

Moving Toward Independence

Essential Question

Why did the American colonies choose to declare independence?

Reading Guide

Content Vocabulary

petition (p. 140) preamble (p. 142)

Academic Vocabulary

debate (p. 141) status (p. 142)

Key People and Events

Second Continental Congress (p. 139)

Continental Army (p. 139)

Olive Branch Petition (p. 140)

Thomas Paine (p. 140)

Common Sense (p. 140)

Declaration of Independence (p. 141)

Reading Strategy

Taking Notes As you read, describe the parts of the Declaration of Independence. Use a diagram like the one below.

Declaration of Independence

Part 1:



Part 2:



Part 3:



Part 4:

American Diary

Colonists debated the wisdom of pursuing peace or declaring independence from Britain. Thomas Paine wrote: "I have heard it asserted by some, that as America has flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness. . . . Nothing can be more [false]. . . . We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat. . . . A government of our own is our natural right."

—from *Common Sense*

The Declaration of Independence is presented to the Second Continental Congress.

Colonial Leaders Emerge

Main Idea When the Second Continental Congress met for the first time, many leaders were not yet ready to call for independence.

History and You Do newspapers, books, or television news programs affect your opinion on important issues? Read to learn how a pamphlet by Thomas Paine influenced colonial opinion.

On May 10, 1775, the **Second Continental Congress** assembled for the first time. However, many delegates were not yet prepared to break away from Great Britain. It would be another year before John Adams would ask Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence.

The delegates to the Second Continental Congress included some of the greatest political leaders in America. Among those attending were John and Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and George Washington—all delegates to the First Continental Congress held in 1774. Several distinguished new delegates came as well.

Benjamin Franklin, one of the most respected men in the colonies, had been an influential member of the Pennsylvania legislature. In 1765, during the Stamp Act crisis, he represented the colonies in London and helped secure the repeal of the act.

John Hancock of Massachusetts was a wealthy merchant. He funded many Patriot groups, including the Sons of Liberty. The delegates chose Hancock as president of the Second Continental Congress.

Thomas Jefferson, only 32, had already earned a reputation as a brilliant thinker and writer. He served in the Virginia legislature.

The Second Continental Congress began to govern the colonies. It authorized the printing of money and set up a post office with Franklin in charge. It established committees to communicate with Native Americans and with other countries. Most important, the Congress created the **Continental Army** to fight against Britain in a more organized way than the colonial militias could. On John Adams's recommendation, the Congress unanimously chose George Washington to be the army's commander.

Primary Source Creating the Declaration

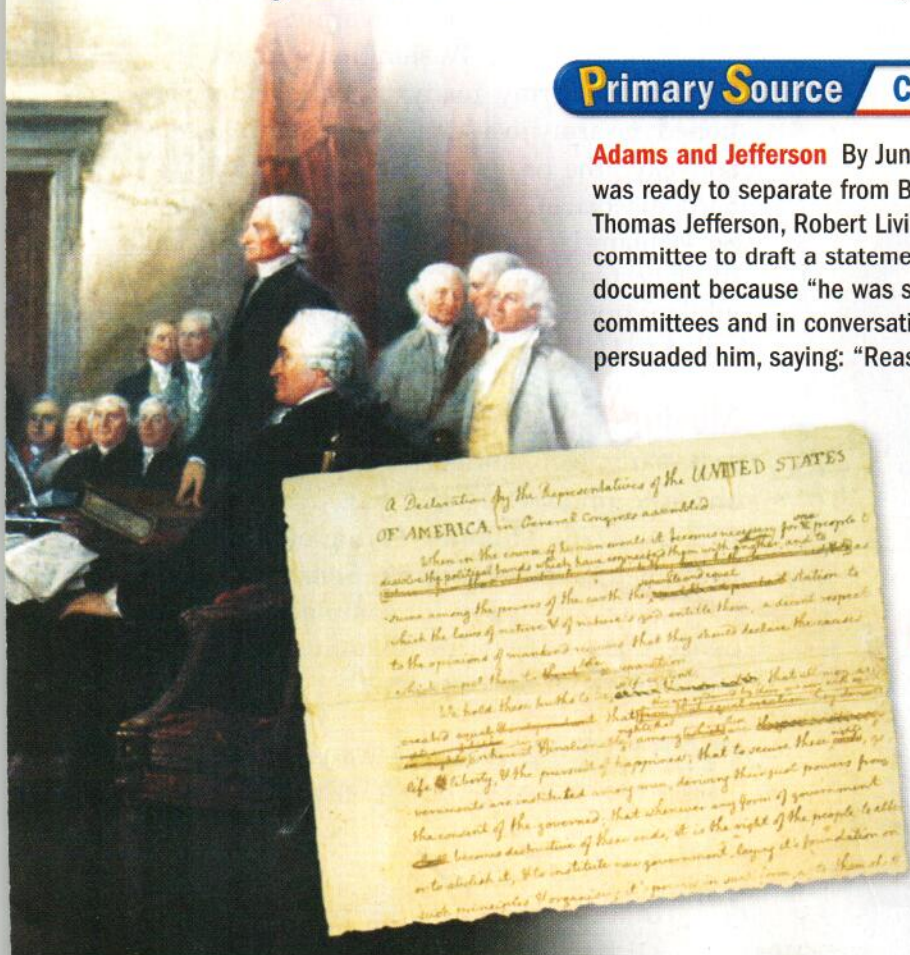
Adams and Jefferson By June 1776, the Second Continental Congress was ready to separate from Britain. John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman formed the committee to draft a statement. Adams asked Jefferson to write the document because "he was so prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committees and in conversation." Jefferson was reluctant, but Adams persuaded him, saying: "Reason first—You are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second—I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third—you can write ten times better than I can."

—from *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*

◀ Early draft of the Declaration of Independence

Critical Thinking

Explaining What were Adams's reasons for wanting Jefferson to draft the Declaration of Independence?

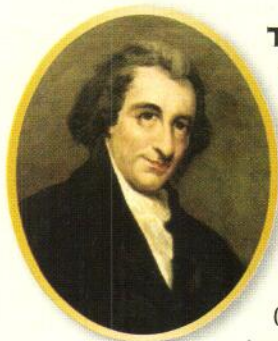


YOU DECIDE

Independence: Yes or No?

Many Americans were uncertain whether independence was the correct course for the colonies. After Americans and British troops had fought, however, other colonists felt strongly that independence should be their goal.

In 1776 Thomas Paine made an impassioned appeal for independence in his pamphlet *Common Sense*:



THOMAS PAINE

"Every thing that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'tis time to part."

Other Americans did not want to break away from Britain. Colonists who felt a strong sense of loyalty to the king were called Loyalists. They believed British law should be upheld.

Loyalist Charles Inglis argued against going to war with Britain, saying:

CHARLES INGLIS

"Ruthless war, with all its aggravated horrors, will ravage our once happy land—our seacoasts and ports will be ruined, and our ships taken. Torrents of blood will be spilt, and thousands reduced to beggary and wretchedness."



DBQ Document-Based Questions

- Analyzing** What is Paine's argument in favor of independence?
- Identifying** What did Inglis believe would result from war with Britain?

After Washington left to take charge of the forces in Boston, the delegates offered Britain one last chance to avoid war. The Congress sent a **petition**, or formal request, to George III. Called the **Olive Branch Petition**, it assured the king of the colonists' desire for peace and asked him to protect the colonists' rights. George III refused to receive the Olive Branch Petition. Instead he prepared for war, hiring more than 30,000 German troops to fight beside British troops.

The Colonies Take the Offensive

Meanwhile the Congress learned that British troops in what is now Canada were planning to invade New York. The Americans decided to strike first. Marching north from Fort Ticonderoga, a Patriot force captured Montreal. An American attack on Quebec led by Benedict Arnold failed, however.

Washington reached Boston in July 1775, a few weeks after the Battle of Bunker Hill. While he found the size of the militia growing every day, Washington realized that the members lacked discipline, organization, and leadership. He began the hard work of shaping these armed civilians into an army.

By March 1776, Washington judged the Continental Army ready to fight. He positioned the army in a semicircle around Boston and gave the order for its cannons to bombard the British forces. The redcoats, under Sir William Howe, hurriedly withdrew from the city. On March 17, Washington led his jubilant troops into Boston. The British troops sailed to Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Moving Toward Independence

In early 1776, support for the position of absolute independence was growing. In January 1776, **Thomas Paine** published a pamphlet called **Common Sense**. In bold language, Paine called for complete independence. *Common Sense* greatly influenced opinion throughout the colonies.

Reading Check **Explaining** What was the significance of the Olive Branch Petition?

The Colonies Declare Independence

Main Idea The Declaration of Independence announced the birth of a new nation, committing Americans to a struggle for independence.

History and You How do you celebrate the Fourth of July? Read to learn how Americans celebrated at the reading of the Declaration of Independence.

At the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, the meeting hall was filled with spirited discussion, or **debate**: Should the colonies declare themselves an independent nation or stay under British rule? Virginia's Richard Henry Lee proposed a bold resolution:

PRIMARY SOURCE

"That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States . . . and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

—Richard Henry Lee, resolution for independence

The Debate Over Independence

Congress debated Lee's resolution. Some delegates thought the colonies were not ready to form a separate nation. Others argued that war had already begun. Still others feared Britain's power to crush the rebellion.

As they debated, the Congress chose a committee to draft a **Declaration of Independence**. Jefferson was selected to write the declaration. Jefferson drew some ideas from English philosopher John Locke in his arguments for freedom. Locke wrote that people were born with certain natural rights to life, liberty, and property; that people formed governments to protect these rights; and that a government interfering with these rights might rightfully be overthrown.

On July 2, 1776, the Congress finally voted on Lee's resolution for independence. Twelve colonies voted for it. New York did not vote but later announced its support. Congress then took up Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence, which they approved with some changes on July 4, 1776.

Primary Source Independence Day

"The Second Day of July 1776, will be the most memorable [day], in the History of America. . . . It ought to be solemnized with Pomp and Parade, with Shews [shows], Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other from this Time forward forever more."

— John Adams, in a letter to his wife Abigail

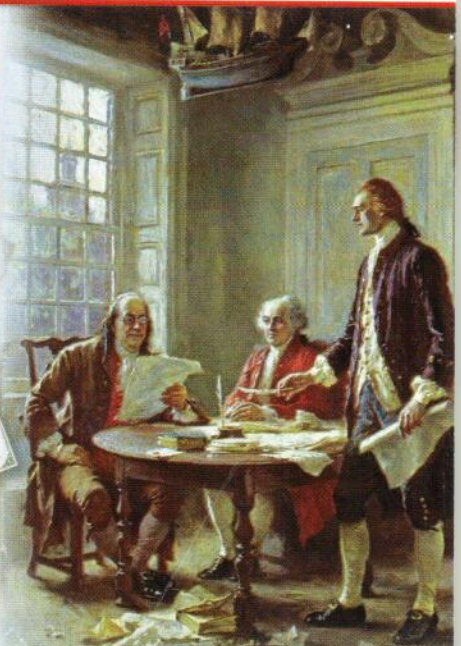


Advertisement for railroad transportation to Fourth of July celebration, 1876



◀ A Fourth of July celebration in New York in the early 1800s

▶ The committee assigned to draft the Declaration: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams



A Day to Celebrate John Adams expected the Second Continental Congress's vote for independence on July 2, 1776, to be celebrated as a great national holiday. Instead, it was the date of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence that has come to be celebrated as Independence Day.

Critical Thinking

Analyzing How has Independence Day come to be celebrated?

John Hancock was the first to sign. Hancock remarked that he wrote his name large enough for King George to read it without his glasses. Eventually 56 delegates signed the paper announcing the birth of the United States.

Copies of the Declaration went out to the newly declared states. Washington had it read to his troops on July 9. In Worcester, Massachusetts, the reading of the Declaration of Independence was followed by “repeated [cheers], firing of musketry and cannon, bonfires, and other demonstrations of joy.”

The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration has four major sections. It includes a **preamble**, or introduction, which states that people who wish to form a new country should explain their reasons for doing so. The next sections list the rights the colonists believed they should have and their complaints against Britain. The final section proclaims the existence of the new nation.

The Declaration of Independence states what Jefferson and many Americans thought were universal principles. It begins by describing traditional English rights:

PRIMARY SOURCE

“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.”

—Thomas Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*

The Declaration states that government exists to protect these rights. If it does not, “it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it and to institute new Government.” The Declaration goes on to list grievances against the king and Parliament. These include “cutting off our trade with all parts of the world” and “imposing taxes on us without our consent.” Americans had “Petitioned for Redress” of these grievances. These petitions, however, were ignored or rejected by Britain.

The Declaration ends by announcing America’s new **status**, or position. Now pledging “to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor,” the Americans declared themselves a new nation.

 **Reading Check** **Summarizing** According to John Locke, what is the purpose of government?

Section 4 Review

History ONLINE
Study Central™ To review this section, go to glencoe.com.

Vocabulary

- Use each of these terms in a sentence that will help explain its meaning: **petition**, **debate**, **preamble**, **status**.

Main Ideas

- Explaining** What actions did the Second Continental Congress take to begin governing the colonies?
- Summarizing** What grievances against King George III were included in the Declaration of Independence?

Critical Thinking

- Interpreting** Reread the Primary Source quote from the Declaration of Independence above. Rewrite this quote in your own words, and explain its significance.
- Organizing Information** Using a diagram like the one below, describe each leader’s role in the movement toward independence.

Leader	Role
Benjamin Franklin	→
John Hancock	→
Thomas Jefferson	→
George Washington	→

- Expository Writing** Prepare a help-wanted ad to locate a person who is qualified to write the Declaration of Independence. Describe the responsibilities of the job as well as the experience and character traits needed.

Answer the Essential Question

- Why did the American colonies choose to declare independence?