

# Handout A: Key Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

## Directions:

As you listen to the oral reading of the key excerpts below, underline words or phrases that refer to individual rights, democracy, freedom, and self-government.

## Document: Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

## Source:

[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/declare.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp)

Text
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.
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.

## Review Questions:

1. What is the name of this document and what is its purpose?
2. What argument is being made in this document?
3. Who is the audience for the document?
4. Give at least two examples of references to natural rights, self-rule, or other Enlightenment ideals.
5. Describe the overall tone of the document using no more than three words.