

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Read part of the original Declaration of Independence on the left and then the translation on the right. Then answer the questions on the following page.

### Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence

#### Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident:

That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness...

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...

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;... For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world;... For imposing Taxes upon us without our Consent;....

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America... and by 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.

#### Translation

We believe that it is obvious that all people are created by God as equal souls, and that they all have basic rights. Among the rights they have are the rights to life and freedom, and the right to seek happiness. In order to protect these rights, people set up governments. The governments get their powers from the people. If government takes away the freedoms of the people, then the people have the right to change or end the government. The people have a right to create a new government which will protect their rights. They have a right to organize their government in a way which they think will protect them and their happiness.

The present King of Great Britain has repeatedly hurt us and taken away our power. He has done this in order to get total control over us. The following facts prove to the world that what we say is true...

He has housed large numbers of soldiers in our homes... He has stopped our merchants from trading with other countries than Great Britain... He has required that we pay taxes to which we did not agree...

Therefore, we who represent the united States of America, with the support of the good People of these colonies, are letting the world know that from now on we are, and ought to be, Free and Independent. We give up our loyalty to Great Britain. We are breaking off our connection to the King of Great Britain. As a free, independent country we have the power to make war and make peace. We have the power to make alliances with other countries. We have the power to trade with anyone we wish, and the power to do all the things that any independent country can. To support this declaration, we rely on God and we promise to stand by each other. We promise to each other our lives, all we have, and our honor.

**Directions:** Use the **Background Information** below and the **Declaration of Independence** to answer the following questions.

**Background Information:**

During the mid-to-late 1700s, the British **Parliament** passed a number of laws that severely limited the freedom of the American **colonists**. Even though the colonists' complaints were brought to the attention of **King George III**, he ignored them. On June 11, 1776, the **Continental Congress** selected a group of five men to plan the **Declaration of Independence**. These men were **John Adams**, Benjamin Franklin, **Thomas Jefferson**, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman. Thomas Jefferson was given the task of writing the Declaration of Independence.

1. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?

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2. According to the Declaration of Independence, men are born with basic rights given to them by the Creator. What are these rights?

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3. What were the colonists' main complaints in the Declaration of Independence?

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4. What events led to the writing of the Declaration of Independence?

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