

Rights and Grievances

Tracing the Declaration's argument for independence.

7.3c "Influenced by Enlightenment ideas and their rights as Englishmen, American colonial leaders outlined their grievances against British policies and actions in the Declaration of Independence."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one idea about rights or government in paragraph 1. Circle two British actions in paragraph 2 that colonial leaders opposed.

The Case for Independence

- ① Enlightenment writers argued that people have natural rights and that government should protect them. Government gains legitimate power from the people it governs. Social contract theory describes obligations between people and government; some thinkers argued that people could replace a government that repeatedly violated their rights. Colonial leaders used these ideas to judge British rule and ask whether Parliament protected liberty or abused power.
- ② Colonists also believed they possessed the traditional rights of Englishmen, such as being represented when taxes were approved and receiving fair legal treatment. Yet Parliament imposed taxes, including the Stamp Act and Townshend duties, although colonists did not elect members of Parliament. Britain also kept troops in the colonies and, under Quartering Acts, required colonial governments to provide housing or accommodations for troops. Leaders argued that these policies took property, money, and local control without proper colonial consent.
- ③ On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. Written mainly by Thomas Jefferson, it announced that the colonies were separate from Great Britain. Its opening argued that people have equal natural rights and that governments exist to protect those rights. The document then listed grievances against King George III, including taxation without colonial consent and interference with colonial self-government. By presenting these actions as repeated abuses, the Declaration said Britain had broken its obligations to the colonists.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** Choose one Enlightenment idea from the passage. How did that idea give colonial leaders a reason to oppose British rule?

- 2** What right of Englishmen did colonists connect to taxes? What did they object to about Parliament?

- 3** Why did colonial leaders see the Quartering Acts as a grievance?

- 4** How did the Declaration of Independence use both rights and grievances to support independence?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine that Parliament orders a colony to stop holding elected town meetings and collects a new tax without the colony's consent. Write exactly three sentences as a colonial leader: name one Enlightenment idea or right of Englishmen, explain why this policy is a grievance, and state why it supports independence.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one idea about rights or government in paragraph 1. Circle two British actions in paragraph 2 that colonial leaders opposed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Choose one Enlightenment idea from the passage. How did that idea give colonial leaders a reason to oppose British rule?	Natural rights meant people have rights that government must protect, so leaders could oppose a government that violated them. The social contract meant people could replace a government that repeatedly violated their rights.
2	What right of Englishmen did colonists connect to taxes? What did they object to about Parliament?	They believed they should be represented when taxes were approved. They objected because Parliament imposed taxes even though colonists did not elect members of Parliament.
3	Why did colonial leaders see the Quartering Acts as a grievance?	The acts required colonial governments to provide housing or accommodations for troops, which leaders said took local control and acted without proper colonial consent.
4	How did the Declaration of Independence use both rights and grievances to support independence?	It stated that governments must protect natural rights, then listed British abuses such as taxation without colonial consent and interference with self-government. It argued that Britain had broken its obligations to the colonists.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Government should rest on the consent of the people it governs. By ending elected town meetings and taxing us without our consent, Parliament denies our rights as Englishmen and breaks the social contract. These abuses support the argument that the colonies should govern themselves.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect natural rights or the social contract to British abuses. For the open response, accept a clear three-sentence argument that identifies a right or Enlightenment idea, names the grievance, and supports independence.