



**FLORIDA JOINT CENTER
FOR CITIZENSHIP**

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

SS.7.C.1.4 Analyze the ideas (natural rights, roles of the government) and complaints set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

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Lesson Summary

Essential Question

What are the ideas and complaints in the Declaration of Independence?

NGSSS Benchmark

SS.7.C.1.4 Analyze the ideas (natural rights, role of the government) and complaints set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

Florida Standards

LAFS.68.RH.1.1	LAFS.68.RH.1.2	LAFS.68.RH.2.4	LAFS.68.RH.2.6
LAFS.68.WHST.1.2	LAFS.68.WHST.2.6	LAFS.68.WHST.3.9	LAFS.7.SL.1.1
LAFS.68.WHST.4.10	LAFS.68.SL.2.4	MAFS.K12.MP.5.1	

Overview

In this lesson, students will analyze how the ideas of natural rights and the role of government and complaints are outlined in the Declaration of Independence.

Learning Goals/Benchmark Clarifications

- Students will explain the concept of natural rights as expressed in the Declaration of Independence.
- Students will identify the natural rights specifically expressed in the Declaration of Independence (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness).
- Students will analyze the relationship between natural rights and the role of government. 1. People are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; 2. Governments are instituted among men to secure these rights; 3. Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed; and 4. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government.
- Students will recognize the connection between specific grievances in the Declaration of Independence and natural rights' violations.
- Students will recognize colonial complaints as identified in the Declaration of Independence (imposing taxes without the consent of the people, suspending trial by jury, limiting judicial powers, quartering soldiers, and dissolving legislatures).

Benchmark Content Limits

- Items will examine the Declaration of Independence from the perspective of the colonists, not from the British perspective.

Civics EOC Reporting Category

Reporting Category 1 – Origins and Purposes of Law and Government

Suggested Time Frame

- Three 45-50 minute class periods

Civics Content Vocabulary

- abolish, assent, consent of the governed, deprive, despotism, dissolve, endowed, grievance, impel, impose, institute, natural rights, oppression, quartering, rectitude, self-evident, tyranny, tyrant, unalienable (inalienable) rights, usurpations

Instructional Strategies

Close reading of complex text

Collaborative learning

Inquiry with primary sources

Materials

Computer to project images and documents

Student activity sheets:

- Artwork Viewing Guide
- Declaration of Independence: Background Information and Brainstorming
- Declaration of Independence: Understanding Vocabulary in Context
- Primary Source Document Analysis Worksheet
- Assessment Guidelines

Student reading materials:

- Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence

Lesson Activities and Daily Schedule

Please use the chart below to track activity completion.

Day	Task #	Steps in Lesson	Description	Completed? Yes/No
Day One	Task 1	1-4	Hook Activity	
	Task 2	5-11	Declaration of Independence Background Information and Brainstorming	
	Task 3	9-33	Document Analysis	
	Task 4	34	Checking for Understanding: Formative Assessment	
Day Two	Task 5	35	Checking for Understanding: Performance Assessment	
Day Three	Task 6	35	Checking for Understanding – Product Presentations	

Suggested Student Activity Sequence

1. To begin this lesson, project the following link to John Trumbull's "Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776":
<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/images/trumbull-large1.jpg>.
2. Pass out the "Artwork Viewing Guide" student activity sheet.
3. Review the activity sheet as a whole class and provide students with time to identify evidence and write answers in complete sentences for each question.
Teacher note: If your students require additional direction for analyzing this painting, please use the National Archives Photograph Analysis Worksheet:
http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf
4. Share the following information about the painting with the students:
 - John Trumbull painted a presentation of the Declaration of Independence in what is now called Independence Hall in Philadelphia.
 - The painting features the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence — John Adams, Roger Sherman, Thomas Jefferson (presenting the document), and Benjamin Franklin — standing before John Hancock, the President of the Continental Congress.
 - This painting currently hangs in the U.S. Capitol.
5. Ask students to define the term "independence" and pose the following question for discussion: "What is an example of independence in every day life?"
6. Pass out the "Declaration of Independence: Background Information and Brainstorming" student activity sheet.
7. Provide students with some background information about the circumstances leading up to and the reasons for writing the Declaration of Independence. Instruct students to take notes on their student activity sheet. Teacher note: Utilize the Essential Content Background section to guide the discussion. Some key points to include:
 - During the Second Continental Congress in 1775, delegates argued over whether to seek independence or remain loyal to Great Britain. Many did not want to seek independence as they feared that this would start a war with Great Britain. Others felt that independence was necessary because King George III was an oppressor who was limiting the colonists' rights and actions. They felt that Great Britain was becoming a tyranny.
 - In 1776, Thomas Paine stated that it was "common sense" for the colonies to break away from Great Britain. He said that King George was a "royal brute" and the colonies had every right to sever ties.
 - After many months of debate, more than half of the delegates agreed to declare independence from Great Britain.
 - Thomas Paine's writings were very influential in the decision to declare independence.
 - Thomas Jefferson, the main author, detailed the colonies' reasons for breaking away with Great Britain.
 - The document argued that the king did not look after the interests of the colonies anymore.
 - He listed the grievances, or complaints, that the colonists had towards the crown.
8. Project an image of the Declaration of Independence from the National Archives:
<https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1419123>.
9. Place students into pairs and have them brainstorm about the document using the questions on their activity sheet to guide their thinking.
10. Have students share out.
11. Encourage students to share questions they raised about the document during their paired brainstorm. List these questions on the board.
12. Explain to students that they will analyze excerpts of the document in order to understand the colonists' argument for independence.
13. Project and pass out the "Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence" reading.
14. Read the "Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence" aloud to the whole class.
15. Instruct students to answer the following questions: "What is this about? Who is "He"? What is the main issue of this document?"
16. Have students share out.
17. Pass out the "Declaration of Independence: Understanding Vocabulary in Context" student activity sheet and project the following list of civics content vocabulary terms on the board:

1. dissolve	2. impel	3. self-evident	4. endowed	5. unalienable rights	6. institute
7. derive	8. consent of the governed	9. abolish	10. usurpations	11. despotism	12. tyranny
13. tyrant	14. assent	15. quartering	16. deprive	17. oppression	18. rectitude

Teacher note: The terms are listed as they appear in the text.

18. Read the “Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence” aloud to the class for the second time and pause at each term. Instruct students to define the term using the clues available. Teacher note: If additional support is needed to define terms in context, utilize the S.L.A.P. technique: 1. SAY the word aloud to the class, 2. instruct students to LOOK for clues, 3. instruct students to ASK themselves what the word might mean and think of another word that may be used to express that meaning, and 4. PUT that word in place of the unknown word, does it make sense? Why or why not?
19. Have students mark their text and add the definition for each term on the activity sheet.
20. Begin reading the “Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence” aloud to the class for the third time.
21. Pause after the first sentence in the second paragraph and pose the following question for discussion: “What do you think the statement: *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* means? Have you heard the phrase life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness before? Do you think this applies to all people? How does the text explain this phrase?”
22. Lead students to the understanding that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are natural rights. Ask students to define the term natural rights in their own words and write it in the discussion section of their activity sheet.
23. Continue reading the second paragraph and pose the following question for discussion: “What is the connection between natural rights and the role of government? What evidence from the text led you to this conclusion?” Instruct students to take notes on their activity sheet during this discussion.
24. Pass out the “Primary Source Document Analysis” student activity sheet. Explain to students that this activity sheet includes some of the questions you, the teacher, have about the document.
25. Compare the list of student-generated questions with the questions on the student activity sheet.
26. Mark any questions on the board that are not covered by the activity sheet.
27. Explain to the students that they will continue reading the document with their partner in order to answer the questions on the “Primary Source Document Analysis” activity sheet.
28. Monitor student progress while the pairs are working.
29. Merge sets of pairs together so that students are in groups of four.
30. Provide time for the groups of four to review and compare their answers.
31. Ask students to share out their responses for Question 6F.
32. Instruct students to read through the remaining student-generated questions on the board. Ask students if they are able to answer any of the questions using the text.
33. Pose the following reflective questions for discussion: “How does this information of the Declaration of Independence fit into what else we have learned? How might we find answers to some of the questions still listed on the board?”
34. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment):
Prompt
 Using what you have learned from analyzing the Declaration of Independence, write a well-crafted informative text explaining the relationship between natural rights and the role of government and how the colonists’ complaints are related to the concept of natural rights.
35. Checking for Understanding (Performance Assessment):
 Explain to students that they will have an opportunity to demonstrate and share their understanding of the Declaration of Independence in a creative way. Pass out the “Assessment Guidelines” overview and review the project expectations and grading criteria with the class.
 Explain to students that they will demonstrate their knowledge about the relationship between natural rights and the role of government in the Declaration of Independence and the connection between the colonists’ complaints and grievances and how they are related to the concept of natural rights by creating a product of their choice.

Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776 by, John Trumbull
Artwork Viewing Guide

Artwork	Specific Evidence from the Painting	Complete Sentence
What do you think is going on in this painting?		
What is the issue on which it is focusing?		
What is the action that is taking place?		
Do you see any familiar people or objects?		
Painting – Additional Notes/Evidence from Group Discussion		

Declaration of Independence: Background Information and Brainstorming

Background Information

Notes

Document Brainstorming

What is the first feature that you notice about the document?	
What is the second feature you notice in the document?	
What might be the connection between the first and second features that you noticed?	
How does this document make you feel or think about? What are the words or phrases from the document that caused this feeling or thought?	
What do you already know about this document?	
What questions do you have?	

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

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

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

... For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

... For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent.

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

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only 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.

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. . . . 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.

Declaration of Independence: Understanding Vocabulary in Context

Term	Definition as it appears in context.
abolish	
assent	
consent of the governed	
deprive	
derive	
despotism	
dissolve	
endow	
impel	
institute	
oppression	
quarter	
rectitude	
self-evident	
tyranny	
tyrant	
unalienable (inalienable) rights	
usurpation	

Notes from Class Discussion

Primary Source Document Analysis Worksheet

Adapted from the "Written Document Analysis Worksheet" from the National Archives
https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet_former.pdf

Document Title: _____

1.	<p>What type of document is this? (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Newspaper</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Report</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Memo</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Letter</i></p> <p>Other (please explain): _____</p>
2.	<p>What are some unique <u>visual</u> characteristics of this document? (check all that apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Interesting Letterhead</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Handwritten</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Typed</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Seals/Stamps</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Notations</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Signatures</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>"Received" Stamp</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain): _____</p>
3.	<p>What is the date of this document? The Declaration of Independence</p>
4.	<p>Who is the author (or creator) of this document?</p> <p><i>What is their position? What words does the author use to make their position known to the reader?</i></p>
5.	<p>Who is intended to read this? Do you think they read it?</p>

Performance Assessment Guidelines

Directions: Your task is to demonstrate your understanding of the Declaration of Independence by creating and presenting a product of your choice.

To complete this project, you will do the following:

1. Choose your work style. You may work individually or in small groups of up to 4 students.
2. Choose your product. How will you demonstrate your learning in a creative way? Some ideas: Write and perform a skit, design and create a prezi or video, write and perform a song.
3. Plan your product. A good product requires a good plan. You must hand in a rough draft of your product and have it approved by your teacher before you can begin working on the final draft.

Your product must include the following:

- a. A clear and engaging introduction that provides an overview of the entire product.
 - b. An explanation between the concept of natural rights and the role of government as explained in the Declaration of Independence.
 - c. A focus on the colonists' point of view, summary of the complaints and grievances by the colonists' and how they relate to the concept of natural rights.
 - d. Text-based evidence and specific examples from the Declaration of Independence.
 - e. Appropriate vocabulary terms that you learned during the lesson activities.
 - f. A clear concluding statement that summarizes the information and does not introduce new information.
 - g. Creativity! Your product should be engaging, colorful and interesting to the audience.
4. Present your product. Create and rehearse your presentation. The presentation must include all group members, all information required in points A – G, appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Grading Criteria	4	3	2	1
Content 40%	All required content is accurate, summarized appropriately and specific examples from text are included.	Most required content is accurate, summarized appropriately and specific examples from text are included. There are 1-2 errors with the content.	Some required content is accurate, summarized appropriately and specific examples from text are included. There are 3 errors with the content.	There are more than 4 errors with the content.
Creativity and content of product 30%	Product is engaging, colorful, and interesting to the audience. All required content is present in product.	Presentation product is somewhat engaging, colorful, and interesting to the audience. One required content component is missing, all others are present in product.	Presentation product is minimally engaging, colorful, or interesting to the audience. Two pieces of required content are missing from product.	Presentation product needs improvement in order to be engaging, colorful and interesting to the audience. More than two pieces of content are missing from product.
Presentation 20%	Presentation is clear and easy to follow; appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation is used.	Presentation is clear and easy to follow most of the time; appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation is frequently used.	Presentation is clear and easy to follow some of the time; appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation is sometimes used.	Presentation is difficult to follow; eye contact, volume and clear pronunciation is not used throughout the presentation.
Rough Draft 10%	Submitted a rough draft, with all required components included.	Submitted a rough draft, with all, but one, required components included.	Submitted a rough draft, with two required components missing from the draft.	Submitted a rough draft, with more than two required components missing from the draft.

Adapted from: Oral Evaluation Rubric, Based on: Iowa State University, 2005. Oral Presentation Rubric, <http://www.educ.iastate.edu/elps/rubricoral.htm>, accessed 19 May 2005
<http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/assess/oralpresentations.html> and http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/30700_rubric.pdf

Sources

John Trumbull's "Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776":

<http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/images/trumbull-large1.jpg>

Declaration of Independence: <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/1419123>

The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription:

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html

Primary Source Analysis Worksheet:

https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet_for_mer.pdf

Performance Assessment Rubric: Adapted from: Oral Evaluation Rubric, Based on: Iowa State

University, 2005. Oral Presentation Rubric, <http://www.educ.iastate.edu/elps/rubricoral.htm>, Accessed 19

May 2005 <http://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/assess/oralpresentations.html> and

http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/printouts/30700_rubric.pdf

The SLAP Strategy: <http://literacyblock2010.wikispaces.com/file/view/Vocabulary.pdf> , Accessed April 2013

Primary Source Document Analysis Worksheet – Sample Answers

Adapted from the “Written Document Analysis Worksheet” from the National Archives

https://www.archives.gov/files/education/lessons/worksheets/written_document_analysis_worksheet_former.pdf

Document Title: Declaration of Independence

1.	<p>What type of document is this? (check one):</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper <input type="checkbox"/> Report <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Memo <input type="checkbox"/> Letter</p> <p>Other (please explain): _____</p>
2.	<p>What are some unique <u>visual</u> characteristics of this document? (check all that apply)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interesting Letterhead <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Handwritten <input type="checkbox"/> Typed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Seals/Stamps <input type="checkbox"/> Notations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Signatures</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> “Received” Stamp <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please explain): _____</p>
3.	<p>What is the date of this document? The Declaration of Independence</p>
4.	<p>Who is the author (or creator) of this document? The Representatives of the United States</p> <p>What is their position? What words does the author use to make their position known to the reader?</p> <p>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...</p>
5.	<p>Who is intended to read this? Do you think they read it?</p> <p>He (King George III)</p>

6. Key Information – Using the document, answer the questions that follow:

A. What is the author’s purpose for writing this document?

To declare independence from England and explain the reasons why.

B. What evidence helps you understand why it was written? (Choose a specific quote from the document)

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...

C. How is the concept of “natural rights” discussed in this document? (Choose a specific quote from the document)

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.

D. How are “natural rights” and the government connected? (Choose a specific quote from the document)

That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed

E. What are some grievances that the colonists express in the document?

1. 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.

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

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

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

5... For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

6...For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent.

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

F. Which grievances listed violate the colonists “natural rights”?

All

G. What were the colonists willing to give up by signing this document?

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.

Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Part of Speech	Definition
abolish	verb	to end
assent	verb	to agree
consent of the governed	noun	an agreement made by the people to establish a government and abide by its laws
deprive	verb	to take something away
derive	verb	to take
despotism	noun	a system of government where the ruler has unlimited power
dissolve	verb	to bring to an end
endow	verb	to be given something naturally
grievance	noun	a complaint
impel	verb	to urge
impose	impose	to establish by using authority or power
institute	verb	to establish
natural rights	noun	the belief that individuals are born with basic rights that cannot be taken away by governments
oppression	noun	the use of authority or power in a cruel or unjust manner
quarter	verb	to house
rectitude	noun	the quality or state of being correct
self-evident	adjective	obvious, having no need of proof
tyranny	noun	a government that abuses its power
tyrant	noun	a single ruler that possesses and abuses absolute government power
unalienable (inalienable) rights	noun	basic rights of the people that may not be taken away
usurpation	noun	the act of exercising power by force

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

This section addresses the following issues:

1. Natural Rights and the Declaration of Independence
2. Colonial Complaints identified in the Declaration of Independence

1. Natural Rights and the Declaration of Independence

There are three core themes found in the Declaration of Independence. It is a common misunderstanding that the Declaration of Independence formed a government. This concept is important because the Declaration of Independence focuses instead on what the colonists found to be unacceptable governance. These unacceptable governance practices fell into three broad categories:

Power was concentrated in one place (unitary government). The concentration of power contributed to the abuse of power. The form of government that created this concentration of power was going to be avoided for this reason when the colonists formed their own government.

For example, the Preamble includes the following phrase:

“...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. — ...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.”

The Preamble focuses on “natural rights philosophy”, the notion that there are certain rights that are inalienable, or God given. Because these rights are given by God, and not given by a government, any government or person cannot take them away. Natural rights supersede legal rights, those rights granted by governments. Government abused its power by denying the colonists their natural rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Natural rights are those rights that belong to a person simply because they exist. Natural rights are also understood to be inalienable rights because they are God given. Rights given by God may not be taken away by the government.

There is a relationship between natural rights and the role of government. In the same way that government can deny the people their natural rights, so too can government protect natural rights. Governments are created by people, who can create government structures that protect natural rights. The people consent to how they are governed because they wish for a government that will protect their natural rights; if government fails to protect the peoples’ natural rights, the people have the right to change the government. In extreme cases, the people have the right to abolish the government if their natural rights are not being protected. Once that government is abolished, the people will then create a new government that protects their natural rights. The Preamble to the Declaration of Independence explains the peoples’ natural rights and the role that government plays in guaranteeing those rights.

The preamble is based largely on the ideas of John Locke, a 17th century English philosopher whose work *The Second Treatise of Civil Government* includes the notion that government is based on the principle of “consent of the governed”. Locke argued that legitimate governments function based on the people’s consent. The form of government was less important than the government’s actions; the government earned the people’s consent provided that it protected the people’s “life, liberty and property”.

The preamble states that it was the *form* of government (unitary, or centralized power) that rendered it impossible for the colonists to enjoy their “life, liberty and pursuit of happiness”, which justified their right to “alter or abolish” the government (“...that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends,

it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it”). Jefferson also makes it known, later in the preamble, that King George III shares the blame for the government failing to insure core guarantees to the people (“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.”). Together, the preamble makes clear that both the form and the head of government have not earned the people’s consent. In many respects, the preamble foreshadows that the first sovereign government that the colonists would form would not be a unitary government, and would exclude King George III.

2. Placeholder

The bulk of the *Declaration of Independence* is devoted to enumerating the colonists’ complaints about King George III and his abuse of power. The preamble ends with “let facts be submitted to a candid world”. The phrase indicates that the *Declaration of Independence* was not written *to* King George III, but rather *about* King George III. This explains why every complaint is written in the third person (“he”) and not the second person (“you”).

The listing of complaints may also be understood as a foreshadowing device for the way that the colonists formed their future governments and the way that they articulated fundamental individual rights.

Examples include:

Complaint	Meaning	Later Action	Document
He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.	He has refused to enforce laws	Checks and balances system insures that the chief executive enforces the laws	U.S. Constitution
He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance	He has forbidden the legislature to pass laws	Separation of powers system insures that the legislature has the right to enact laws	U.S. Constitution
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 refused to pass laws that would benefit particular states He expects that states will forfeit their right of representation	Federal system where the states are represented in the national legislature, and the states have the power to pass laws of particular importance to the people living in those states	Articles of Confederation U.S. Constitution
He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.	He “fired” legislatures if those legislatures did not do what he wanted them to do.	The people elect the national legislature either directly or indirectly, through their state legislatures.	Articles of Confederation U.S. Constitution
He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records	He made it difficult for the colonists to participate in governance	State-centered government where the primary power of government was held at the state level Federal system where the states are represented in the national legislature and retain their own sovereignty	Articles of Confederation U.S. Constitution
He has obstructed the	He has forbidden laws to be	Separation of powers system	U.S. Constitution

Complaint	Meaning	Later Action	Document
Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.	passed that establish judiciary powers	insures that the legislature has the right to enact laws	
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 denied judges their independence to make decisions based on case facts and the law alone	Separation of powers system insures judicial independence	U.S. Constitution
He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.	He has forced persons to house military personnel	Guarantee that the people will not be forced to house military personnel except in wartime	U.S. Bill of Rights/Third Amendment “No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.”
For imposing taxes on us without our Consent	Taxed citizens without the citizens giving their approval	Creation of a national legislature with the power to tax the people; each state is represented in the national legislature (Congress). Members of Congress are elected by the people either directly, or through the state legislatures (Direct election of Senators created with the 17 th amendment in 1913;	U.S. Constitution/Article I, Section 7 (“all bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives”) and Article I, Section 8 (“Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes”)
For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury	Denying those accuse of crimes jury trials under circumstances that the colonists deemed appropriate	Guarantee of jury trials	U.S. Bill of Rights/Seventh Amendment “In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved...”
He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.	Refused to protect the colonists from foreign aggression on colonial lands	Guarantee that the federal government would protect states threatened with violence	U.S. Constitution/ Article IV, Section 4: “The United States shall protect each of them (states) against Invasion; and...against domestic violence.