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Grade level: 8


Allow students, in groups or individually, to examine the document located at the above link while answering the questions below in order. The questions are designed to guide students into a deeper analysis of the source and sharpen associated cognitive skills.

Level I: Description

1. What is the date of the broadside?
2. What markings indicate its authenticity?
3. Who printed the document?

Level II: Interpretation

1. Why was it urgent to communicate the Declaration of Independence to Washington and his troops? Was a broadside a practical means?
2. If you had been John Dunlap, would you have risked your life for publishing it?
3. Between 100 and 200 broadside copies were printed. Why do you think more copies were not printed?

Level III: Analysis

1. How do you think the army felt when the document was read to them? Do you think it encouraged them or worried them to be on the brink of war?
2. What does the apparent condition of the fragment of the broadside tell you about Washington? Was it important to him, why or why not?
3. What conversations do you think this document inspired in the army camp? What thoughts do you think soldiers shared?
IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776.

A DECLARATION
BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
IN GENERAL CONGRESS ASSEMBLED.

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 for 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 from time to time seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient Causes; and accordingly all Experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the Forms to which they are accustomed. 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, and to provide new Guards for their future Security. Such has been the patience of these Colonies; and such is now the Necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The History of the present King of Great-Britain is a History of repeated Injuries and Usurpations, all having in direct Object the Establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid World.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing Importance, unless suspended in their Operation till his Assent should be obtained; and while so suspending, he has callously neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the Accommodation of large Districts of People, unless those People would relinquish the Right of Representation in the Legislature, a Right inseparable to them, and dear to Tyrants only.

He has called together Legislative Bodies at Places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the Depository of their public Records, for the sole Purpose of tarring them into Compliance with his Measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly Firmness his Invasion on the Rights of the People.

He has refused for a long Time, after such Dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the meantime exposed to all the Hazards of Invasion from without, and Convulsions within.

He has endeavored to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; Refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judicial Powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the Tenure of their Offices, and the Amount and Payment of their Salaries.

He has kept among us, in Times of Peace, Standing Armies, without the Consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a Jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our Laws; giving their Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

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 in foreign Parts of their Domains:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighboring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary Government, and enlarging its Boundaries at our Expence:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For stopping our Ports, and voiding our Charters, and declaring themselves invested with Power tolegislate for us in all Cases whatsoever.

For giving us an Armies for theutters of their Trade, and destroying the Lives of our People.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burn't our Towns, and destroyed the Lives of our People.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the Executioners of their Friends and Brethren, or to fall on their own Swords, under Colour of our Laws.

But we have appealed to the World for Redress of these Miseries, which we so clearly declare and justify.

He is, at this Time, transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries, to compleat the Works of Death, Destruction, and Tyranny already begun with Circumstances of Cruelty and Perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous Ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized Nation.

In every Stage of these Oppressions, We have petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms; Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose Character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the Ruler of a free People.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us.

We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here.

We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in our sight.

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