



Declaration of Independence Reading Comprehension

The main purpose of America's Declaration of Independence was to explain to foreign nations why the colonies had chosen to separate themselves from Great Britain. The Revolutionary War had already begun, and several major battles had already taken place. The American colonies had already cut most major ties to England and had established their own congress, currency, army, and post office. On June 7, 1776, at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Richard Henry Lee voiced a resolution that the United States should be completely free of England's influence, and that all political ties between the two countries should be dissolved. Congress agreed and began plans to publish a formal declaration of independence and appointed a committee of five members to draft the declaration.

Thomas Jefferson was chosen to draft the letter, which he did in a single day. Four other members—Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams—were part of the committee to help Jefferson. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson explained that a body of people has a right to change governments if that government becomes oppressive (unfair and controlling). He further explained that governments fail when they no longer have the consent of the governed. Since Parliament clearly lacked the consent of the American colonists to govern them, it was no longer legitimate.

The Declaration was presented to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 2, 1776. It was approved with a few minor changes. Of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, John Hancock, of Massachusetts, was the first.

1.) Why was the Declaration of Independence written?

- a.) For the colonists
- b.) For the British
- c.) For the kings
- d.) For other nations

2.) Which of the following HAD NOT taken place before the Declaration of Independence was written?

- a.) Battles
- b.) America had named a president.
- c.) The Revolutionary War
- d.) American had cut most ties with England.

3.) In the following sentence, what does the word "influence" mean:

Richard Henry Lee voiced a resolution that the United States ought to be completely free of England's **influence**.

- a.) battle
- b.) royal family
- c.) under the effect of
- d.) money

4.) Which of the following is an accurate description of what Thomas Jefferson described in the Declaration?

- a.) That the King of England owes the colonists money.
- b.) That America will win the war against England.
- c.) People have the right to fair government.
- d.) The colonists have no rights.

5.) According to Jefferson, when do governments fail?

- a.) When they no longer have the consent of the people.
- b.) When they fight wars.
- c.) When they issue taxes.
- d.) When they owe money.

6.) Which of the following is NOT a reason the Declaration of Independence was written?

- a.) Parliament lacked consent of the American people.
- b.) Parliament was unfair.
- c.) Parliament taxed the Americans.
- d.) Parliament had failed the American people.

7.) The Continental Congress...

- a.) agreed to the Declaration with a few changes.
- b.) totally and completely agreed with the Declaration.
- c.) disagreed with the Declaration.
- d.) agreed with the Declaration but made major changes.

8.) Which of the following describes an illegitimate government according to the Declaration?

- a.) A government that taxes its people.
- b.) A government that oppresses its people.
- c.) A government that has the consent of its people.
- d.) A government run by the people.

9.) The British were...

- a.) likely to agree to the Declaration.
- b.) likely to disagree to the Declaration.
- c.) likely to agree to the Declaration with a few minor changes.
- d.) likely to agree to the Declaration with a few major changes.

10.) Which of the following is FALSE?

- a.) Congress established a taxing system before the Declaration of Independence.
- b.) Congress established a post office before the Declaration of Independence.
- c.) Congress established an army before the Declaration of Independence.
- d.) Richard Henry Lee voiced the resolution that American should dissolve its ties to England.