

ANSWER KEY

LESSON 1

The Declaration of Independence

Handout B: Key Excerpts Version 1

1. Inalienable rights come from God or from Nature, and everyone is born with them. Because they are “inalienable,” they cannot be taken away with consent.
2. According to the document: rights come from the Creator.
3. The purpose of government is to secure inalienable rights and to protect the happiness and safety of the people.
4. Government gets its power through the consent of the governed.
5. The powers are limited. The people, all of whom are born with an equality of rights, delegate limited powers to government to ensure protection of those rights. This is a key part of the social contract.
6. Government should be changed when it damages, rather than protects, peoples’ rights.
7. Many members of the Continental Congress believed slavery to be a great injustice. Even some of those who owned slaves feared African Americans if there for immediate emancipation.
8. The fact that many of them owned slaves does not make the ideals wrong or less important. The Declaration’s ideals were championed by abolitionists and gave life to the fight to end slavery.

Handout C: Structure of the Declaration

1. Introduction – We care about what the rest of the world thinks about us, so we’re going to explain why we are declaring independence from England.
2. Preamble – People are all born with certain rights that cannot be taken away. All human beings have inalienable rights, because “all men are created equal” and there are no natural rulers among men. When government repeatedly fails to protect these rights, people have the right and

duty to end that government and make a new one.

3. Indictment – King George III has violated the colonists’ rights in these ways, and, therefore, a revolution is justified.
4. Denunciation – The colonists have been let down by their “British brethren” – the people of England – who have stood by and permitted the government to be oppressive. Further, the colonists have tried many times to reconcile with England, but it has not worked.
5. Conclusion – The colonies are and should be independent states, no longer part of England. They can do all things free states do. The Declaration announces the formation of a new social compact and hence a people. This is why we celebrate the birthday of America on the day and year in which the Declaration was issued. The 13 colonies were a new, united people, independent of England.
6. Signatures – Fifty-six people signed their name according to their states to demonstrate that they were taking responsibility for the content of the Declaration.

Handout D: The Declaration, the Founders, and Slavery Versions 1 and 2

1. Response: Accept reasoned answers

Handout F: Comparing the Second Treatise of Civil Government to the Declaration of Independence Version 1 and 2

1. The ideas and principles in both documents include equality, liberty, freedom, and property.
2. Answers as follows:
 - a. In the *Second Treatise*, the natural condition of mankind is a state of perfect freedom to protect his life, liberty, and estate. In the Declaration, all men are created equal and are endowed with certain unalienable rights including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
 - b. The purpose of government is to preserve the rights of the people.
 - c. The people need to accept the law under the government in order for it to be just.