Central America |
| Paraguay | November 25, 1838 | South America |

Created for the New York State K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Binghamton University, 2015. Adapted from David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 2007: pp. 145–156.



Supporting Question 4

Featured Source

Source B: Source packets: Declarations of independence, maps, and key facts related to independence movements in Haiti, Venezuela, and Mexico, 1804–1821

NOTE: The Haitian Declaration of Independence, like the one in Mexico in 1821, followed a war for independence. This situation is in contrast to the situation in the United States and Venezuela, where the declarations of independence came at the beginning of the war for independence.

Haiti's Declaration of Independence (excerpts), January 1, 1804

Proclamation for a solemn Abjuration of the French Nation.

LIBERTY OR DEATH! – NATIVE ARMY

THE GENERAL IN CHIEF TO THE PEOPLE OF HAYTI.

CITIZENS,

IT is not enough to have expelled from your country the barbarians who have for ages stained it with blood—it is not enough to have curbed the factions which, succeeding each other by turns, sported with a phantom of liberty which France exposed to their eyes. It is become necessary, by a last act of national authority, to ensure for ever the empire of liberty in the country which has given us birth. It is necessary to deprive an inhuman government, which has hitherto held our minds in a state of the most humiliating torpitude, of every hope of being enabled again to enslave us. Finally, it is necessary to live independent, or die. Independence or Death! Let these sacred words serve to rally us—let them be signals of battle, and of our re-union.

Citizens—Countrymen—I have assembled on this solemn day, those courageous chiefs, who, on the eve of receiving the last breath of expiring liberty, have lavished their blood to preserve it....

If there exist among you a lukewarm heart, let him retire, and shudder to pronounce the oath which is to unite us. Let us swear to the whole world, to posterity, to ourselves, to renounce France for ever, and to die, rather than live under its dominion—to fight till the last breath for the independence of our country....

Swear then to live free and independent, and to prefer death to every thing that would lead to replace you under the yoke; swear then to pursue for everlasting, the traitors, and enemies of your independence.

J.J. DESSALINES.

Head-quarters, Gonaives, 1st Jan. 1804,

1st Year of Independence

Public domain. Rainsford, Marcus. An historical account of the black empire of Hayti: comprehending a view of the principal transactions in the revolution of Saint Domingo; with its antient and modern state. London: Albion Press, 1805. <https://archive.org/stream/historicalaccoun00rain#page/442/mode/2up>



Summary of Haiti's Independence Movement

From whom: France

When: 1791–1803

Key leader: Toussaint L'Overture

Important facts

- Haiti's independence movement was the largest and most successful slave rebellion in the Western Hemisphere.
- Haiti was the second nation in the Western Hemisphere to win independence from its European colonizer.
- The Haitian independence movement was influenced by the French Revolution (1789) and the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

Interesting facts:

- Haiti won independence when Napoleon Bonaparte ruled France.
- Haitian independence led indirectly to the Louisiana Purchase.
- The French language is still spoken in Haiti today.
- The country was named Saint-Domingue when it was under French control.
- At the time of independence, enslaved persons outnumbered owners ten to one.

Created for the New York State K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Binghamton University, 2015.



NOTE: The two maps on this page are screen shots from the website listed below. After clicking on the link, students may move the cursor to see the political development of the region over time.

Maps of the Region before and after Haitian Independence



Political Evolution of Central America and the Caribbean



Political Evolution of Central America and the Caribbean

Public domain. Source: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_evolution_of_the_Caribbean.



Venezuela Declaration of Independence (excerpts), July 5, 1811

Original Translation

Notwithstanding our protests, our moderation, generosity, and the inviolability of our principles, contrary to the wishes of our brethren in Europe, we were declared in a state of rebellion; we were blockaded; war was declared against us; agents were sent amongst us, to excite us one against the other, endeavouring to take away our credit with the other Nations of Europe, by imploring their assistance to oppress us....

Like all the other nations of the world, we are free, and authorised not to depend on any other authority than our own, and to take amongst the powers of the earth the place of equality which the Supreme Being and Nature assign to us.

We, therefore, in the name and by the will and authority which we hold from the virtuous People of Venezuela, DO declare solemnly to the world, that its united Provinces are, and ought to be, from this day, by act and right, Free, Sovereign, and Independent States; and that they are absolved from every submission and dependence on the Throne of Spain.

Public domain. Venezuelan Declaration of Independence and Constitution (Longman and Co., 1812). Rice University Digital Scholarship Archive. <https://scholarship.rice.edu/jsp/xml/1911/9253/1/aa00032.tei.html>.



Summary of Venezuela's Independence Movement

From whom: Spain (and later, from Gran Colombia)

When: 1811–1823

Key leader: Simón Bolívar

Important facts:

- France's conquest of Spain in 1808 led to the crumbling of the Spanish empire in the Western Hemisphere.
- Venezuela's quest for independence was influenced by Enlightenment ideas and revolutions in the United States and France.
- Venezuela was the first region in South America to declare independence from Spain.
- The Creoles resented high taxes, second-class status, and corruption.

Interesting Facts:

- Francisco de Miranda (a friend of Alexander Hamilton and Catherine the Great) launched a failed independence effort in 1806.
- Before independence in 1811, Venezuela was part of the Spanish Viceroy of New Granada.
- Venezuela's civil war was between supporters of Spain and supporters of the revolutionaries.
- Venezuela became part of Republic of Gran Colombia in 1819 until it fell apart in 1830.

Created for the New York State K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Binghamton University, 2015.



NOTE: The two maps on this page are screen shots from the website listed below. After clicking on the link, students may move the cursor to see the political development of the region over time.

Maps of the Region before and after Venezuela's Independence



Political Evolution of Central America and the Caribbean



Political Evolution of Central America and the Caribbean

Public domain. Source: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_evolution_of_the_Caribbean.



Mexico Declaration of Independence, September 28, 1821

Declaration of the independence of the Mexican Empire, issued by its Sovereign Junta, assembled in the Capital on September 28, 1821.

The Mexican Nation, which for three hundred years had neither had its own will, nor free use of its voice, leaves today the oppression in which it has lived.

The heroic efforts of its sons have been crowned today, and consummated is an eternal and memorable enterprise, which a spirit superior to all admiration and praise, out of love and for the glory of its Country started in Iguala, continued, and brought to fruition, overcoming almost insurmountable obstacles.

Restored then this part of the North to the exercise of all the rights given by the Author of Nature and recognized as unalienable and sacred by the civilized nations of the Earth, in liberty to constitute itself in the manner which best suits its happiness and through representatives who can manifest its will and plans, it begins to make use of such precious gifts and solemnly declares by means of the Supreme Junta of the Empire that it is a Sovereign nation and independent of old Spain with which henceforth it will maintain no other union besides a close friendship in the terms prescribed by the treaties; that it will establish friendly relationships with other powers, executing regarding them whatever declarations the other sovereign nations can execute; that it will constitute itself in accordance to the bases which in the Plan of Iguala and the Treaty of Córdoba the First Chief of the Imperial Army of the Three Guarantees wisely established and which it will uphold at all costs and with all sacrifice of the means and lives of its members (if necessary); this solemn declaration, is made in the capital of the Empire on the twenty-eighth of September of the year one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one, first of Mexican Independence.

Public domain. Source: Wikipedia,

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_Independence_of_the_Mexican_Empire?CFID=4854641&CFTOKEN=35833133.%20Accessed%20on%206/8/15.



Summary of Mexico's Independence Movement

From whom: Spain

When: 1810–1821

Key leaders: Father Miguel Hidalgo, Father Jose Maria Morelos, and Augustin de Iturbide

Important facts:

- Peasants and miners were an important part of the revolutionary army.
- The revolutionaries were inspired by the revolutions in Haiti and the United States.

Interesting facts:

- The move to independence was set in motion after Napoleonic France conquered Spain in 1808.
- Priest Miguel Hidalgo issued the Cry of Dolores (a declaration of war) in 1810.
- Spain attempted to reconquer Mexico on two occasions between 1821 and 1829.
- Iturbide's rule did not last long. He was overthrown in 1824 and Mexico became a republic.
- Mexico lost California in 1848 (the same year gold was discovered) after losing the Mexican American War

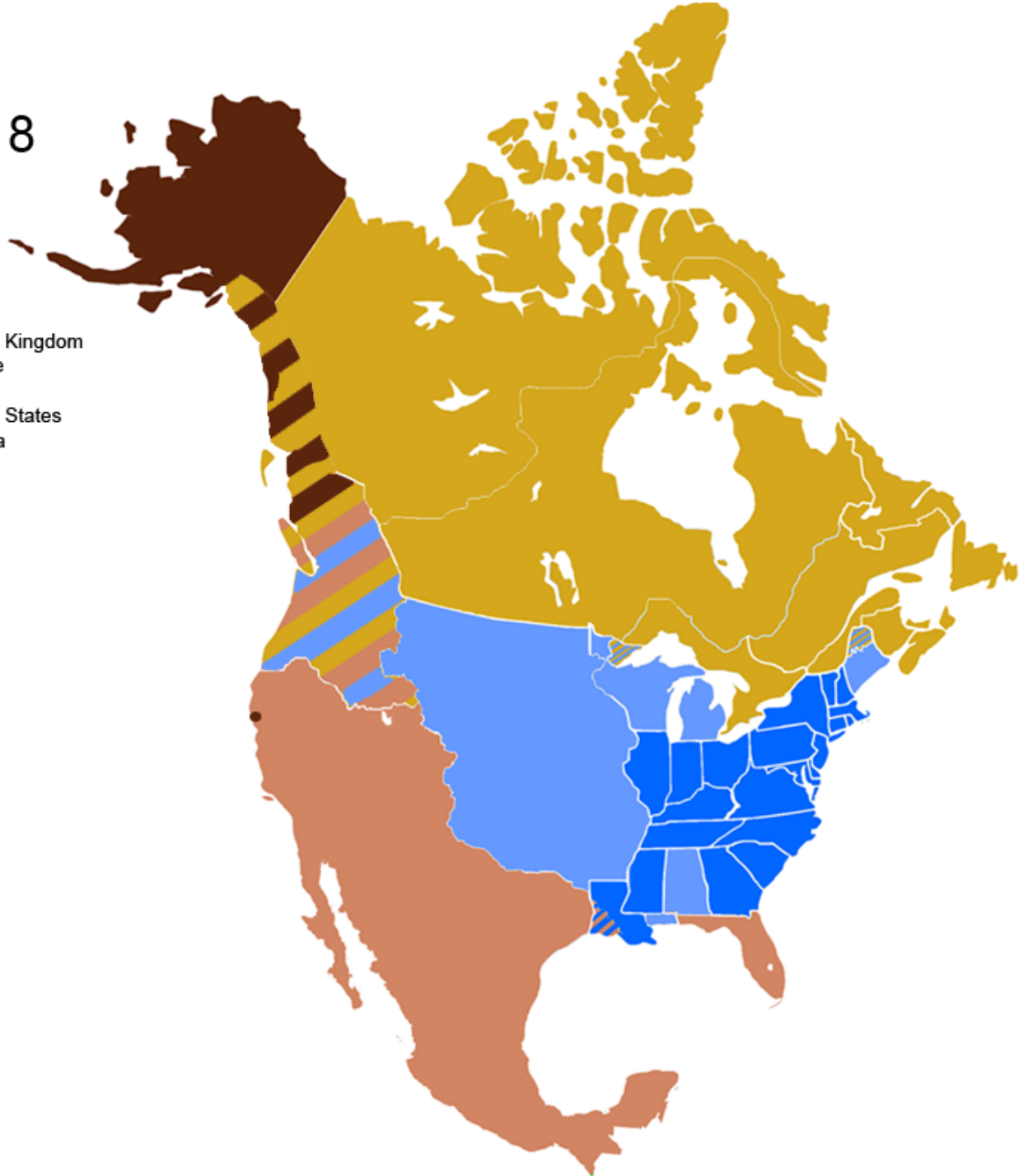
Created for the New York State K–12 Social Studies Toolkit by Binghamton University, 2015.



Maps of the Region before and after Mexican Independence

1818

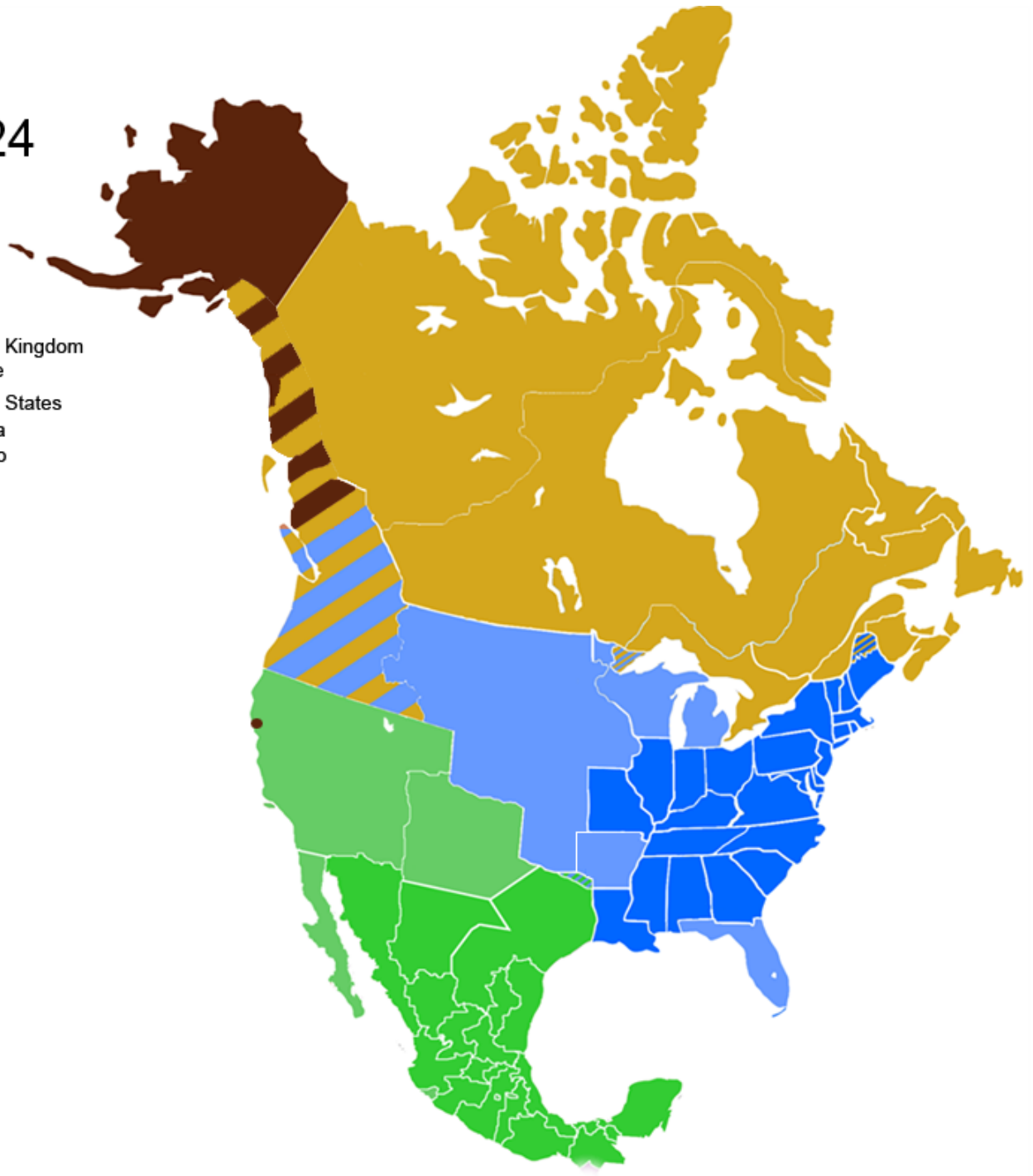
- United Kingdom
- France
- Spain
- United States
- Russia





1824

- United Kingdom
- France
- United States
- Russia
- Mexico



Public domain. Source: Wikimedia Commons, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Non-Native_Nations_Claim_over_NAFTA_countries_1818.png and http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Non-Native_Nations_Claim_over_NAFTA_countries_1824.png.



Summative Performance Task

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Compelling Question | Why do countries declare independence? |
| Summative Performance Task | Construct an argument that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources while acknowledging competing perspectives. |

Building an Argument

In this task, students construct an argument that responds to the compelling question. Students should have a good start after completing the formative performance tasks, where they examined the three parts of the Declaration of Independence and sources related to independence movements in other countries in the Western Hemisphere. Now students' work should shift to the bigger question of why countries declare independence.

Before undertaking the Summative Performance Task, it may be helpful for students to review the sources provided as well as writing and/or reading guides they may have used in the formative performance tasks. Doing so should help students develop their opinions and highlight appropriate examples and details to support their responses. Having students rehearse their answers, opinions, and supporting details orally may be helpful for students to be successful on the task.

Students' arguments should comprise a series of claims about why countries declare independence and how the process in the United States compared with that of other countries in the Western Hemisphere. These claims should focus on what they learned in the formative performance tasks in this inquiry about the design of the Declaration of Independence. Each of the claims that students make should be accompanied by evidence from the sources included and researched independently in this inquiry.

Student arguments likely will vary, but could including any or all of the following claims:

- Countries have declared independence because they think they are not being treated well.
- Over time the needs of people in colonies change and are not the same as the ruling country.
- Not giving people natural rights has inspired them to want independence.
- All the big and small things that ruling countries do over time have made people want independence.
- Ruling countries sometimes have not changed with the changing needs of their colonies.
- Independence movements in one country sometimes inspire groups in other countries to declare their own independence.

Extension

Students might create a comic strip that addresses the compelling question. Students should adapt their arguments while creating their comic strips. The comic strip should reflect arguments that include why the United States and at least one additional country in the Western Hemisphere declared independence. The comic strip should include illustrations and captions to showcase why countries declare independence. Students can be encouraged to include historical and/or contemporary characters.



Common Core Connections across the Grade 5 Inquiry

Social studies teachers play a key role in enabling students to develop the relevant literacy skills found in the New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy. The Common Core emphasis on more robust reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language skills in general and the attention to more sophisticated source analysis, argumentation, and the use of evidence in particular are evident across the Toolkit inquiries.

Identifying the connections with the Common Core Anchor Standards will help teachers consciously build opportunities to advance their students' literacy knowledge and expertise through the specific social studies content and practices described in the annotation. The following table outlines the opportunities represented in the Grade 5 Inquiry through illustrative examples of each of the standards represented.

| Common Core Anchor Standard Connections | |
|---|--|
| Reading | <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</p> <p>See Formative Performance Task 2: Students read the text of the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence and determine the relative importance of each grievance.</p> <p>See Formative Performance Task 3: Students read the text of the conclusion to the Declaration of Independence and use information from the conclusion to restate the ideas within.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</p> <p>See Formative Performance Task 1: Students read the text of the preamble to the Declaration of Independence and summarize the two big philosophical ideas of national sovereignty and natural rights as described in part 1 of the Declaration of Independence.</p> |
| | <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</p> <p>See the Summative Performance Task: Students write an argument in response to the compelling question.</p> |
| Language | <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</p> <p>See Appendix A: Declaration of Independence Inquiry Vocabulary: Students use the vocabulary guide to understand words and phrases they encounter in the formative performance tasks.</p> |



Appendix A: Declaration of Independence Inquiry Vocabulary

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Age of Enlightenment | Period of rapid social and intellectual change characterized by attention to human reason, scientific inquiry, and natural rights instead of reliance on authoritative hierarchies and tradition in science and political systems. |
| grievance | A stated complaint. |
| independence | The ability of a person or group to make and follow their own rules without having to recognize the authority of an outside leader. |
| liberty | Freedom from the control of others. |
| natural rights | Rights that all people are born with in the world, irrespective to position in society. |
| preamble | An introductory statement. |
| providence | The power of a divine force (God) to intervene in human affairs. |
| quartering | British practice of forcing colonists to lodge British soldiers in their homes. |
| sovereignty | The ability of groups to govern themselves. |
| tyranny | Abuse of power often seen in rulers with near absolute power. |



Appendix B: Additional Resources for Teaching this Inquiry

- DOI Road Trip, “Reading of the Declaration of Independence.” YouTube, August 27, 2009. Dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence from Mel Gibson, Michael Douglas, Kathy Bates, Kevin Spacey, Whoopi Goldberg, Edward Norton, Renée Zellweger, Ming Na, Winona Ryder, and Benicio Del Toro, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETroXvRFoKY>.
- Randy Barnett, “The Declaration of Independence Annotated.” *Washington Post*, July 4, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2014/07/04/the-declaration-of-independence-annotated/>,
- Stephen E. Lucas, “The Stylistic Artistry of the Declaration of Independence.” National Archives, 1989. http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_style.html.



Appendix C: Pre-reading Guide to the Declaration of Independence

| Declaration of Independence Pre-read Prediction Think-Pair-Share Questions | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Questions | Why did you say this? | How confident are you? (Circle one.) |
| 1. Who do you think wrote the Declaration of Independence? | | <i>I am sure</i> <i>Not sure</i> |
| | | |
| 2. Why do you think the Declaration of Independence was written? | | <i>I am sure</i> <i>Not sure</i> |
| | | |
| 3. When do you think the Declaration of Independence was written? | | <i>I am sure</i> <i>Not sure</i> |
| | | |
| 4. What do you think the Declaration of Independence was about? | | <i>I am sure</i> <i>Not sure</i> |
| | | |
| 5. To whom might the Declaration of Independence have been written? | | <i>I am sure</i> <i>Not sure</i> |
| | | |



Appendix D: Declaration of Independence Close-Reading Guides and Other Teacher Material

| Close-Reading Guide for the Declaration of Independence—Part 1: Preamble | List the Main Idea |
|--|--------------------|
| <p>Sentence 1: 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>Explanation: This first sentence says that if you are going to change your government you have to say why.</p> | |
| <p>Sentence 2: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.</p> | |
| <p>Explanation: This sentence describes the first big philosophical idea—natural rights. Natural rights mean that “all men are created equal.” Natural rights are “inalienable,” which means they cannot be taken away. Those rights include “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”</p> | |
| <p>Sentences 3 and 4: 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 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>Explanation: These sentences describe the second big philosophical idea—natural sovereignty. Natural sovereignty means governments get power from citizens. When governments do not protect people, it is “the right of the people” to change governments.</p> | |
| <p>Sentence 5: 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.</p> | |
| <p>Explanation: This sentence explains that people should use “prudence” or caution when changing governments. It also states that some “evils are sufferable,” which means people may put up with some mistakes by their government.</p> | |
| <p>Sentence 6: 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.</p> | |
| <p>Explanation: This sentence explains that sometimes government gets so bad that it has to be changed.</p> | |
| <p>Sentence 7: 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.</p> | |
| <p>Explanation: This sentence explains that the colonists have put up with a lot. It also says that they are being forced to change their government. The word “constrains” means forced in this sentence.</p> | |
| <p>Sentences 8 and 9: 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>Explanation: These last two sentences introduce the next section of the Declaration of Independence, which is about the things the king did wrong. “Absolute tyranny” means the king wanted total control.</p> | |



Notes for Teachers on the Preamble

| Sentences from the Declaration of Independence | Teachers' Notes |
|---|--|
| Sentence 1: 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. | This sentence is recognizable to many and serves as an introduction to the important ideas that follow. The sentence contains several concepts that teachers may wish to explain, including political bands, separate and equal station, and Laws of Nature and of Nature's God. |
| Sentence 2: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. | Teachers may want to explain the phrases "all men are created equal" and "inalienable rights." Teachers may also introduce the idea that the rights listed in this sentence did not apply to everyone in 1776, including women and African Americans. |
| Sentences 3 and 4: 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 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. | These sentences are about the first big philosophical idea—natural rights. Teachers may review the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers, such as John Locke, and how they influenced the authors of the Declaration of Independence. |
| Sentence 5: 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. | Teachers may want to pause and ask students to brainstorm specific parameters or rules for when a group can call for independence. It might also be helpful to ask students why the authors included this sentence. |
| Sentence 6: 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. | This sentence is about the second big philosophical idea—national sovereignty. Teachers may want to highlight the influence of John Locke and Enlightenment ideas on this sentence, too. |
| Sentences 7–9: 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. | Teachers may want to explain the term "absolute tyranny." |



Close-Reading Guide for the Declaration of Independence—Part 2: Grievances

| Grievances in the Declaration of Independence | Helpful Hints | Write the Grievance in Your Own Words |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. | “Assent to laws” means the king gave his permission. | |
| 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. | Governor may mean any lawmakers. “His Assent should be obtained” means until his permission is granted. | |
| 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. | “Relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature” refers to colonists giving up representation in Parliament—Britain’s law-making body of government. “Inestimable” means priceless. “Formidable” means something to be afraid of. | |
| 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. | “Legislative bodies” are places where laws are made. “Fatiguing” is to tire out. “Compliance” means obedience. “Measures” refer to laws. | |
| 5. He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people. | “Dissolved Representative Houses” means the king canceled meetings of colonial lawmakers. | |
| 6. 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. | “After such dissolution, to cause others to be elected” means the king was not allowing elections to occur. | |
| 7. 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. | “Endeavoured” means attempted. “Obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners” means the king was preventing people from moving into Native American territories. | |



| | | |
|--|---|--|
| 8. He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers. | “Obstructed the Administration of Justice” likely refers to the king breaking laws. “Judiciary powers” refer to the powers of judges in the court system. | |
| 9. He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. | “Tenure of their offices” refers to the length of time a judge would be in power. | |
| 10. He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance. | “A multitude of New Offices” were created to help enforce many of the acts Great Britain passed that angered the colonists. | |
| 11. He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures. | “Consent of our legislatures” refers to the approval of the colonial lawmakers and/or leaders. | |
| 12. He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power. | “Render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power” refers to the king making the military stronger than the people and not allowing the people any check over it. | |
| 13. 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: | “Jurisdiction foreign to our constitution” refers to illegal laws. The use of the term “pretended” is sarcastic in this case. | |
| 14. For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: | “Quartering” refers to the practice of forcing people to provide housing for soldiers. | |
| 15. For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: | “Them” refers to British troops being automatically found innocent whenever they committed crimes against colonists because they were tried in Great Britain. | |
| 16. For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: | Many colonists were forced to buy and/or trade for British goods only. The port of Boston was closed as punishment for the Boston Tea Party. | |
| 17. For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: | “Without our Consent” means without permission. | |
| 18. For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury: | “Depriving” means to take away. A “Trial by Jury” is a trial in which one’s peers will determine guilt in a court case. | |



| | | |
|--|--|--|
| 19. For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences | Some colonists had to travel thousands of miles to be tried in British courts on false charges. | |
| 20. 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: | The “neighbouring Province” refers to the American colonies. “Arbitrary government” means a government without support of the people. “Absolute rule” means total control. | |
| 21. For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: | This refers to Great Britain getting rid of charters, laws, and local governments and replacing them with ones that limited colonial rule. | |
| 22. For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. | “Suspending our own Legislatures” means to cancel the colonists’ law-making meetings. | |
| 23. He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us. | “He has abdicated Government here” refers to King George III removing local and state governments. | |
| 24. He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people. | The word “plunder” means to steal. “Ravage” means to damage. | |
| 25. He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete 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. | The term “foreign Mercenaries” means soldiers hired to fight on behalf of another country. | |
| 26. 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. | “Constrained” means to force. The king forced colonists to serve in the British navy. | |
| 27. He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the | “Domestic insurrections” refer to conflicts between colonists and Native Americans that the British were encouraging. | |



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| inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. | | |
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Reasons for the Grievances

Teachers may support students' contextual understanding by presenting the information contained in the Reasons for Grievances summary before or concurrently with the second formative performance task.

The second part of the Declaration of Independence puts forward the “long train of abuses and usurpations,” that caused the colonists to declare independence. The 27 grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence served to substantiate the cause of independence. Perhaps more important was the fact that King George III was the target of those grievances. By directly addressing the king, the colonists were ending any possibility of reconciliation. A tussle with Parliament was one thing, but to take on the king quite another.

The grievances, in fact, had been stewing for quite some time; it was not as if, in 1776, the colonists were suddenly aware of the injustices from the British crown. What changed were the prospects for reconciliation. The outbreak of hostilities in April 1775 at Lexington and Concord moved the colonies and the British government closer to the breaking point, but it was King George III's Proclamation of Rebellion in August of that year that began to tip the balance. The prevailing attitude in the Continental Congress in the summer of 1775 was that the colonists were resisting Parliament, which the colonists began to argue did not represent them. Most colonists remained loyal to the king, so much so that the Continental Congress offered to reconcile in a September Olive Branch Petition. King George III instead expanded his Proclamation of Rebellion in October and, with the January 1776 publication of Thomas Paine's anti-monarchist pamphlet *Common Sense*, the die was cast. In May 1776 the Continental Congress passed a resolution calling on the colonies to dissolve their governments and create new independent state governments. This resolution included a blistering preamble written by John Adams accusing King George III of various injustices. Now the colonists' disagreements with Parliament had morphed into grievances against the king himself. With the publication of the Declaration of Independence, there was no turning back. The American colonies had severed their ties to the monarchy and were now embarked on an uncertain future.

Timeline of Events Leading to the Declaration of Independence

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|------------------|--|
| March 5, 1770 | Boston Massacre |
| March 28, 1774 | Intolerable/Coercive Acts |
| April 9, 1775 | Lexington and Concord |
| June 17, 1775 | Battle of Bunker Hill |
| August 23, 1775 | Proclamation of Rebellion by King George III |
| July 5, 1775 | Olive Branch Petition |
| October 27, 1775 | Expansion of the king's proclamation |
| January 10, 1776 | Publication of <i>Common Sense</i> by Thomas Paine |
| May 15, 1776 | Resolution from the Continental Congress for state governments |
| July 4, 1776 | Declaration of Independence |

The Final Charge against King George III

The Colonists' Side of the Story

The *Actual* Declaration or Statement of Independence

43

**DIRECTIONS:**

Now it's your turn. Rewrite the argument in the Declaration of Independence in your own words. Make sure to use the same structure and the topics Thomas Jefferson and the Second Continental Congress used. Those topics are in the chart.

An example of a student response:

We keep asking over and over for you to stop abusing our freedoms, but you never respond or do anything different. Since the king is behaving badly, he should not rule the free people of America.

We have told the British over and over how unhappy we are. We told you that the Parliament was being unfair. We explained to you why we came to America. We reminded you that many of us are originally from England and believe the same things as you, but you will not listen to reason. We must then either be friends or enemies.

Because of everything we said above, we are FREE and INDEPENDENT. We promise to each other to stick to this declaration at all cost.