## ****Analyzing the Declaration of Independence****

## ****Directions:** The Declaration of Independence includes 4 basic parts. Read each of the parts and answer the questions that follow. Pay particular attention to the sections in bold.**

**Q1.** **Prediction.** List 2+ people/groups the authors of the Declaration of Independence probably expected would read their declaration? In other words, who is the audience they wrote for?

**Part A – Preamble --** *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.*

**Part B -- Statement of Political Philosophy** -- *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.*

## ****Q2.** According to the Declaration of Independence, in what sense are “all men created equal?” Obviously some people are taller than others, some are smarter than others – so how exactly are people equal?**

## ****Q3.** During the 1700s, many kings believed in “divine right”, and claimed they got their power to rule from God. According to the Declaration of Independence, who grants kings/governments the right to rule?**

*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.*

 **Q4.** When should people revolt? Should they do so often?

— 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.

## ****Part C. List of Grievances – This section consists of a long list of complaints. Some of these complaints have been listed below. Match each complaint to one of the summaries provided.****

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ****Grievance**** | ****Which Summary Matches It?**** |
| 1.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.  |  |
| 2.He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.  |  |
| 3.He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures. |  |
| 4.For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: |  |
| 5.For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: |  |
| 6.For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury: |  |
| 7.For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. |  |
| 8.He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people. |  |
| 9.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. |  |
| 10.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. |  |
| 11.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. |  |

## ****Summaries****

## This charge relates to the King's opposition to colonial laws passed to encourage immigration to America. The British government feared that such encouragement would reduce the population of England and lure away workers who would otherwise be employed in its domestic industries.

## This refers to the hiring by King George of German troops to fight against the colonists.

1. This refers to the fact that at the end of the Seven Years' War with France, English troops were not withdrawn from the colonies. Indeed, the Quartering Act, passed by the British government in 1765, made the colonies liable for supporting the troops.

## This refers to the Sugar Act of April 5, 1764, which entrusted military courts with enforcing all acts of the British Parliament pertaining to commerce and related revenues. In 1768, the British government, partly in an effort to stop smuggling, increased the number of these courts. All trials by such courts were conducted without juries.

1. This charge suggests that the British encouraged slave and Indian revolts against the colonists. For example, in 1775, Lord Dunmore of Virginia, swore to members of the Virginia House of Burgesses that if "any Injury or insult were offered to himself" he would "declare Freedom to the Slaves, and reduce the City of Williamsburg to Ashes."

## This charge quotes parliament's repeal of the stamp tax in 1766; although the tax was repealed, parliament asserted its authority to legislate for the colonies "in all cases whatsoever."

## This charge refers to additional customs officials and military courts established by the British government in the colonies, in an effort to enforce trade laws and prevent smuggling.

## This charge refers to a 1775 law authorizing the British navy to capture the ships and cargoes of other countries trading with the American colonies. In addition, the law authorized that anyone captured in the taking of these ships was to be forced to fight for the British.

1. This charge points to the fact that King George had declared war on the Americans. It refers specifically to the burning by British troops of several American towns. The British considered that the Americans were in open rebellion against their lawful rulers. But for the Americans, their "lawful rulers" were the very colonial legislatures and town meetings that were declared closed by British decrees and under attack by British troops.
2. The charge refers to the Stamp tax of the early 1760s and other major causes of the quarrel between the Americans and the British. It occasioned the first strong articulation of the principle "no taxation without representation", and was soon extended to the whole conduct of government. Not just taxes, but all acts of government must be by "the consent of the governed."
3. This charge refers to the Navigation Acts.

## ****Part D. Justification for the Separation & Formal Declaration of Independence****

*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.*

**Q5.** What did the colonists do to try to avoid declaring independence?

*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.*

## ****Q6.** Based on the language in this section, did the Declaration of Independence create a new country or 13 new states?**