

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

# I STUDENT INTRODUCTION to the *Declaration of Independence*

★ ENCOURAGE & MOTIVATE YOUR STUDENTS ★

Dennis Parker, author of *Jefferson's Masterpiece*  
& *A Standing Miracle*



Thomas Jefferson  
Arthur Middleton  
John Jay  
Benjamin Franklin  
John Adams

## MESSAGE TO TEACHERS

*The Declaration of Independence*  
is the Birth Certificate of the United States of America.

I believe students should understand the value and importance of the Declaration of Independence. They should know about the long struggles, difficulties and sacrifices that it took for the United States of America to be establishment.

This document is designed to help your students cultivate a desire to learn how the Declaration presented a philosophy of government based on equal rights for everyone, by a government that derives its powers from the consent of the people, and guarantees the rights of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” to every American that cannot be taken away or abridged.

It is my hope that you will find this booklet helpful and your students will develop a desire to learn about Declaration of Independence.

*Dennis Parker*

## INTERESTING FACTS about Thomas Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence

**I**ndependence from King George III and his government was a distant dream for most American colonists until 1776.

**I**t took Thomas Jefferson 10-14 days to travel from his home near Charlottesville, Virginia, to Philadelphia to join the Second Continental Congress in May 1776.

**J**ohn Hancock, President of the Second Continental Congress, appointed John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert Livingston, Roger Sherman and Thomas Jefferson to write a Declaration of Independence.

**T**homas Jefferson did not want to write the Declaration of Independence.

**T**he phrase, “United States of America,” first appeared in the title of the Declaration of Independence.

**T**he first public reading of the Declaration of Independence took place on July 8, 1776, in the yard of the Pennsylvania State House, where the Second Continental Congress conducted its meetings.

**J**efferson stayed in a two-room suite at the Jacob Graff house while he was a member of the Second Continental Congress. This is where he wrote the Declaration of Independence.

**J**efferson used a ivory notebook to make notes that he would later transfer to a permanent record or onto single pages. He used his finger or cloth to erase the carbon markings.



**J**efferson did not use a quill pen to write the Declaration of Independence. Instead, he used a silver fountain pen that was made for him by a Virginia watchmaker.



He wrote the Declaration on a mahogany lap desk that he designed and had built by a Philadelphia cabinetmaker.

**T**he first shots of the American Revolution were fired on April 19, 1775, 11 months and 19 days before the Declaration of Independence was adopted.

# **I STUDENT INTRODUCTION** *to the Declaration of Independence*

## ***Activities and Information to Encourage Your Students to Want to Learn about the Declaration of Independence***

### **Introductory Activities**

#### **Test Students Knowledge of the Declaration of Independence**

✓ Direct the students to answer the *Declaration of Independence Questionnaire* (P. 4) as best they can. Explain that this is to get an idea of how much they know about this important American document.

#### **6 Parts of the Declaration of Independence**

✓ Provide each student with a copy of *The Declaration of Independence* (P. 11-13) and *6 Parts of the Declaration of Independence* (P. 6). Divide the class into 6 groups and assign one part of the Declaration to each group. Tell them to read their specific section of *The Declaration of Independence* to answer the questions on the *Worksheet: 6 Parts of the Declaration of Independence* (P. 7). Bring the class together and let each group share their answers.

#### **27 Grievances Against King George III**

✓ Provide each student with a copy of *27 Grievances Against King George III* (P. 8-10). Explain that Thomas Jefferson included this list of grievances against King George III to prove that the King had lost his right to rule the citizens of the American colonies. Tell them to study the list carefully, and then list what they think are the 3 most important grievances against King George. Instruct them to explain to the class why they chose those specific grievances.

#### **Write Letter to King George III**

✓ Tell the students to imagine they are living in 1776 and to write a letter to King George III expressing their concerns about the way he treats the colonists.

# Declaration of Independence Questionnaire

1. What is the Declaration of Independence? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Why was it written? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Who was asked to write the Declaration of Independence? \_\_\_\_\_

4. On what date did the Second Continental Congress approve the Declaration? \_\_\_\_\_

5. On what date was it signed? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How many colonies were represented at the Second Continental Congress? \_\_\_\_\_

7. How many delegates signed the Declaration of Independence? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Name some of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. The phrase “unalienable rights” was mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, what does it mean?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Quote a phrase from the Declaration of Independence?

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

# Answers: Declaration of Independence Questionnaire

1. What is the Declaration of Independence? The Declaration of Independence is the founding document of the United States of America. It announced to the world the unanimous decision of the 13 American colonies to separate from Great Britain, and it articulated the foundational principles on which America was created.
2. Why was it written? To clarify and justify the actions the Second Continental Congress took to declare the 13 American colonies free and independent from British domination.
3. Who was asked to write the Declaration of Independence? Thomas Jefferson
4. On what date did the Second Continental Congress approve the Declaration? July 4, 1776
5. On what date was it signed? August 2, 1776
6. How many colonies were represented at the Second Continental Congress? 13
7. How many delegates signed the Declaration of Independence? 56
8. Name some of the men who signed the Declaration of Independence? See Biographies of the Signers in *Jefferson's Masterpiece* Appendix
9. The phrase “unalienable rights” was mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, what does it mean? Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness
10. Quote a phrase from the Declaration of Independence?

## 6 Parts of the Declaration of Independence

**1. PREAMBLE** – States that the purpose of the Declaration is to “declare” the “causes” that impel the colonies to separate from the British Empire.

*IT BEGINS:* “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, . . .”

**2. STATEMENT OF BELIEFS** – Establishes that all men (all Americans) have certain rights.

*IT BEGINS:* “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. . . .”

**3. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE KING** – Lists the twenty-seven grievances the colonists had against King George III and his government.

*IT BEGINS:* “To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World. . . .”

**4. ATTEMPTS TO REDRESS GRIEVANCES** – Recounts the colonists’ efforts to get the King to remedy their grievances.

*IT BEGINS:* “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. . . .”

**5. ANNOUNCEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE** – Declares that the 13 American colonies are free and independence states.

*IT BEGINS:* “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, . . .”

**6. SIGNATURES** – Where the delegates to the Second Continental Congress signed their names in support for the Declaration of Independence.

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson’s Masterpiece Teacher’s Guide*, P. 10

# Worksheet: 6 Parts of the Declaration of Independence

## Part 1. PREAMBLE

1. Why do you think this section was included in the Declaration of Independence?
2. What reasons did the Founding Fathers give for their decision to write a declaration?

## Part 2. STATEMENT OF BELIEFS

1. Why do you think this section was included in the Declaration of Independence?
2. What beliefs are mentioned in this section?

## Part 3. COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE KING

1. Why do you think this section was included in the Declaration of Independence?
2. Name five of the complaints listed in this section?

## Part 4. ATTEMPTS TO REDRESS GRIEVANCES

1. Why do you think this section was included in the Declaration of Independence?
2. In what ways does the Declaration state that the colonists appealed to King George III?

## Part 5. ANNOUNCEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE

1. Why do you think this section was included in the Declaration of Independence?
2. What changed in the colonies as a result of the Declaration of Independence?

## Part 6. SIGNATURES

1. Why do you think this section was included in the Declaration of Independence?
2. Which signers' names do you recognize and what colony did they represent?

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Teacher's Guide*, P. 35

## 27 Grievances Against King George III

1. ***“He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.”***

The King had rejected laws passed by colonial assemblies.

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.”***

Royal governors had rejected any colonial laws that did not have a clause that suspended their operation until the King had approved them.

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.”***

The Crown had failed to redraw the boundaries of legislative districts to ensure that newly settled areas were fairly represented in colonial assemblies.

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.”***

Royal governors sometimes had forced colonial legislatures to meet in inconvenient places.

5. ***“He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.”***

Royal governors had dissolved colonial legislatures for disobeying royal orders or protesting royal policies.

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 meantime exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.”***

Royal governors had delayed to call for elections of new colonial assemblies.

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.”***

The King had impeded the development of the colonies by prohibiting the naturalization of foreigners in 1773, and raised the purchase price of western lands in 1774.

8. ***“He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.”***

The King had rejected a North Carolina law setting up a 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.”***

The Crown had insisted that judges serve at the King’s pleasure, and they should be paid by the King.

**10. “He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.”**

The royal government had appointed colonial tax commissioners and other local officials.

**11. “He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies, without the consent of our legislatures.”**

The Crown had kept an army in the colonies after the French and Indian War (North American part of the Seven Years’ War) without the consent of the colonial legislatures.

**12. “He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.”**

The British government had named General Thomas Gage commander of British forces in America.

**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:”**

In the Declaratory Act of 1766, the royal government had claimed the power to make all laws for the colonies.

**14. “For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us.”**

The Crown had required the colonies to house British troops stationed in America.

**15. “For protecting them by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States.”**

Parliament had passed a 1774 law permitting British soldiers and officials accused of murder while in Massachusetts to be tried in Britain.

**16. “For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world.”**

Parliament had enacted laws restricting the colonies’ right to trade with foreign nations.

**17. “For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent.”**

Parliament had imposed several taxes for a number of years, such as the Sugar Act of 1764, without the colonists’ consent.

**18. “For depriving us in many cases of the benefits of Trial by Jury.”**

The royal government had deprived colonists of a right to a jury trial in cases dealing with smuggling and other violations of trade laws.

**19. “For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences.”**

A 1769 parliamentary resolution declared that colonists accused of treason could be tried in England.

**20. “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.”**

The 1774 Quebec Act extended Quebec’s boundaries to the Ohio River and applied French law to the new region.

**21. “For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments.”**

In 1774, Parliament had restricted town meetings in Massachusetts, had decided that the colony’s councilors

would no longer be elected but would be appointed by the king, and had given the royal governor control of lower court judges.

**22. “For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.”**

In 1767, Parliament had suspended the New York Assembly for failing to obey the Quartering Act of 1765.

**23. “He has abdicated Government here by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us”**

The Crown had authorized General Thomas Gage to use force to make the colonists obey the laws of Parliament.

**24. “He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.”**

The British government had seized American ships that violated restrictions on foreign trade and had bombarded Falmouth (now Portland), Maine; Bristol, Rhode Island; and Norfolk, Virginia.

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

The British army hired German mercenaries to fight the colonists.

**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.”**

The Crown had forced American sailors (under the Restraining Act of 1775) to serve in the British navy.

**27. “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.”**

In November 1775, Virginia’s royal governor promised freedom to slaves who joined British forces. The royal government also instigated Indian attacks on frontier settlements.

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson’s Masterpiece Teacher’s Guide*, P. 18

# The Declaration of Independence

## In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776, The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen UNITED STATES of AMERICA

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 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 any Form of 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. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, 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 [George III] 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.

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 meantime 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 harass 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 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:

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 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 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.

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 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 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.

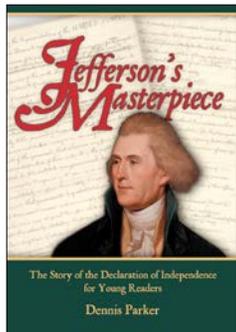
**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Teacher's Guide*, P. 21

# *Jefferson's Masterpiece*

## EXCERPT

Tuesday, June 11, 1776

“The time has come for the American colonies to declare independence from the British monarchy!” exclaimed Benjamin Franklin in a louder voice than he normally spoke.



“Congress has no other choice but to approve the Virginia Resolution proclaiming our freedom. When that is done, we can go on with the important business of winning this war and governing ourselves.” Franklin reclined in his favorite chair and rested his sore foot on a cushioned stool. Keeping his foot elevated helped relieve the pain from the gout he had suffered for many years. He invited the Committee of Five to hold its first meeting in his three-story brick Philadelphia home located only a few blocks from the Pennsylvania State House, where the Second Continental Congress met.

“You are absolutely right . . . we all agree with you,” John Adams said to Dr. Franklin and to the three other men sitting in Franklin’s parlor that warm June afternoon. “I hope we can convince the delegates who are reluctant to support independence to vote with us.”

“We were given an important job,” added Franklin. “Our assignment is to write a statement that clearly sets forth our reasons for breaking ties with the government of Great Britain. We must select the right man to write our declaration of independence.”

“There is only one man on this committee or in this Congress who can write the kind of statement we need,” answered Adams as his eyes settled on Thomas Jefferson. “That man is you, Thomas.” He turned in his chair so he directly faced Jefferson, who felt uncomfortable by his friend’s attention. “We all know you are an experienced and able writer.” Adams paused for a brief moment. “Gentlemen, I nominate Thomas for this important job.” . . .

After a few moments of hesitation, Thomas Jefferson spoke. “I appreciate your confidence, John, but I think the committee should appoint you. Virginia, as you know, recently declared its independence from the British government. My countrymen are now working to establish a new government. I would like to take part by helping to write Virginia’s constitution. In fact, I have already made some notes that I plan to take when I go to Williamsburg. John, you should write the declaration. You led the fight to get us this far; you should be the one to write it.”

Adams was visibly agitated by what Jefferson said about going to Virginia. He tried to compose himself before speaking. “But . . . you know how important a written declaration of America’s independence would be for the colonies. This is a matter that concerns all the colonies – all the citizens. The new government for Virginia is important, of course, but freedom for all of our people is the most important business at hand.” . . .

Jefferson felt compelled to return to Virginia. “What can be your reasons?” He asked as he looked directly into Adams’ eyes.

“Reasons enough,” Adams answered. “Reason first: You are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second: I am obnoxious, suspected and unpopular. Reason third: You can write ten times better than I can.”

All eyes were fixed on Jefferson, who sat with his head bowed. The only sound in the room was the ticking of the grandfather clock that stood beside the window. He raised his head and looked momentarily into the face of each man. They watched as he crossed his arms and cupped his chin with his left hand. He stared at the floor in front of him. More time passed until he scanned the face of each man again. “If you are determined,” he finally said, “I will do as well as I can.”

*Jefferson's  
Masterpiece*  
*Appendix*

*Declaration of Independence Library*

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- ❖ Fate of the Signers – consequences they suffered for signing the Declaration
  - ❖ Significance of the Declaration of Independence
- ❖ Evolution of the Declaration – from Jefferson's original draft to the official signed document

# Prelude to Independence

## *Events that Led to the Adoption of the Virginia Resolution and the Declaration of Independence*

**1764**

**April 15**

British Action: The British Parliament passed the Sugar Act that increased the taxes on imported sugar and other items such as textiles, coffee, wines and indigo.

**September 1**

British Action: The British Parliament passed the Currency Act that prohibited the colonial governments from issuing paper money.

**1765**

**March 22**

British Action: The British Parliament passed the Stamp Act that taxed all printed material – newspapers, pamphlets, bills, legal documents, licenses, almanacs, dice and playing cards.

**March 24**

British Action: The British Parliament passed the Quartering Act that required the colonists to house British troops in their homes and to supply them with food.

**October 7-25**

American Action: The Stamp Act Congress, composed of delegates from nine American colonies, convened in New York City. The delegates prepared and sent a petition to King George III and to Parliament that requested the repeal of the Stamp Act, Sugar Act and the Currency Act.

**December**

British Action: British General Thomas Gage asked the New York Assembly to make colonists comply with the Quartering Act and to house and supply his troops.

**1766**

**January**

American Action: The New York Assembly refused to comply with British General Thomas Gage's request to enforce the Quartering Act.

**March 8**

British Action: King George III repealed the Stamp Act. On the same day, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act that gave the British government total power to legislate laws governing the American colonies.

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**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 120

# Biography of Thomas Jefferson

## Birthdate

April 13, 1743

## Birthplace

Shadwell, Virginia

## Parents

- Father: Peter Jefferson (1708-1757) was a planter and surveyor.
- Mother: Jane Randolph (1720-1776) was a member of one of Virginia's most distinguished families.

## Siblings

Jefferson was the third of eight children (six sisters and one brother); two children died during childhood.

## Education

- 1752: attended a local school operated by Reverend William Douglas.
- 1758-1760: attended Reverend James Maury's school in Fredericksville Parish, twelve miles from Shadwell. He boarded with Maury's family.
- 1760-1762: attended and graduated from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg.
- 1762-1767: studied law under George Wythe in Williamsburg.

## Occupation

Lawyer (1767-1774)

## Marriage

- January 1, 1772 to Martha Wayles Skelton (1748-1782)
- Martha and Thomas were married for ten years. She died four months after the birth of their sixth child. In 1766, at the age of 18, Martha had married Bathurst Skelton, who died two years later in 1768.

## Children

- Martha "Patsy" Jefferson Randolph Jefferson (1772-1836)
- Jane Randolph Jefferson (1774-1775)
- Unnamed son (1777)
- Mary "Polly" Eppes Jefferson (1778-1804)
- Lucy Elizabeth Jefferson (1780-1781)
- Lucy Elizabeth Jefferson (1782-1785)

## Government Offices Held

- Representative to the Virginia House of Burgesses from Albemarle County (1769-1776)
- Delegate to the Continental Congress (1775-1776 and 1783-1784)
- Minister to negotiate treaties with Barbary states and European nations (1784)
- Member of the Virginia House of Delegates (1776-1779)
- Governor of Virginia (1779-1781)
- Minister Plenipotentiary to France (1785-1789)
- Secretary of State of the United States (1789-1793)
- Vice President of the United States (1797-1801)
- President of the United States (1801-1809)

1st Page of 2

SOURCE: *Jefferson's Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 128

# Facts About the Signers

- Nine were born outside of America.
- Eighteen were merchants or businessmen.
- Nine were large landowners.
- Four were doctors.
- Twenty-two were lawyers.
- Nine were judges.
- Forty-two served in their colonial legislatures.
- All but two had wives and children.
- One was a member of the clergy; two had formerly served.
- All were religious men.
- Every signer was declared a traitor by the British government.
- Seventeen served in the military during the American Revolution.
- Five were captured and held in British prisons.
- Nine died of wounds or hardships.
- Some had their wives and children killed, jailed, mistreated, persecuted or left penniless.
- Eleven had their homes and property destroyed.
- Most were unable to visit their families and homes for long periods of time.
- Most were offered immunity or freedom if they would pledge allegiance to King George III. They all refused.
- At least six are known to have given or loaned money or pledged their personal credit to support the revolution.
- A majority lost most, if not all, of their wealth by the end of the American Revolution.
- Five helped to establish colleges and universities.
- Fifteen participated in their states' constitutional conventions.
- Fifteen signed the Articles of Federation.
- Six signed the United States Constitution.
- Two signed the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Federation and the United States Constitution.
- Thirteen became governors of their new states.
- Eighteen served in their new state legislatures.
- Sixteen became state or federal judges.
- Seven became United States Congressmen.
- Six became United States Senators.
- Two became Justices of the United States Supreme Court.
- Three became Vice President of the United States.
- Two became President of the United States.

**1st Page of 1**

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 130

# Biographies of the Signers

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

### JOSIAH BARTLETT

**Born:** November 21, 1729

**Birthplace:** Amesbury, Massachusetts

**Age at Signing Declaration of Independence:** 46

**Occupation:** Physician, Judge

**Public Service:** New Hampshire Legislature, 1765-1775; Continental Congress, 1775-1776, 1778; signed Articles of Confederation, 1778; Chief Justice of Court of Common Pleas, 1778; Superior Court Justice, 1784, Chief Justice, 1788; U.S. Constitutional Convention, 1787; Governor of New Hampshire, 1790-1794.

**Died:** May 19, 1795

### MATTHEW THORNTON

**Born:** 1714

**Birthplace:** Ireland

**Age at Signing Declaration of Independence:** 62

**Occupation:** Physician

**Public Service:** New Hampshire Provincial Assembly, 1758, 1760-1761; Chairman, Committee of Safety, 1775; Colonel, New Hampshire militia, 1776-1777; Continental Congress, 1776-1777; Superior Court Judge, 1776-1782; New Hampshire General Assembly, 1783-1784.

**Died:** June 24, 1803

### WILLIAM WHIPPLE

**Born:** January 14, 1730

**Birthplace:** Kittery, Maine

**Age at Signing Declaration of Independence:** 46

**Occupation:** Merchant, Judge

**Public Service:** New Hampshire Provincial Congress, 1775; Continental Congress, 1776-1779; New Hampshire State Assembly, 1780-1784; fought in American Revolutionary War; New Hampshire Supreme Court Judge, 1782; Financial Receiver for New Hampshire, 1782-1784.

**Died:** November 28, 1785

**1st Page of 17**

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 131

# Fate of the Signers

*“The signers suffered from British persecution in direct proportion to the exposure of their property and persons to enemy action.”*

*Greatness To Spare*, by T.R. Fehrenbach

## NEW YORK

**FRANCIS LEWIS'** country estate, Whitestone, was invaded by a party of British Light Horse. Angry that Lewis was not there, they seized and imprisoned Mrs. Lewis, ransacked the house, burned Lewis' books and papers, and took away everything of value. Months later, General George Washington arranged a prisoner exchange for Mrs. Lewis. The prison experience affected her health; she died soon after her release. When Lewis was able to return to his home seven years later, he found only rubble.

**WILLIAM FLOYD'S** wife and children were warned that British troops were approaching. They fled across the countryside to the Long Island Sound where patriot fishermen took them to Connecticut to stay with friends. The estate was looted, the livestock and farm equipment were stolen, the timberland was burned, and British troops and their horses turned the house to shambles.

**LEWIS MORRIS** and his family were able to evacuate their home before the arrival of British troops. The house was looted, the furnishings were destroyed, the livestock was taken, and the trees were cut down.

**PHILIP LIVINGSTON'S** New York business property was confiscated, his mansion on Duke Street was turned into a British barracks, and his estate on Brooklyn Heights became a Royal Navy hospital. Livingston and his family escaped to Kingston, New York, but had to flee when the British attacked and burned the town. He died in 1778 without ever seeing his home again.

## NEW JERSEY

**RICHARD STOCKTON** decided to move his family from Morven, his estate, to Monmouth County after Washington's army marched out of Trenton, New Jersey. British sympathizers invaded his home. He was turned over to British authorities and imprisoned. Later, British troops rampaged his estate, burned his books and papers, stole everything of value, and confiscated his horses. He was eventually released and able to return to his ransacked home.

**JOHN WITHERSPOON'S** country house, Tusculum, near Princeton, New Jersey, was raided and stripped by British troops. The troops took over Nassau Hall at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) where Witherspoon was the president. Books from the college library and Witherspoon's library were burned. Classes were suspended for a year. During the Battle of Germantown in 1777, Witherspoon's son was killed.

**1st Page of 5**

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 148

# Significance of the Declaration of Independence

*The Declaration of Independence ... [is the] declaratory charter  
of our rights, and of the rights of man.*

Thomas Jefferson's letter to Samuel Adams Wells, 1819

- The Declaration of Independence is the birth certificate of the United States of America.
- The Declaration of Independence announced to the world the unanimous decision of America's thirteen colonies to absolve their allegiance to British rule and to be free and independent states. This was the first time a colony had ever declared independence from its mother country.
- The Declaration of Independence presented a philosophy of government based on equal rights for everyone – the unalienable individual rights of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” that cannot be taken away or abridged; and a government that derives its powers from the consent of the governed – a government accountable to the people, not the people to the government.
- The Declaration of Independence justified America's right to revolt against King George III, and listed the reasons why America had the right to become an independent nation.
- The Declaration of Independence contributes to Americans' understanding of their rights and privileges as citizens.
- The Declaration of Independence merged thirteen independent colonies into the United States of America.
- The Declaration of Independence provided the name for the new nation: “We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled ...”
- The Declaration of Independence was an inspiration to the suffering, aggrieved and oppressed people of France during the reign of King Louis XVI that resulted in the French Revolution of 1789.
- The Declaration of Independence has inspired as many as 115 declarations of independence around the world – granting liberty to millions of people who strived for freedom and the right to govern themselves.
- The Declaration of Independence was the inspiration for granting civil rights to African-Americans and equal rights to women.

**1st Page of 1**

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 153

# *Evolution of the Declaration of Independence*

## **Jefferson's "Rough Draught" Presented to the Committee of Five**

### **A Declaration of the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled**

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a people to advance from that subordination in which they have hitherto remained, & to assume among the powers of the earth the equal & independent station to which the laws of nature & 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 change.

We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable; that all men are created equal & independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these ends, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government shall become destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, & to institute new government, laying it's foundation on such principles & organizing it's powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness. prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light & transient causes: and accordingly all experience hath shewn 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 & usurpations, begun at a distinguished period, & pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to subject them to arbitrary power, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government & to provide new guards for their future security. such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; & such is now the necessity which constrains them to expunge their former systems of government. the history of his present majesty, is a history of unremitting injuries and usurpations, among which no one fact stands single or solitary to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, all of which have in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. to prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world, for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unsullied by falsehood.

**1st Page of 4**

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 154

# “Fair Copy” the Committee of Five Presented to Congress

Includes corrections made by John Adams & Benjamin Franklin

## A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA in General Congress Assembled

<NEW COPY> deletions

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a <ONE> people to <DISSOLVE THE POLITICAL BANDS WHICH HAVE CONNECTED THEM WITH ANOTHER,> ~~advance from that subordination in which they have hitherto remained, & to~~ <AND TO> assume among the powers of the earth the < SEPARATE AND EQUAL> ~~equal and independent~~ 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> ~~change~~.

We hold these truths to be <SELF-EVIDENT,> ~~sacred & undeniable~~; that all Men are created equal & independent; that <THEY ARE ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR WITH> ~~from that equal creation they derive in rights~~ inherent & inalienable <RIGHTS; THAT> among <THESE> ~~which are the preservation~~ of life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these <RIGHTS> ~~ends~~, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government shall become destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, & to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, & organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness. Prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light & 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 & usurpations pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to ~~subject~~ reduce them <UNDER ABSOLUTE DESPOTISM> ~~To arbitrary power~~, it is their right, it is their duty to throw off such government, & to provide new guards for their future security such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; & such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The History of <THE> ~~his~~ the present <KING OF GREAT BRITAIN> ~~majesty~~ is a history of repeated injuries & usurpations, among which <APPEARS NO SOLITARY FACT> ~~no one fact stands single and solitary~~ to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, <BUT ALL> ~~all of which~~ have in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world, for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unsullied by falsehood.

1st Page of 5

SOURCE: *Jefferson’s Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 158

# The Final Declaration of Independence as Amended by Congress

## A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA in General Congress Assembled

<NEW COPY> ~~deleted copy~~

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> ~~inherent & inalienable~~ < 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 any Form of 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. 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, ~~begun at a distinguished period and~~ 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 ~~expunge~~ <ALTER> their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great Britain is a History of ~~unremitting~~ <REPEATED> Injuries and Usurpations, ~~among which appears no solitary fact to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest, but~~ 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 the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unsullied by falsehood.~~

He has refused his Assent to Laws <,> the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.

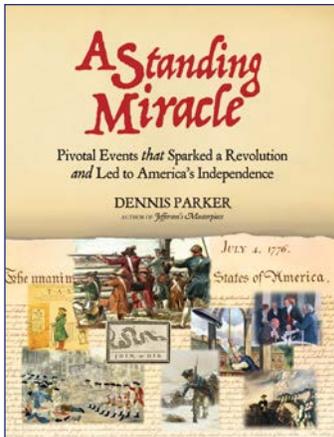
He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance,

**1st Page of 5**

**SOURCE:** *Jefferson's Masterpiece Appendix*, P. 163

# America's Remarkable Birth

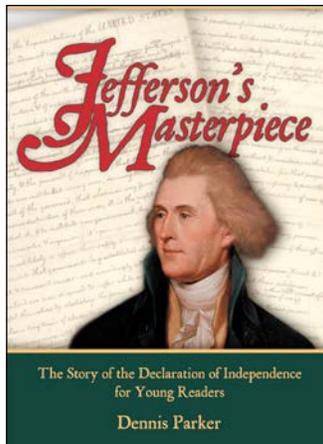
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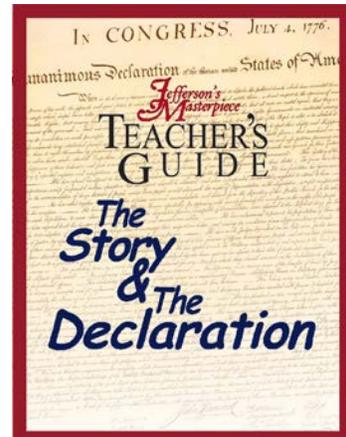
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