



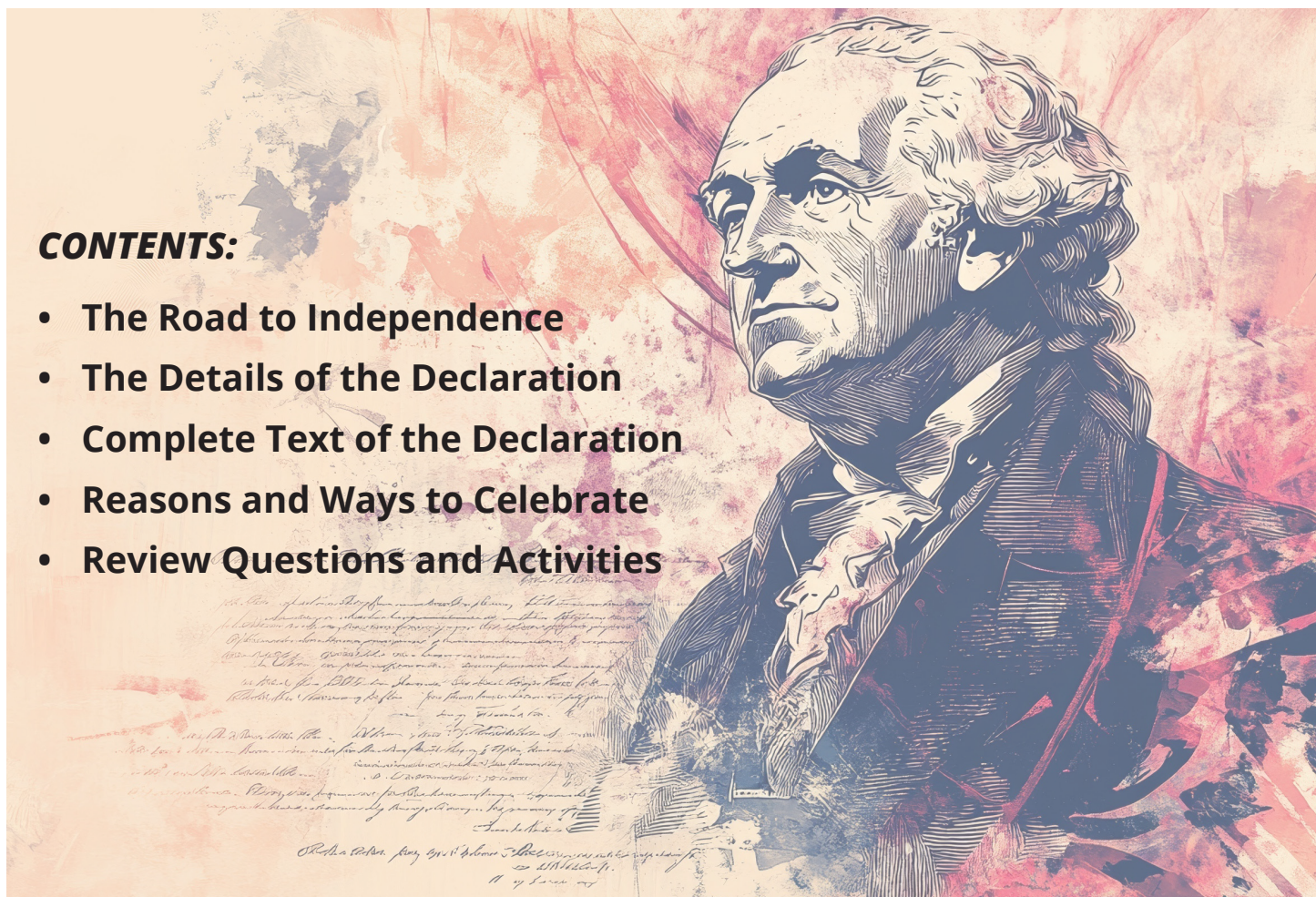
America's 250th Anniversary

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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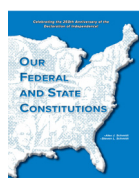


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On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This significant milestone, known as the *Semiquincentennial*, provides an opportunity for all citizens to come together 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 image above is probably the most famous image of the Boston Massacre. It was engraved by Paul Revere about two weeks after the Boston Massacre occurred.

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 mainly 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.*”

Timeline and Events Leading to the Declaration of Independence

1763	1765	1767	1770	1773	1774	1775
End of French & Indian War - Britain wins the war but is left with huge debt, decides colonies must help pay.	Stamp Act - imposed a high tax on colonists represented by a stamp, on various forms of papers, documents, and playing cards.	Townshend Act - duties imposed on the import of glass, paper, and tea, colonists begin boycott of British goods.	Boston Massacre - British soldiers fire on a crowd; 5 colonists are killed. Used as a rallying point against British rule.	Boston Tea Party - Sons of Liberty dump tea into Boston Harbor in protest of unjust taxes.	Intolerable Acts - series of 4 laws passed to punish colonists for the Boston Tea Party, First Continental Congress meets.	Battles of Lexington and Concord - First battles of the Revolution, “Shot heard round the world.”

IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. — 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. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such Principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world. — He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good. — He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them. — He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only. — He has called together legislative Bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures. — He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people. — He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within. — He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. — He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers. — He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries. — He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance. — He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our Legislatures. — He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the civil power. — He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: — For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: — For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: — For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: — For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent: — For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by jury: — For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences: — For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies: — For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments: — For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever. — He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us. — He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people. — He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation. — He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands. — He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions. In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people. Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British Brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable Jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, 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; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to lay War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Boston Greenwich
Sylvan Hall,
Geo. Wallcut.

John Hancock
Joseph Hewes,
John Penn

Edward Rutledge.

Thos. Heyward Jr.
Thomas Lynch Jr.
Arthur Middleton

Samuel Chase
Wm. Paro
Thos. Stone
George Carroll of Carrollton

George Wythe
Richard Henry Lee
Wm. Jefferson
Wm. Harrison
Thos. Nelson Jr.
Francis Lightfoot Lee
Charles Braxton

John Hancock
John Morri
Benjamin Rush
Beng. Franklin
John Morton
Geo. Clymer
Sam. Smith
Geo. Taylor
James Wilson
Wm. Floyd
Casar Rodney
G. Mifflin
Thos. Mifflin

Josh. Jackson
Geo. Witherspoon
Treat. Hopkinson
John Hart
Abra. Clark

Josiah Bartlett
M^{rs} Mapple
Sam. Adams

John Adams
Robt. Treat Paine
Abigail Gerry

Step. Hopkins
William Ellery
Roger Sherman
John Huntington
M^{rs} Williams
Oliver Wolcott
Nathaniel Gorham

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

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.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

QUESTIONS

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

	Document Details	D	C
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.

A

- ___ 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. Failing to fulfill a responsibility.
- ___ 9. The right to legal authority to make & enforce laws.

B

- a. tyranny b. allegiance c. usurpation
- d. despotism e. unalienable f. prudence
- g. abdicate 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

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. What are you thankful for or proud of about America? 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?
