

The Declaration of Independence

Original Text and Modern Text 1776, By Thomas Jefferson

1st Paragraph Preamble - Introduction to a document / Shows the Purpose

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another,

There comes a time in History when the American People must break away from England,

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,

and become a separate nation, equal with other nations, like God planned all along.

a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We care about what the rest of the world thinks, so we'll tell you why we were forced to declare independence.

Summary why the colonists want to break away from England

2nd Paragraph Principles of Government / Rights of the people to self-governance

We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal;

Everyone can see that the following things are true: All people are created with equal rights;

that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

God made them with rights that cannot be taken away; These include Life, Political Freedom, and Economic Freedom.

That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men,
to make sure we have these rights, people set up governments to protect these rights.

deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; That, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends,

Governments get their powers from the "O.K." of the people; if a government tries to take away people's rights,

it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government,
the people may change or get rid of that government, and set up a new government,

laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form,
it should be based on principles, and its power should be organized,

as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.
so that it protects the safety and happiness of the people.

Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes;
We should be cautious, and if a government has been around for a long time, don't change it just because of some little thing (or because of something that might change back again in a few years.)

Social Contract Theory

property
Natural Rights

and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, because of this, History has shown that people will suffer as long as they can,

than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. rather than get rid of a government that they're used to.

But when a long train of abuses and usurpations,

But when a long list of bad things happen, and the leaders illegally seize power,

pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, and it looks like what they're after, is a plan to put the people under an evil dictatorship,

it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, it is the right and duty of the people, to get rid of that evil government,

and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patience sufferance of these colonies; and set up a new government that will protect their rights in the future. The American Colonies have suffered patiently;

and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. but now we must change our old system of government.

The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, In the past King George has repeatedly hurt the colonies and illegally seized power.

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.

His plan all along has been to become a dictator over the colonies. To prove what we say, here is a list of what he's done.

3rd paragraph — 29th paragraph (27 injustices of the King) & final paragraph

He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. He has refused to approve necessary colonial laws.

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's forbidden the governors to approve necessary colonial laws and delayed the passing of other laws.

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.

In some districts he has refused to pass laws unless people gave up their democratic rights.

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 called legislative bodies together hastily and in unusual places (so that they would give in to his demands).

He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly, for opposing, with manly firmness, his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has dissolved Legislatures for opposing him when he tried to take away our rights.

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 meantime, exposed to all the dangers of

Tyrannical Acts of the King / Historical Context

3-27 Grievances / list of complaints

Declaratory Act

invasion from without and convulsions within.

After closing down our legislatures, he has refused to let us elect a new one and our colony was left unprotected.

He has endeavored to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners, refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has tried to keep the colonies from growing by preventing immigration and land ownership by immigrants.

He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

He has refused to let us have our own courts.

He has made judges dependent on his will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He decided how long judges should serve and what they should be paid.

He has erected a multitude of new offices and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He set up new offices and sent a bunch of new officers here and we'll have to pay them.

He has kept among us in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

He's kept armies here in peacetime without our consent.

Marital Law

He has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

He's put us under military rule.

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:

He's tried to rule us by laws that are completely different from our own. Here's a list of what those laws have done:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;

Keeping troops in the colonies without our consent and making us house and feed them; (Quartering Act)

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;

His soldiers murdered us and weren't even punished. (Boston Massacre);

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

cutting off trade (blockade)

For imposing taxes on us without our consent;

Taxing without our consent.

For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury;

took away our right to a trial by jury;

For transporting us beyond seas, to be tried for pretended offenses;

He made us go to England for a trial based on fake charges;

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring 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;

he did away with Canada's laws and enlarged Canada's boundaries. He might try to take away our laws too.

For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering, fundamentally, the forms of our governments;

He took away our charters and changed our form of Government;

Acts of Parliament + The King

For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

The King took away our legislatures and says that he and Parliament have the power to make all laws for us.

He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us.

The King has given up his right to govern us because he's waged war against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He's attacked our coasts, burned our towns, and killed our people.

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 and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

He has hired armies of foreign soldiers (Hessians) to fight us and then he'll rule us like a tyrant.

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.

American citizens, taken prisoner at sea, have been forced to fight against us.

He has excited domestic insurrection among us, and has endeavored 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.

He's stirred up quarrels among us and tried to get the Indians to kill all Americans on the frontier.

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.

When the King has done something wrong, we asked him to correct it and he only injures us more. A King who acts like a tyrant is not fit to rule us.

Summary : King was wrong. Told him to stop. He made it worse. Unfit to rule.

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 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've asked the people of Great Britain to speak out against what Parliament and the King have been doing to us. They haven't listened to us either. We'll just have to figure that if there's a war, they'll be our enemies. If there's peace, they'll be our friends.

Summary : Tried to be friends w/ people of England; but sided with the King. So, we fight you.

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 to 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.

We, the representatives of the United States, knowing that God is our judge, declare that these colonies are free and independent states. WE'RE FREE! We can depend on God's protection. In support of this declaration we pledge our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

Summary : We are independent & free.

Acts of Parliament King

