

Declaration of Independence Excerpts

Teacher Read-Aloud Script

Text and Thinking Prompts

Vocabulary:

The following list of vocabulary definitions are provided so that you can pre-teach, define as you read, or utilize after reading with your students. The words are bolded in the script text.

Self-evident	not needing to be proven, obvious
Unalienable	not able to be taken away
Consent of the governed	the power of government comes from the people
Alter or abolish	change or get rid of

A long train of abuses and usurpations –the King has taken power where he did not have it and has used his power to hurt the colonies.

Absolved from all allegiance the British crown –The colonies are removing their ties with Britain and will not be connected to the British government anymore.

Before reading, display for students the Declaration of Independence from the teacher slide deck. Ask students what they see. Prompt students to record their responses on their See Think Wonder handout.

Then, tell students you are going to read aloud some parts of this document they see. It is very important to read this document with inflection and feeling. This document is far above the reading level of most students, so you want the students to “feel” the document more than understand it.

Say: “In this section of the Declaration, the authors were explaining the causes for separating from Great Britain and becoming an independent nation.”

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

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.

Stop and ask: “What reasons do the authors give for separating from Great Britain?” Prompt students to record ideas and thoughts on their See Think Wonder worksheet.

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.

To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

Stop and say: “In this section of the Declaration, the authors listed grievances or complaints against King George III of Great Britain and his government. What are some of those complaints?” Prompt students to record thoughts and ideas on their See Think Wonder worksheet.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That 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.

Say: “ In this section, the authors state that they are free and independent from Great Britain. What final thoughts and ideas can you add to your See Think Wonder worksheet?”

