

## Ideas that Shaped the Declaration of Independence

*This was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take. Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, &c. ...*

-Thomas Jefferson, in a letter to Henry Lee written May 8, 1825 ([http://www.ashbrook.org/constitution/henry\\_lee.html](http://www.ashbrook.org/constitution/henry_lee.html))

You will read, think about, and discuss some of the materials from which Jefferson got his ideas for the Declaration of Independence. When you read the Declaration of Independence later, look for these ideas in the document.

### Part 1: John Locke

John Locke was an English philosopher who lived from 1632-1704. He wrote down his ideas in his *Second Treatise of Government*, written in 1690: (<http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm>)

Short phrases from his writings are included below for you to analyze.

From Chapter II: Of the State of Nature

1. He wrote that men are "...all equal and independent..."
2. "...no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions..."
3. "... all men being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's uses..."
4. "Every one...when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind..."
5. "Every one... may not, unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another."

## From Chapter XIX: Of the Dissolution of Government

1. "... revolutions happen not upon every little mismanagement in public affairs."
2. "Great mistakes in the ruling part, many wrong and inconvenient laws... will be borne by the people without mutiny or murmur. But if a long train of abuses, prevarications, and artifices... make the design visible to the people... it is not to be wondered that they should then rouse themselves, and endeavour to put the rule into such hands which may secure to them the ends for which government was at first erected..."

### Part 2: Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine was an English born writer and journalist who immigrated to Philadelphia with the help of another famous journalist, Ben Franklin. Paine's most famous work is called *Common Sense*. Published in 1776, it explained in words that ordinary Colonists could understand why the Colonies should declare independence from England. This pamphlet went a long way towards convincing the general population that a break with Great Britain was the only option.

(<http://www.ushistory.org/paine/commonsense/index.htm>)

The following are selected phrases from one section of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* pamphlet:

### Common Sense

#### THOUGHTS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS

1. "In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense..."
2. "... on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs; but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed."
3. "Arms, as the last resource, decide this contest; ...the sun never shined on a cause of greater worth."
4. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent—of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe."
5. "By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new era for politics is struck; a new method of thinking hath arisen."
6. "All plans, proposals, &c. prior to the nineteenth of April, i.e. to the commencement of

hostilities, are like the almanacs of the last year; which, though proper then are superseded and useless now.”

7. “Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated in one and the same point, viz. a union with Great-Britain: the only difference between the parties was the method of effecting it; the one proposing force, the other friendship; but it hath so far happened that the first hath failed, and the second hath withdrawn her influence.”
8. “It is but right, that we should examine the contrary side of the argument, and inquire into some of the many material injuries which these colonies sustain, and always will sustain, by being connected with, and dependent on Great Britain.”
9. “We have boasted the protection of Great Britain, without considering, that her motive was INTEREST not ATTACHMENT; that she did not protect us from OUR ENEMIES on OUR ACCOUNT, but from HER ENEMIES on HER OWN ACCOUNT, from those who had no quarrel with us on any OTHER ACCOUNT, and who will always be our enemies on the SAME ACCOUNT.”

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

- 1) **The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,**
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.
- 4) To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

- 5) He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.
- 6) 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.
- 7) 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.
- 8) 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.
- 9) He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.
- 10) 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 mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.
- 11) 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.
- 12) He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

- 13) He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.
- 14) He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.
- 15) He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.
- 16) He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.
- 17) 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:
- 18) For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:
- 19) For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:
- 20) For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:
- 21) For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:
- 22) For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:
- 23) For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences
- 24) For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring 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:

- 25) For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:
- 26) For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.
- 27) He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.
- 28) He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.
- 29) He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.
- 30) 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.
- 31) 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.
- 32) 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.

33) 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.

34) 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 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.

<b>Georgia:</b>	<b>North Carolina:</b>	<b>Massachusetts:</b>	<b>Pennsylvania:</b>	<b>New York:</b>	<b>New Hampshire:</b>
Button Gwinnett Lyman Hall George Walton	William Hooper Joseph Hewes John Penn	John Hancock	Robert Morris Benjamin Rush Benjamin Franklin John Morton George Clymer James Smith George Taylor James Wilson George Ross	William Floyd Philip Livingston Francis Lewis Lewis Morris	Josiah Bartlett William Whipple Matthew Thornton
	<b>South Carolina:</b> Edward Rutledge Thomas Heyward, Jr. Thomas Lynch, Jr. Arthur Middleton	<b>Maryland:</b> Samuel Chase William Paca Thomas Stone Charles Carroll of Carrollton		<b>New Jersey:</b> Richard Stockton John Witherspoon Francis Hopkinson John Hart Abraham Clark	<b>Massachusetts:</b> Samuel Adams John Adams Robert Treat Paine Elbridge Gerry
		<b>Virginia:</b> George Wythe Richard Henry Lee Thomas Jefferson Benjamin Harrison Thomas Nelson, Jr. Francis Lightfoot Lee Carter Braxton	<b>Delaware:</b> Caesar Rodney George Read Thomas McKean		<b>Rhode Island:</b> Stephen Hopkins William Ellery
					<b>Connecticut:</b> Roger Sherman Samuel Huntington William Williams Oliver Wolcott



### 8.3: Declaration of Independence Socratic Seminar Ticket

**Directions:** Read both readings (8.1 & 8.2) twice before writing anything on this sheet. The second time you read, highlight or underline words or phrases that you think are important, puzzling, or intriguing to you. Make notes in the margins about your thoughts and feelings as you read the passage and any questions you have about what the text says.

1. Identify any words that you do not understand or think are important to the text. Give the meaning, part of speech, and an original sentence using each.

Word	Meaning



#### **8.4: Seminar Discussion Norms**

Socratic Seminar Discussion Norms:

- 1) Do not raise hands; this is a conversation, not a question and answer session
- 2) One person speaks at a time -- no interrupting
- 3) Address each other, not the teacher
- 4) Ground interpretations and comments in the text
- 5) Listen to and respect each other's opinions
- 6) Remember: there is no wrong answer!

Discussion Phrases to Use:

In order to interact with one another in a mature way, here are a few phrases to help us communicate during the discussion:

When you disagree:

- 1) "I have a different opinion/interpretation" (followed by statement)
- 2) "I disagree. Let me explain why..."

For clarification if you do not understand:

- 1) "I think I understand, but let me be sure" (then rephrase)
- 2) "What do you mean by...?"

When you agree:

- 1) "I agree with his/her point and this is why..."
- 2) "I think he/she is right because..."