

A Case for Independence

Analyze how the Declaration builds its argument and shaped events.

SS.8.A.3.7 "Examine the structure, content, and consequences of the Declaration of Independence."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the statement about rights and government, circle each complaint against the king, and number the passage's three major moves: principles, evidence, and declaration. These marks will help you trace how the document builds its case for independence.

How the Declaration Made Its Case

- ① In July 1776, delegates to the Second Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson drafted most of it, while a committee and Congress revised it. The document did more than announce a break with Britain. Its opening explained a political idea: people possess rights, and governments receive their just powers from the consent of the governed. This claim gave the colonists a reason to judge King George III's rule, rather than simply complain about taxes or trade rules.
- ② After stating its principles, the Declaration argues that people may alter or abolish a government that destroys their rights. It then presents a long list of grievances, or complaints, against King George III. The list accuses him of acts such as keeping standing armies in the colonies during peacetime and cutting off colonial trade with other parts of the world. By placing evidence after its principles, the writers tried to show that separation was a justified response to repeated abuses of power.
- ③ Finally, the Declaration formally declares that the colonies are free and independent states, no longer loyal to the British Crown. The signers pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor to support that decision. The Declaration did not immediately win the Revolutionary War or create a new government. Instead, it announced the colonies' purpose, encouraged support for independence, and helped France see the conflict as a fight by a separate nation. Its ideas later influenced debates about rights and equality in the United States and beyond.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How does the order of the Declaration's major parts help the writers make a case for independence?

2 Choose one grievance named in the passage. What action did it accuse the king of taking, and why would the writers place that complaint after their principles?

3 What two outcomes did the Declaration not produce immediately? What did it do instead?

4 According to the passage, how did the final claim of independence affect France's view of the conflict?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a three-sentence mini-declaration for a fictional community. State a right in sentence 1, give one specific grievance in sentence 2, and declare the community's response in sentence 3.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the statement about rights and government, circle each complaint against the king, and number the passage's three major moves: principles, evidence, and declaration. These marks will help you trace how the document builds its case for independence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the order of the Declaration's major parts help the writers make a case for independence?	It begins with principles about rights and consent, follows with grievances as evidence of abuses, and ends by declaring independence. This order presents separation as a justified conclusion.
2	Choose one grievance named in the passage. What action did it accuse the king of taking, and why would the writers place that complaint after their principles?	Answers may name keeping standing armies during peacetime or cutting off colonial trade. The complaint serves as evidence that the king had abused power and harmed colonists' rights.
3	What two outcomes did the Declaration not produce immediately? What did it do instead?	It did not immediately win the Revolutionary War or create a new government. It announced the colonies' purpose, encouraged support for independence, and helped France view the colonies as a separate nation.
4	According to the passage, how did the final claim of independence affect France's view of the conflict?	It helped France see the conflict as a fight by a separate nation, rather than only a dispute within the British Empire.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

People have the right to help choose the rules that govern them. Our ruler has imposed taxes without allowing elected representatives to vote on them. Therefore, our community will form its own council and govern itself.

Accept responses that use the three required structural parts in order: a right or principle, a specific grievance, and a clear response or declaration. The fictional grievance and response may vary, as long as they logically connect.