

Breaking down the Declaration of Independence

1) *The first sentence of the Declaration asserts as a matter of **Natural law** the ability of a people to assume political independence, and acknowledges that the grounds for such independence must be reasonable*

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.

2) *The next section, the famous preamble, includes the ideas and ideals that were principles of the Declaration. It is also an assertion of what is known as the "**right of revolution**": that is, people have certain rights, and when a government violates these rights, the people have the right to "alter or abolish" that government*

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.....

3) *The next section is a **list of charges** against King George III, which aim to demonstrate that he has violated the colonists' rights and is therefore unfit to be their ruler:*

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.

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....

4) *Many Americans still felt a kinship with the people of Great Britain, and had appealed in vain to the prominent among them, as well as to Parliament, to convince the King to relax his more objectionable policies toward the colonies. The next section represents the **disappointment that these attempts had been unsuccessful***

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.

5) *In the fifth section, the signers assert that there exist conditions under which people must change their government, that the British have produced such conditions, and by **necessity the colonies must throw off political ties with the British Crown and become independent states***

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.

6) *In the final section the signers boldly **sign their names** to the historical document, knowing full well that this could lead to their arrest and imprisonment*

A large, elegant, handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John Hancock". The signature is written in black ink and features a prominent, sweeping flourish at the end.