**Declaration of Independence**

**Thomas Jefferson**

As you read the text, consider how the author develops an argument for independence that reflects his perspective on the nature and purpose of government. Try to identify the evidence he uses to support his argument. Think about how Jefferson defines rights and how government relates to those rights.

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| Second Continental Congress, July 4, 1776  In Congress, July 4, 1776.  **The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,**  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. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, 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 patient sufferance 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 when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them….  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….  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 . . . | Use the space below each paragraph to rewrite what Jefferson is saying in your own words.  **Academic Vocabulary**  Find the phrase “Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” in this paragraph. Use context clues within the text to determine what Jefferson means.  **Source Analysis**  Underline the phrase in this paragraph that explains why Jefferson wrote this document.  **Source Analysis**  Underline the characteristic of government Jefferson mentions here.  **Source Analysis**  According to Jefferson, under what conditions are the people justified in throwing off a government?  **Source Analysis**  How does Jefferson use these grievances as evidence to support his claim? |