



# The Declaration of Independence

## Sources & Meaning

# Standard:

- **SSCG 2**: The student will analyze the natural rights philosophy and the nature of government expressed in the Declaration of Independence.
- a. Compare and contrast the Declaration of Independence and the Social Contract Theory.
- b. Evaluate the Declaration of Independence as a persuasive argument

# Essential Question

- How are natural rights and the nature of government expressed in the Declaration of Independence?

# Warm Up:

- **As we're watching the music video "It's too late to Apologize" by Soomo Publishing, answer the follow Warm-Up Question in your journal**
  - **-What do you remember about the events that led to the signing of the Declaration of Independence?**

Kahoot.it

- Its time to kahootit!

# Declaration of Independence

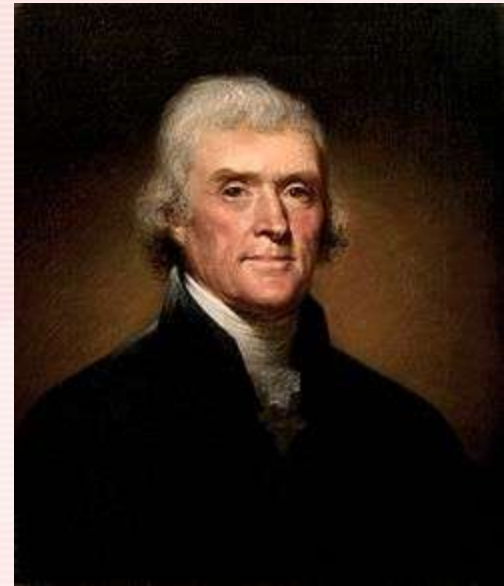
- How difficult is the language of the Declaration of Independence?
- Is it still relevant today?





## Declaration of Independence--Purpose

- 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.



# Declaration of Independence—Statement of Rights

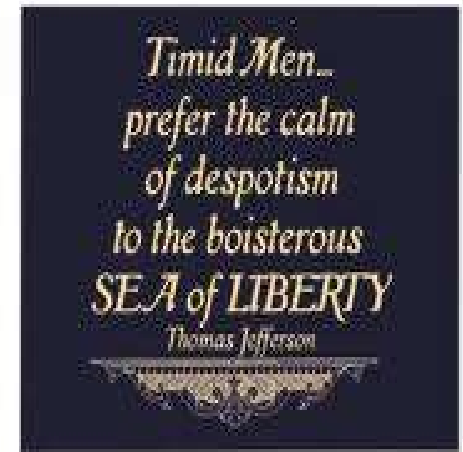
- We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,
- that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,
- that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.
- That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just 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.





# Declaration of Independence—Violation of Rights

- 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.



# Declaration of Independence—Evidence

- The remainder of the Declaration is a “laundry list” of specific grievances against England and King George:
  - Dissolving colonial governments and limiting law-making
  - Sending armies to occupy the colonies
  - Cutting off trade with countries other than England
  - Lack of representation in Parliament
  - Controlling and limiting judicial appointments and operation of courts
  - Putting military authority above civilian
  - Taxes without colonial consent
  - Impressment into military service against the colonies
  - Exciting insurrection and stirring up “the Indian savages”
- What of slavery?
- Jefferson’s original draft included an scathing indictment of the slave trade, and laid the blame at the feet of King George III



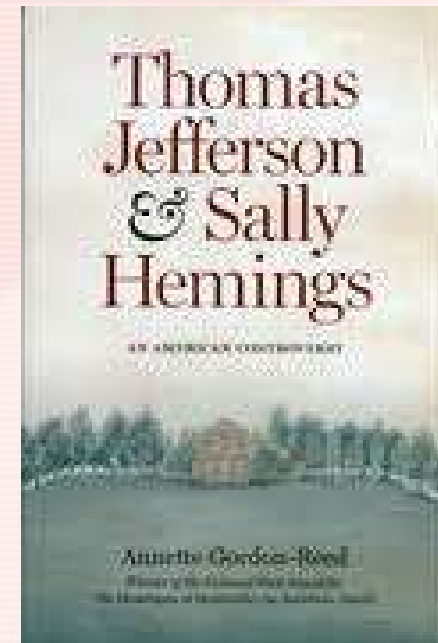
# Jefferson's Original Slavery Clause

- He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither.
- This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of INFIDEL Powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain.



# Jefferson's Ownership of Slaves

- Can slave ownership be reconciled with “all men are created equal?”
- “Hypocrisy” is the easy answer, but it is not entirely fair.
  - Can't wipe out a centuries-old system that is the foundation of much of the national economy with the stroke of a pen.
  - Paternalism (they're children)
  - Encumbered property—Jefferson's creditors had claims on his property, including slaves
  - Practical—needed southern states' support to win Revolution
  - The Founders were great men, but far from perfect
- Northwest Ordinance of 1787—a step toward recognizing equality of men (banned slavery in NW Territory)





# Declaration of Independence--Conclusion

- \*\*\* 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 levy 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.



## For Further Study

- **“The American Ideal of 1776”** by Hamilton Abert Long, available online at:  
<http://lexrex.com/enlightened/AmericanIdeal/Index.html>
- 12 Principles of Government (based largely on Judeo-Christian tradition)
- Conservative point of view
- Reflects fear of government becoming too powerful
- Limited Government
- Limited view of “equality of man” (equal under law/under God; political rights)
- Decentralization (federalism)—sharing of power between national and state governments
- Republic vs. Democracy—We are the former!!

# Summing it all up

- In your journals, answer the following;
  - 1. What are the similarities and differences of the Declaration of Independence and the Social Contract Theory?
  - 2. Do you consider the Declaration of Independence to be a persuasive argument? Why or why not?
  - 3. Answer Essential Question: How are natural rights and the nature of government expressed in the Declaration of Independence?