

## Declaration of Independence Assignment

The Declaration of Independence is one of the more well-known documents of American history. The purpose of the Declaration was to convince Americans and Europeans that what seemed to be an irrational action—declaring independence from England—was in fact the only rational action available to Americans.

In the introduction, Jefferson establishes the philosophical basis for his argument, that "all people are created equal and enjoy certain unalienable rights."

Jefferson then establishes the relationship between people and their government. People form governments to protect their rights, and therefore governments derive their power from the people. The people retain the power to, if necessary, replace the government if rights are not being protected.

Jefferson then lists the charges against the King.

As a result of these events Jefferson establishes independence as a solution, which he then declares.

### Your Assignment:

1. Read your copy of The Declaration of Independence.
2. Then, read the rough draft of the Declaration at <http://www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/rough.htm>. Notice the changes that were made.
3. Answer the following:
  - \* How was the argument strengthened with the changes made?
  - \* Why is the Declaration an important document in American history?
  - \* Do you believe the Declaration is a successful document? Why/why not?
  - \* Have you ever wished to declaration your independence from something? What? Why?
4. If you want to read about the background of the document, go here: <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html>