

# Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence was signed and ratified by the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. The Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, provides a formal proclamation of the intention and reasons for the American colonies to separate from England.

## **Instructions: Read the first 2 paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence**

**then answer analysis questions below.**

**While reading, listen to President John F. Kennedy's reading on <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/declarationofindependence.htm>**

“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.”

**1) The Five Founding Ideals of the United States** are: Rights, Liberty, Equality, Democracy and Opportunity. Find the references to the founding ideals in the text of the Declaration of Independence and discuss what each one means in your own words.

Ideal	Term in Text	Meaning
Rights	”But when a long	Something you are

	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."	entitled to.
Liberty	"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,"	Freedom
Equality	"that all men are created equal,"	Multiple subjects acting the same, under the same constraints
Democracy	"(...) the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle	The ability of everyone, to have an influence. Often in politics.

	them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes (...)”	
Opportunity	”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.”	The ability to achieve something, without it being insured.

## 2) Extra work: John Locke’s Social Contract

John Locke was a philosopher from England who lived from 1632-1704. He developed the Social

Contract Theory. The main idea of the theory is that there is a “contract” or agreement between

the people and the government. People are inherently good and they have the natural right to

life liberty and property. Furthermore, it is the people that give the power to the government,

and it is the job of the government to protect the people’s rights. However, should the

government not protect the people's rights then the government can be changed by the people.

For more information See: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Locke>

**Where do you see the influence of John Locke in the Declaration of Independence? Find the quotes in the text and explain.**