

Words for Freedom

Read how the colonies explained their decision for independence.

SS4H1.d "Explain the writing of the Declaration of Independence; include who wrote it, how it was written, why it was necessary, and how it was a response to tyranny and the abuse of power."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline facts that show how the Declaration was written, circle actions that show abuse of power, and number 1, 2, 3 beside details that explain why independence was necessary.

Writing a Declaration

- ① In 1776, the thirteen American colonies were in a serious dispute with King George III and Great Britain. Parliament had passed taxes and laws that affected colonists, even though the colonies had no representatives in Parliament. British soldiers were sent to enforce some laws. Many colonists believed that the king and Parliament were using power unfairly instead of protecting their rights.
- ② The Continental Congress asked a five-person committee to prepare a statement explaining the colonies' choice. Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft in June 1776. John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston served on the committee and reviewed the draft. Congress discussed the words, made changes, and approved the final Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.
- ③ The Declaration said that people have rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It explained that governments should protect these rights. The document listed complaints about the king's actions, such as keeping troops in the colonies and interfering with colonial lawmaking. By declaring independence, the colonies said they were no longer ruled by Britain. This response challenged tyranny, or cruel and unfair use of power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Who wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence?

2 What did the committee and the Continental Congress do with Jefferson's draft before it became final?

3 What were two reasons many colonists believed independence was necessary?

4 How did the Declaration respond to tyranny and the abuse of power?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Imagine that town leaders make rules without listening to the people and use guards to force the rules. Write a three-sentence statement that names the unfair power, tells what right the people deserve, and says what the people choose to do.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline facts that show how the Declaration was written, circle actions that show abuse of power, and number 1, 2, 3 beside details that explain why independence was necessary. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Who wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence?	Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft.
2	What did the committee and the Continental Congress do with Jefferson's draft before it became final?	The committee reviewed the draft. Congress discussed it, made changes, and approved the final document.
3	What were two reasons many colonists believed independence was necessary?	Answers may include that Parliament passed taxes and laws without colonial representatives, British soldiers enforced laws, and colonists believed their rights were not being protected.
4	How did the Declaration respond to tyranny and the abuse of power?	It listed complaints about the king's unfair actions and declared that the colonies would no longer be ruled by Britain.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The town leaders make rules without hearing the people, which is an unfair use of power. The people deserve a voice in rules that affect them. We choose to form a new council that will protect our rights.

Accept equivalent evidence-based answers to the passage questions. For the open response, accept three sentences that identify an abuse of power, name a right, and state a response to the unfair leaders.