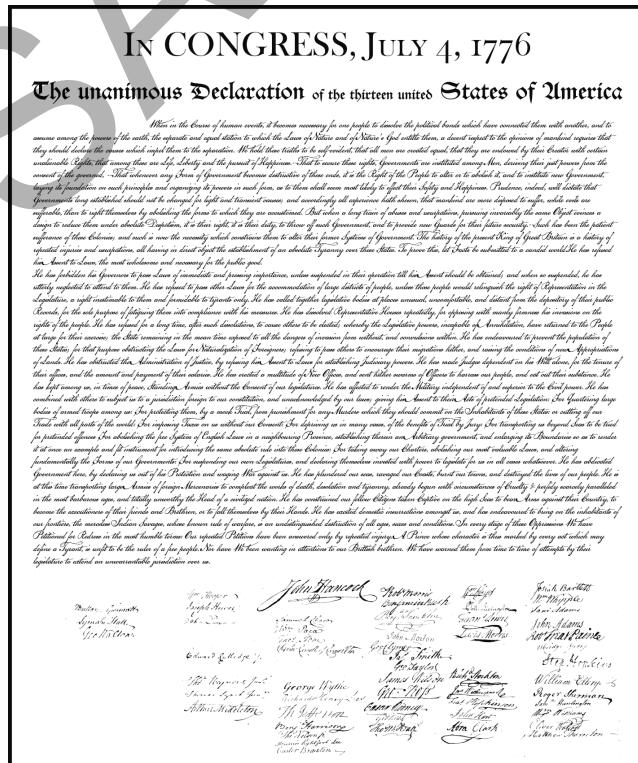


Introduction

The Declaration of Independence was written by a committee of five people: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston, although Thomas Jefferson did most of the writing. It was adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. Just a few days later, on July 8, 1776, the Liberty Bell was rung when the Declaration was read to the public for the first time.

The Declaration of Independence begins by telling the world that there were reasons for the colonies declaring their independence and that this document would explain the reasons. It goes on to explain what the framers of the Declaration believed were basic rights that people should have. The Declaration then tells what the colonies felt the King of Britain did that made him more like a tyrant than a fair and just ruler. The document finally explains that an effort has been made to settle the problems peacefully, but these efforts have been ignored and the only course left to the colonies is to declare independence.

You'll notice some of the spelling is different than what you're used to today. Like most things, language changes over time. You may also notice references to people groups that may seem offensive. Keep in mind that just as language changes, so does what is considered acceptable or offensive to say also changes.



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 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.

