Week 2 – The Declaration of Independence



Proverbs 29:2 "When the righteous people rule the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule the people mourn."

Lesson 1

Write the definitions from the glossary for the following vocabulary terms.

1. pillaged

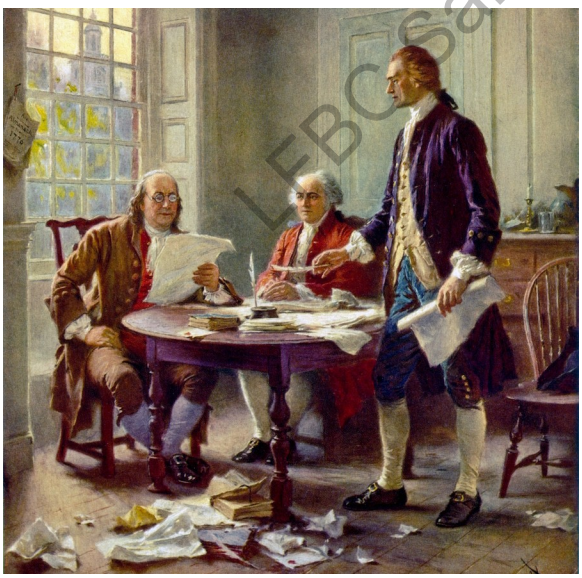
2. abject

3. cogency

Read the following text for good understanding.

Independence Day

The United States became an independent nation on July 4, 1776. The colonies had been resisting British tyranny by force for over a year. It was becoming increasingly clear that there was no other option left for solving the problems with Great Britain.



Ben Franklin, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson prepare the Declaration of Independence

Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and Robert Livingston were assigned to write a Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson and each of the other members of the committee would go over each word. Then the entire document would be reviewed by the whole Congress.



Presentation of the Declaration of Independence – painting by John Trumbull

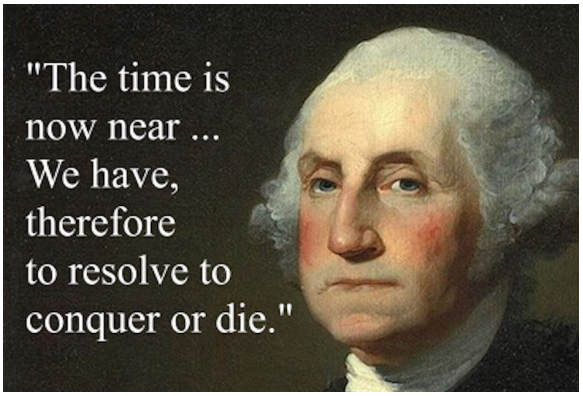
This Declaration was designed to declare independence and explain to the American people and the rest of the world the reasons this was necessary.

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The Influence of The Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence and the concepts it presents have inspired many to the love of liberty.

George Washington said in 1776,

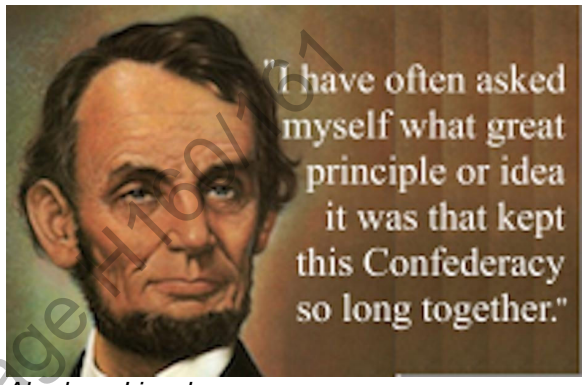


George Washington

> The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves, whether they are to have any property they can call their own; whether their houses and farms are to be pillaged and destroyed, and themselves consigned to a state of wretchedness from which no human efforts will deliver them. The fate of unborn millions will now depend, under God, on the courage and conduct of this army. Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves only the choice of brave resistance, or the most abject submission. We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die.

Abraham Lincoln said in 1861,

> I have often asked myself what great principle or idea it was that kept this Confederacy so long together. It was not the mere matter of separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world, for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weights would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance. This is the sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence.



Abraham Lincoln

> If the American Revolution had produced nothing but the Declaration of Independence, it would have been worthwhile … The beauty and cogency of the preamble, reaching back to remotest antiquity and forward to an indefinite future, having lifted the hearts of millions of men and will continue to do … These words are more revolutionary than anything written by Robespierre, Marx, or Lenin, more explosive than the atom, a continual challenge to ourselves as well as an inspiration to the oppressed of all the world.
>
> — Samuel Eliot Morrison (1965)

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The Appeal to God

The Congress then lists some basic powers of a nation:

> 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.

The Declaration closes with an appeal to God for aid:

> 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.

Since God's Word was being used to define government and a new nation was being formed to fulfill the Biblical role of government, they felt free to ask God for help.

Samuel Adams clearly understood the Biblical nature of government being dealt with in the Declaration. He made this statement on the day the Declaration was signed:

> We have this day restored the Sovereign to whom all men ought to be obedient. He reigns in Heaven and from the rising to the setting of the sun, let His Kingdom come.

The 56 Signers



signers of the Declaration of Independence

Those who signed the Declaration of Independence became particular targets for the British Army. Nine fought and died in the war; 12 had their homes burned by the British; five were arrested by the British; 17 had their property confiscated.



John Hancock signing the Declaration of Independence

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Listing.

4. List in order the three things the signers of the Declaration of Independence pledged to each other.

5. For what two reasons did the colonists feel free to ask God for help?

Read the following text for good understanding.

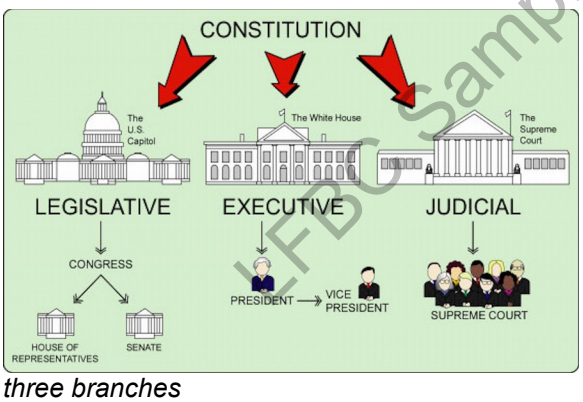
U.S. Constitution: Seven Articles



Great Seal of the United States

The Preamble is followed by seven "Articles," each outlining the powers of, and limitations upon, the Federal government.

There are three branches of the federal government:



three branches

- the legislative branch --- The main institution of the legislative branch is the United States Congress.
- the executive branch --- The President of the United States is the Chief Executive officer of the United States and oversees the departments in the executive branch of the federal government.
- the judicial branch --- The judicial branch of government deals with the federal courts.

The top court in the country is the United States Supreme Court. There are many districts of federal courts in the United States. The first three articles of the Constitution deal with the three main branches of government.

Article I

Article I discusses the legislative powers of a bicameral legislature called the United States Congress. There are ten sections to Article I.

The first section divides the Congress into a Senate and House of Representatives.

Section 2 lists the qualifications for election to the House, describes apportionment for the purpose of electing house members, grants the House the power of impeachment and the right to elect its own speaker. Congressmen or Members of Congress (the terms applied to members of the House of Representatives) must be at least 25 years of age, have been a citizen of the United States at least seven years, and reside in the state he represents. Eventually the number of the House members would be established at 435.

Section 3 describes the qualifications and powers of the Senate. Each state is represented by two Senators. Senators must be at least 30 years of age, reside in the state which selects them, and have been citizens of the United States for at least nine years. The Vice-President of the United States serves as the head of the Senate. He may vote only to cast a tie-breaking vote in the case of a tie vote. The Senate has the power to try all impeachments.

Section 4 deals with the timing and regulation of elections and requires Congress to assemble at least once each year.

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