Ideas Behind Independence

Read the Declaration's claims and connect them to its purpose.

5.SS.4.2 "Identify and explain the important concepts in the Declaration of Independence."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline a phrase about rights and circle a phrase that tells where a government gets its power. Write 1 beside a reason the colonists wanted change and 2 beside the action they took.

Why Declare Independence?

1. On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. Its writers spoke for the thirteen colonies in announcing a break from British rule. The document was more than a notice of separation. It offered reasons for that decision and explained ideas about rights and government. Imagine hearing it read aloud in a crowded town square: What would its claims mean for the people listening?

2. The Declaration says that "all men are created equal" and have rights that cannot rightfully be taken away, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It says governments get their fair powers from the consent of the governed, the people they serve. A government's job is to protect people's rights. If a government repeatedly violates those rights, the people may change or replace it.

3. The writers listed complaints against King George III, including taxes imposed without the colonists' consent and the closing of colonial lawmaking groups. They argued that these actions showed a pattern of unfair rule, not just one mistake. Then they declared the colonies free and independent states. The promise of equality was bold, but many people, including enslaved people and women, were denied equal rights in 1776.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the Declaration say about people's rights? Name one right from the passage and explain the idea behind it.

2. What does “consent of the governed” mean for a government's power?

3. According to the Declaration, when may people change or replace their government? Explain why.

4. How did the writers use their complaints against King George III to explain the decision to declare independence?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are helping a new island community choose its first government. In three sentences, propose one rule for its leaders and explain how your rule puts two ideas from the Declaration into practice.

ANSWER KEY

Ideas Behind Independence

GRADE 5 · 5.SS.4.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline a phrase about rights and circle a phrase that tells where a government gets its power. Write 1 beside a reason the colonists wanted change and 2 beside the action they took. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the Declaration say about people's rights? Name one right from the passage and explain the idea behind it.	**People have rights that cannot rightfully be taken away, such as liberty.**
2	What does "consent of the governed" mean for a government's power?	**A government gets its fair powers from the people it serves.**
3	According to the Declaration, when may people change or replace their government? Explain why.	**They may change or replace it when it repeatedly violates their rights, because a government's job is to protect those rights.**
4	How did the writers use their complaints against King George III to explain the decision to declare independence?	**They described actions such as taxes without consent as a pattern of unfair rule, then declared the colonies free and independent states.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

On our island, every adult resident should be able to vote for leaders who must protect everyone's freedom to speak. Voting gives leaders power through the consent of the governed. Protecting speech follows the Declaration's idea that governments should protect people's rights.

Accept answers that accurately explain the Declaration's ideas in the student's own words. For Your Turn, the proposed rule should clearly apply two distinct ideas, such as consent and the protection of rights.