

Name: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

An Abridged Interpretation of
The Declaration of Independence
by Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams

1. What does the Preamble say the colonies should do? (circle one)

seek peace with Britain

separate from Britain

surrender

In Congress, July 4, 1776. The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

Preamble

When in the course of human events, it sometimes becomes necessary for one people—the colonies—to end their connection with another people—Great Britain. When this occurs, it should be stated to the rest of the world why this separation is necessary.

2. What is the purpose of government? (circle one)

to protect natural rights

to control its citizens

to overthrow other governments

to start wars

We believe that all men are created equal, that they are given by their Creator certain natural Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

To guarantee these rights, Governments are created by Men, and these governments get their power from the approval of the people they govern.

Whenever any Form of Government abuses its responsibility, it is the Right of the People to change or destroy that government, and create a new Government that will protect the Safety and Happiness of the people. Governments should not be changed for simple reasons. History has shown that people will suffer rather than change the government that causes their injuries. But when a long series of abuses is committed by a government wanting to create a dictatorship, it is the right of the people, it is their duty, to destroy that government and replace it with a new one.

List of Grievances

The colonies have suffered and now it is necessary to change their Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of injuries and abuses with the intent of creating an absolute dictatorship over the States. To prove this, here are the facts—

- He has refused to support laws necessary for the public good.
- He has prevented his Governors from passing important Laws or refused to approve these laws.
- He has refused to pass other Laws unless the people are willing to give up Representation in the Legislature.
- He has called legislatures together at far away places forcing lawmakers to agree to his demands because they cannot reach the far away places.
- He has dissolved legislatures that opposed his attacks on the rights of the people. [see problem 3]
- He has prevented new legislatures from being formed preventing the State from protecting itself from dangers outside and inside.

3. This statement refers to: (circle one) ←

Proclamation of 1763

the Sugar Act

the Townshend Acts

the Tea Act

- He has prevented foreign-born people from becoming citizens and he has changed the laws preventing settlement of new lands. **[see problem 3]**
- He has prevented laws giving power to the courts.
- He has controlled judges.
- He has created offices that bring swarms of Officers to harass and abuse citizens.
- He has kept, in times of peace, standing armies without the consent of our legislatures.
- He has allowed the military to act on its own and control the legislatures.
- He has worked with others to control us under a system foreign to our constitution and not recognized by our laws:

4. This statement refers to: (circle one) ←

the Proclamation of 1763

the Stamp Act

the Coercive Acts

the Intolerable Acts

- For quartering large bodies of troops among us.
- For protecting them from punishment for any Murders they might commit.
- For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world.
- For Taxing us without our consent. **[see problem 4]**
- For removing, in many cases, our right to Trial by Jury.
- For removing citizens to foreign lands to be put on trial for false reasons.
- For removing English Laws in a neighboring Province and expanding its borders as an example of what will happen to these Colonies.
- For changing the basic Forms of our Governments.
- For suspending our legislatures and declaring that he has the power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.
- He has ended Government here so that he can wage War against us.
- He has robbed our seas, attacked our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the Lives of our people.

5. In this statement, "Mercenaries" refers to: (circle one) ←

British soldiers

Hessian soldiers

Minutemen

French soldiers

- He is at this time sending large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death and tyranny that have a cruelty seldom seen in the most barbarous times. He is totally unworthy to be the leader of a civilized nation. **[see problem 5]**
- He has drafted our fellow Citizens and forced them to attack us.
- He has encouraged Indian Savages on our frontier to attack us.

In every stage of these Abuses We have asked for a change in policy. Our requests have been met by more injuries. A King who acts like a tyrant is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

We have warned the British people that their legislature is unlawfully trying to control us. The British people have ignored our pleas of justice. Having no choice, we must then Separate, and hold the British people, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

6. What is a state? (circle one)

a monarchy

an independent country

a group of people

Statement of Independence by the United States

We, the Representatives of the united States of America, declare, That these United Colonies are Free and Independent States. As Independent States, we can declare war, make peace, create Alliances, establish trade, and do all Things that other countries can do.

And for the support of the Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honour.