

Declaration of Independence Examination

Name: _____

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.

Step 1: Translate (in your own words) each line of the beginning of the Declaration here.

Step 2: Answer the following questions.

1. What underlying beliefs must the founders have had in order to write the first three lines? What Enlightenment ideas are embedded in the document? List all underlying beliefs/ideas in bullet points.
2. This document is later used in arguments over slavery, Civil Rights and womens' rights. What line do you think was used in these arguments, and why?
3. List 3 of the grievances that America had with the British (see longer copy of the Declaration).
4. Do you think the Americans had strong enough reasons to break off from Britain? Why or why not? Quote a specific line (or two) from the document to support your point.