

In-Depth Declaration of Independence Study

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Declaration of Independence

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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

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**;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

that, to **secure** these rights, governments are **instituted** among men, **deriving** their **just** powers from the **consent** of the **governed**;

Definitions:

Annotations:

Personal Application:

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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

Prudence, indeed, will **dictate** that governments long established should not be changed for **light** and **transient** causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more **disposed** to **suffer**, while evils are **sufferable** than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are **accustomed**.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

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**.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

1. He has **refused** his **assent** to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

2. 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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

3. 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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

5. 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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

6. He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly, for opposing, with manly firmness, his **invasions** on the rights of the people.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

7. 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 invasions from without and **convulsions** within.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

8. He has endeavored to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for **naturalization** of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their **migration** hither, and raising the conditions of new **appropriations** of lands.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

9. He has **obstructed** the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

10. He has made judges **dependent** on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

11. He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither **swarms** of officers to **harass** our people and eat out their **substance**.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

12. He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

13. He has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

14. 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:

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

15. For **quartering** large bodies of armed troops among us;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

16. For protecting them, by a **mock** trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

17. For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

18. For **imposing** taxes on us without our consent;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

19. For **depriving** us, in many cases, of the **benefits** of trial by jury;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

20. For transporting us beyond seas, to be tried for pretended offenses;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

21. For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring 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;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

22. For taking away our charters, abolishing our most **valuable** laws, and altering **fundamentally** the forms of our governments;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

23. For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

24. He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

25. He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

26. He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny already begun with circumstances of cruelty and **perfidy** scarcely **paralleled** in the most **barbarous** ages, and totally unworthy the head of a **civilized** nation.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

27. 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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

28. He has **excited** domestic **insurrection** among us, and has endeavored 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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

Nor have we been wanting in our 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.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

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 the 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**;

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

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 do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do.

Definitions:

Annotations and Personal Application:

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**.

[Signed by] JOHN HANCOCK [President]

New Hampshire

Josiah Bartlett,
Wm. Whipple,
Matthew Thornton.

Massachusetts Bay

Saml. Adams,
John Adams,
Robt. Treat Paine,
Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island

Step. Hopkins,
William Ellery.

Connecticut

Roger Sherman,
Sam'el Huntington,
Wm. Williams,
Oliver Wolcott.

New York

Wm. Floyd,
Phil. Livingston,
Frans. Lewis,
Lewis Morris.

New Jersey

Richd. Stockton,
Jno. Witherspoon,
Fras. Hopkinson,
John Hart,
Abra. Clark.

Pennsylvania

Robt. Morris
Benjamin Rush,
Benja. Franklin,
John Morton,
Geo. Clymer,
Jas. Smith,
Geo. Taylor,
James Wilson,
Geo. Ross.

Delaware

Caesar Rodney,
Geo. Read,
Tho. M'kean.

Maryland

Samuel Chase,
Wm. Paca,
Thos. Stone,
Charles Carroll Of Carrollton.

Virginia

George Wythe,
Richard Henry Lee,
Th. Jefferson,
Benja. Harrison,
Ths. Nelson, Jr.,
Francis Lightfoot Lee,
Carter Braxton.

North Carolina

Wm. Hooper,
Joseph Hewes,
John Penn.

South Carolina

Edward Rutledge,
Thos. Hayward, Junr.,
Thomas Lynch, Junr.,
Arthur Middleton.

Georgia

Button Gwinnett,
Lyman Hall,
Geo. Walton.

