Name:

Date:

School:

Facilitator:

4.02 Notes Guide

“Declaring Independence”

Answer the 4.02 Notes Guide as you review the lesson.

Introduction:

Which patriot do you think spoke the words quoted above the painting entitled “Declaration of Independence?”

What do you think he meant by this statement?

Is this statement found in any important document?

Ideas Behind the Independence

The struggle for power and victory between the American colonists and Great Britain was now underway on the battlefield; however, there was a deeper struggle taking place among Americans concerning the role of government in the lives of citizens.

Military conflicts between the American colonists and British forces amplified the independent fervor amongst many colonists. Soon the colonists would no longer simply be fighting for representation in a British Parliament or for the British King to listen to their grievances, but for freedom and the right to start a new country governed by free men.

Early English Documents

Colonists looked to early  documents as the foundation of their beliefs concerning the balance between the rights of citizens and the need for government and social order.

 (1215) - English barons forced King John to sign a charter guaranteeing certain civil and political freedoms that eventually protected the rights of all Englishmen.

 (1689) - Prohibited the king from suspending or passing laws and from raising taxes without Parliament’s consent, guaranteed the right to a fair and speedy trial, and prohibited cruel and unusual punishment.

Common Sense

One of the most influential documents on American colonists concerning struggles with the British was the a 47-page pamphlet written by Thomas Paine in January 1776.

used common everyday language that was easy to understand to reach over 150,000 colonists. 500,000 copies were sold within a year.

Common Sense convinced American colonists, even those who had favored a peaceful settlement with the British, that independence was not only acceptable, but absolutely necessary.

Thomas Paine

Inspired by the philosophy of freedom and by the natural-rights thinking of the Enlightenment, Thomas Paine moved from England to North America to join the Americans’ struggle for independence.

Enlightenment

Patriot leaders were influenced by political ideas of the  or Age of Reason, a late 17th-century and 18th-century movement that emphasized science and reason as keys to improving society.

Charles de declared that power should not be concentrated in the hands of any one individual. He recommended among executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

Jean-Jacques stated that society should be ruled by the “” of the people.

proclaimed the right of the people to change a government that does not protect natural rights of life, liberty and property.

Colonial leaders began to absorb the ideas of the Enlightenment philosophers and apply them before, during, and after the Revolution as they were creating a new government.

Declaring Independence

John Locke’s theory of  stated that citizens have the right to revolt and to replace their government if it does not protect their natural rights. Jefferson and other Patriot leaders used Locke’s ideas as the basis of their argument to cut colonial ties with Great Britain and finally declare independence from our “Mother Country.”

Declaring Independence could not be taken lightly. The act was considered treason and rebellion with a penalty of death for those who participated in the act.

Writing the Declaration of Independence

In June 1776, after fighting the British for over a year, the Second Continental Congress appointed a committee to draft a to state the reasons for separation and independence from Great Britain.

 (lawyer, planter, and future president) was chosen as the main author on a committee that included:  (Boston lawyer and future president),  (judge from Connecticut), Robert Livingston (wealthy New York lawyer), and  (inventor, printer, writer, and statesman).

The Declaration of Independence

1. The introduction, or preamble, explained the purpose of the Declaration.

2. A declaration of rights explained the political ideas, like Locke’s natural rights, on which the document was based. Jefferson’s words include: “” and “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

3. A list of  against the British king and his establishment of “absolute Tyranny.”

4. A “Resolution of Independence” was the final section in which Jefferson stated, “these United Colonies are…and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States.”

The Principles of the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence established the right of property-owning men to live independently and choose their government.

Signing the Declaration of Independence

On , the Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, which formally declared the colonist's independence from British authority. It was a crucial step in the Revolutionary War and in the founding principles on which the new nation’s government and society would rest.