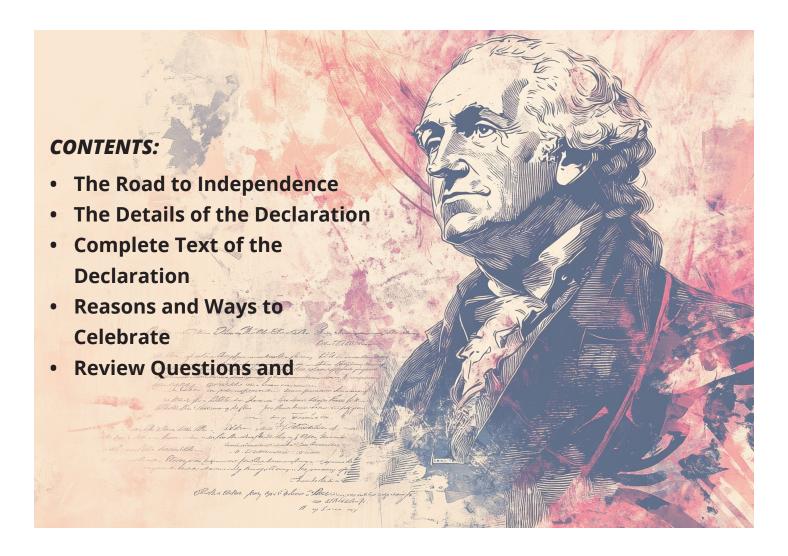


America's 250th Anniversary

A Student's Celebration of Independence

On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.







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Page 2 THE BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This significant milestone, known as the *Semiquincentennial*, provides an opportunity for all citizens to come together and celebrate our shared values rather than our divisions. It encourages reflection on how our country was founded on the principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," as well as the ongoing work of our democracy.

The Road to Independence

The Declaration of Independence, adopted on July 4, 1776, was the result of more than a decade of conflict between the American colonies and Great Britain. Most colonists began as loyal subjects of Britain, but after the French and Indian War (1754–1763), Britain's new taxes and strict trade laws angered them. Acts like the Stamp Act (1765) and Townshend Acts (1767) taxed everyday goods. Colonists argued that these laws violated their rights because they had no representatives in Parliament, giving rise to the famous slogan: "No taxation without representation!" They began protesting, boycotting British goods, and forming groups like the Sons of Liberty. Violence erupted in events like the Boston Massacre (1770) and the Boston Tea Party (1773). Britain's harsh response — the Intolerable Acts (1774) united the colonies in opposition.

The journey to independence gained momentum when delegates from twelve colonies gathered in Philadelphia in the fall of 1774 for the First Continental Congress. This meeting aimed to repair relations with Great Britain in response to the tax acts. Many delegates were opposed to independence and instead petitioned the King to repeal the Acts. When Britain ignored these efforts, they reconvened in May 1775 for a Second Continental Congress. By then, the Revolutionary War had begun with the first shots fired at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. With war underway and no official central government, the Second Continental Congress served as the de facto government of the United States.

On June 7, 1776, more than a year after the Revolution began, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced this resolution to the Second Continental Congress:

"That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, 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."

The resolution proposed independence for the American colonies.

Inspired by Thomas Paine's Common Sense, Congress formed a committee led by Thomas Jefferson to draft a declaration. Approved on July 4, 1776, it proclaimed liberty and equality for all and announced a new nation—the United States of America. As a result, this date is celebrated as Independence Day. The road to independence was a journey from loyalty to liberty—turning protest into the promise of freedom for future generations.

Details of the Declaration

A committee from the Second Continental Congress wrote the Declaration. Drafted by Thomas Jefferson in collaboration with the "Committee of Five" John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston and Roger Sherman. While the words were mostly Thomas Jefferson's, the ideas were centuries old.

The Declaration of Independence was intended for multiple audiences: the King, the colonists, and the world. It also had several purposes. The Declaration can be divided into three parts:

- 1. Preamble A statement of principle concerning the rights of a man and why a revolution was necessary; The most important and famous line states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, 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.
- 2. Grievances A list of 27 complaints against England's King George III is the longest part of the Declaration and begins with "He has refused his Assent to Laws." It lists the unfair actions from Britain and states the king is "unfit to be the ruler of a free people."
- 3. A Formal Claim of Independence The final paragraph, beginning with "We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America," affirms that the 13 colonies are free and independent states. This formal declaration of independence includes a dramatic statement, "That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States." It declares a complete break with Britain and its King and claims the powers of an independent country. (continued)

The Declaration of Independence committee, known as the "Committee of Five," was a group of five delegates to the Second Continental Congress appointed to draft the document.

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

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REVIEW QUESTIONS AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES

QUESTIONS

THE DECLARATION OR CONSTITUTION? To idenity the puprose and powers of the Declaration (D) and Constitution (C), put an "X" in the column that applies to the detail listed.

	Document Details	D	С
1.	Mainly written by Thomas Jefferson		
2.	Rallied support for the American Revolution		
3.	Established the framework of government		
4.	Is the Supreme Law of the Land		
5.	Signed by members of the Continental Congress		
6.	Listed grievances against King George		
7.	Includes 27 Amendments		
8.	Starts with "We the People"		
9.	Declared the U.S. as an independent nation		
10.	Main author was James Madison		

THE DECLARATION BY THE NUMBERS. Choose the correct number from the bank that matches the statement.

#	Number Bank: 3, 5, 6, 10, 13, 27, 56, 250
	Number of committee members drafted Declaration
	Celebration is the result of this anniversary
	Number of parts in the Declaration
	Grievances against the King
	Number of signers of the Declaration
	Number of original colonies
	Signed both the Declaration and Constitution
	Amendments in the Bill of Rights

VOCABULARY MATCH - Identify the terms used in the Declaration of Independence, matching the statement in Section A with the vocabulary word in Section B.

	2 -
 1.	Fix a wrong or make things fair again.
 2.	Not being able to be taken away or surrendered.
 3.	Cruel and harsh government or rule.
 4.	Good judgement and caution.
 5.	Loyalty or commitment to a cause or government.
 6.	Taking power or rights by force.
 7.	A single ruler holds absolute or unchecked power.
 8.	A complaint or protest.
 9.	The right to legal authority to make & enforce laws.
	D

- **a.** tyranny **b.** allegiance **c.** usurpation
- d. despotism e. unalienable f. prudence
- **g.** grievances **h.** redress **i.** jurisdiction

SHORT ANSWER

READ THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

After reading the full text of the Declaration carefully, answer the sections below to confirm understanding of the main ideas and structure.

List 3 Key Phrases that stand out to you

1	
2	
3	

List 3 Grievances against the King

1	
2	
3	

Give 3 Powers of the new, free states

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1	
2	
3	

YOUR BIRTHDAY WISH TO THE UNITED STATES.

As we honor the 250th Anniversary, reflect on its history, achievements, and hopes for the future.

1.	Please share specific examples or experiences that reflect your pride?

2.	What are your hopes for our future, and in what ways do you believe America can improve?
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