

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Interrogating the Sources: Editing the Declaration



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INTERROGATING THE SOURCES: EDITING THE DECLARATION

Introduction

The Second Continental Congress named a committee of five representatives in June of 1776. The committee was to draft an official declaration of separation from Great Britain. Thomas Jefferson did most of the writing, but the others had edits. Then the Continental Congress also had edits. **Why are the edits to the Declaration of Independence significant?**

Content warning (racist language): We acknowledge that, as an author, politician, and Revolutionary, Jefferson was trying to build a very strong case for American Independence. At the same time, we acknowledge that his language and actions are heavy with contradictions and have caused harm to many. The document, in its many editions, asserts in the first line that "all men are created equal," but it is subject to the legacy of its authors and to the nation that was established on stolen land and through the enslavement, displacement, and disfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of human beings.

Cover Image:
Drafting the Declaration of Independence, 1776
Engraving by Alonzo Chappel, 1867
Printed by Johnson, Fry & Co., New York
American Philosophical Society

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Inquiry Design Model (IDM)

Compelling question:
Why are the edits to the Declaration of Independence significant?

PA State Aligned System standards:

5.1.6-9.D: Explain the basic principles and ideals within documents and the roles played by the framers as found in significant documents: Declaration of Independence.

8.3.6-9, 12.B: Evaluate the importance of historical documents, artifacts and places critical to United States history.

Staging the Question:
Discuss students’ experience with editing. How do students decide what to keep and what to change? How can edits change the tone or message? How did the final draft compare with their original idea?

Supporting question #1:	Supporting question #2:	Supporting question #3:
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What are some of the differences between this draft and the final text of the Declaration?	How would the tone and meaning of the Declaration of Independence be different without those changes?	What is the lasting legacy of edits to the Declaration of Independence?
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Formative performance task:	Formative performance task:	Formative performance task:
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read Jefferson’s Fair Copy and the Declaration approved by Congress. List all the words and phrases that are different. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and discuss how the different words and phrases change the nature of the document. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make your own edits to Jefferson’s draft. Discuss what you changed and why. Consider how your own edits change the nature of this document.
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Featured sources:	Featured sources:	Featured sources:
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Selected passages of Jefferson’s Fair Copy Congress-approved Declaration		Full text for Jefferson’s Fair Copy: https://therevolutionarycity.org/islandora/declaration-independence-thomas-jeffersons-second-draft?language=en
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Summative performance task	Construct an argument that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.
Extension	Explore what a declaration is. As a class, draft your own declaration in support of an identified common cause. Reflect on the experience of creating this document as a group, like the Declaration of Independence. What was included? What was left out? How does the final version reflect the group’s original idea?

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 to the opinions of mankind

INSTRUCTIONS / TASKS

1. What are some of the differences between this draft and the final text of the Declaration?
 - Read the selected passages of Jefferson's Fair Copy provided. For the full text of the Fair Copy, please visit:
<https://therevolutionarycity.org/islandora/declaration-independence-thomas-jeffersons-second-draft?language=en>.
 - Read the official version of the Declaration approved by Congress which is provided.
 - List all the words and phrases that are different.
2. How would the tone and meaning of the Declaration of Independence be different if those changes were not made?
 - Consider and discuss how the different words and phrases change the nature of the document.
3. What is the lasting legacy of edits to the Declaration of Independence?
 - Make your own edits to Jefferson's fair copy, either individually, in small groups, or as a large group.
 - Discuss what you changed and why.
 - Consider how your own edits change the nature of this document.

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 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 unalienable and inalienable 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 & 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, begun at a distant perishd period & 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, & to provide new guards for their future security. such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies, & such is now the necessity which constrains them to expunge their former systems of government. the history of the present king of Great Britain, is a history of unremitting injuries and usurpations, among which appears no solitary fact to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest; but all have in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. to prove this let facts be submitted to a candid world, for the truth of which we pledge a faith not unallied by falsehood.

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 & pressing importance, unless suspended for their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has neglected utterly to attend to them.

he has refused to pass other laws for the accomodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature; a right inestimable to them, & formidable to tyrants only.

for suspending our own legislatures & declaring themselves invested with power to
legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

out he has abdicated government here, withdrawing his ⁶⁴governors & declaring us out of his alle-
giance and protection, & waging war against us

out he has plundered our seas, ravaged our coast, burnt our towns & destroyed the lives of our people
he has transported large numbers of foreign mercenaries to commit the works of death
desolation & tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty & perjury unworthy the rec-
ord of a civilized nation.

in the most
barbarous
totally

out he has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages, whose
known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, & conditions of existence.
out he has excited insurrection among our fellow citizens with the allurements of for-
feiture & confiscation of our property.

in the
the

out he has constrained others taken captives on the high seas, to bear arms against their own
country, to help the manes of their friends & brethren to fall themselves by their side.

out he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of
life & liberty on the persons of a distant people who never offended him, capturing
and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in
their transportation, he has practiced his artifice, the oppression of which, he
powers, is the warfare of the Christian King of Great Britain, determined to keep

out

open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative
for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable com-
merce, and that his execrable trade of human souls might want no fact of oppression, he
now excites those very people to rise in arms against us and to purchase that li-
berty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom he also ob-
truded them: thus paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one
people with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another.

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. The people who have thus been oppressed, have all since the
denial of one man adventured within the short compass of twelve years only, to build
a foundation, so broad and undivided, for tyranny over a people fostered and
fixed in principles of freedom.

in the

out

he has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, & distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

he has dissolved Representative houses repeatedly, & continually, for opposing with manly ^{left out} firmness his invasions 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 mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, & 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; & raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

he has suffered the administration of justice totally to cease in some of these states, refusing ^{he has} his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers. ^{obstructed}

he has made our judges dependant on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and ^{of people} the amount & payment of their salaries. ^{by refusing}

he has erected a multitude of new offices by a self-assumed power, & sent hither swarms ^{out} of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

he has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies and ships of war, without the ^{our} consent of our legislatures.

he has affected to render the military independant of, & superior to, the civil power.

he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and ^{our} unacknowledged by our laws; giving his 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 of the benefits of trial by jury;

for transporting ^{in many} ^{cases} ~~us~~ ^{and} ~~seas~~ ^{to} be tried for pretended offences;

for abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring province, establishing there in an arbitrary government, and enlarging it's boundaries so as to render it at once an example & fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these states;

for taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments;

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 a jurisdiction over these ^{an unwar-} ~~our~~ ^{rentable}
 our states. we have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement ^{our}
 here, no one of which could warrant so strange a pretension: that these were effected at ^{our}
 the expense of our own blood and treasure, unassisted by the wealth or the strength of
 Great Britain. that in constituting ourselves a people, we were united by a common
 interest, thereby laying a foundation for perpetual league and amity
 with them: & that submission to their parliament was no part of our constitution, nor
 ever an idea, if history may be credited: and we appealed to their native justice &
 magnanimity, as well as to the eyes of our common kindred, to disavow these usurpa-
 tions, which were likely to interrupt our connection & correspondence. they too have
 been deaf to the voice of justice, and of consanguinity, and when occasions have been given
 them, by the regular course of their laws, of removing from their councils the dis-
 members of our peace, they have done us no injury, and we have not
 too they are permitting their chief magistrate to, and over not only soldiers of our common
 blood but [Scotch and] foreign mercenaries to invade and destroy us. These facts have
 given the last stab to agonizing affection; and manly spirit bids us to renounce for
 ever these unfeeling brethren. we must cease to forgive, we must cease to love for them,
 and to hold them as we hold the rest of mankind: enemies in war, in peace friends.
 we might have been a free & a great people together; but a communication of grandeur
 and of freedom seems, is below their dignity. we it so, since they will have it. the road
 to harmony and to glory is open to us too: we will rebound, and be
 in the necessity which denounces our eternal separation!

Declaration of Independence of the United States of America July 4th 1776

We therefore the Representatives of the United States of America in General
 Congress assembled, do, in the name & by authority of the good people of these states, reject, renounce,
 and renounce all allegiance and subjection to the king of Great Britain, & all those
 who may hereafter claim by, through or under him; we utterly dissolve all political con-
 nection which may heretofore have subsisted between us and the parliament or people
 of Great Britain; we do hereby declare that these colonies are free and independent
 states, & that as free & independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace,
 contract alliances, establish commerce, & to do all other acts and things which inde-
 pendent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, we mutually
 pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

in witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and seals, the 4th day of July, 1776.

TRANSCRIBED SELECTED PASSAGES OF THE FAIR COPY WITH COMMENTARY

To inspire discussion about the differences between Jefferson's Fair Copy of the Declaration and the final Congress-approved version, only select passages where significant changes were made have been transcribed here with commentary. A complete transcription of the entire document can be found online at <https://therevolutionarycity.org/islandora/declaration-independence-thomas-jeffersons-second-draft?language=en>

Transcription

Passage 1:

We hold these truths to be **self-evident**; that all men are created equal; that they are **endowed** by their Creator with **inherent** and **inalienable** 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 it's foundation on such principles and organizing it's power in such form as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness.

Commentary

fair copy: a clean, neatly written final draft of a document without editing marks or notes. Usually these are made to be submitted for final approval. The notes and cross-outs you see in the images were added later by Arthur Lee to note what Congress changed.

self-evident: obvious without needing proof or reasoning

endowed: provided something freely or naturally

inherent: essential or natural

inalienable: unable to be given up

deriving: receiving

This is probably the most famous passage of the Declaration. It states the reasons for separating.

Commentary

prudence indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light & **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**, begun at a distinguished period & 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, & to provide new guards for their future security such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; & such is now the necessity which **constrains** them to **expunge** their former systems of government. the history of the present king of Great Britain, is a history of **unremitting** injuries and usurpations, among which appears no solitary fact to contradict the uniform **tenor** of the rest; but all have in direct object the establishment of an absolute **tyranny** over these states. to prove this let facts be submitted to a **candid** world, for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet **unsullied** by falsehood.

Their reasons are not minor nor will they go away quickly. They are separating because the king has taken away their basic natural rights.

Here the text is saying that people will put up with a bad situation for as long as they can instead of changing it. But, the situation with Great Britain has become worse and it is time for a change.

prudence: good judgement

transient: passing quickly

hath shewn: has shown

usurpation: the act of taking away by force or without the right to do so

evince: to display clearly

despotism: absolute power or authority that is unreasonably severe or cruel

constrain: compel, force

expunge: delete, eliminate

unremitting: constant

tenor: character, nature

tyranny: oppressive or unjust power, usually with a single ruler

candid: honest, fair

unsullied: not stained or corrupted

Commentary

Passage 2:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him **captivating** and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to **incur** miserable death in their transportation **thither**. This piratical warfare, the **opprobrium** of **infidel powers**, is the warfare of the Christian king of Great Britain determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought & sold, he has **prostituted his negative** for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this **execrable** commerce and that his assemblage of horror might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom he also **obtruded** them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people with crimes which he urges them to commit against the lives of another.

This second passage is taken from the list of complaints against the king. It was completely cut from the final versions of the Declaration. Why do you think Congress decided to do that?

captivating: taking captive, seizing

incur: become subject to

thither: there

opprobrium: disgrace

infidel powers: here non-Christian kingdoms

prostituted his negative...: the king refused to let colonial governments prohibit or limit slavery.

execrable: detestable

obtruded: forced upon

Commentary

Passage 3:

In every stage of these oppression, 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 people who mean to be free, future ages will scarce believe that the hardness of one man adventured within the short **compass** of twelve years only, to build a foundation, so broad and undisguised, for tyranny over a people fostered and fixed in principles of freedom.

This third passage is towards the end of the document. Jefferson is concluding his arguments. They have tried to find a peaceful solution and failed. Therefore, they are declaring their independence.

redress: relief or remedy

compass: range or measure

How well does the tone of this paragraph conclude the arguments? How does it compare to the final version? Is this version more or less passionate?

TRANSCRIPTION OF CONGRESS- APPROVED DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

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.

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 inestimable to them and formidable 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 fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions 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 mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured 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 Judiciary 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 erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of

Officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance.

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 his 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 for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

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

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

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 themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

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 Brittish 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 War, in Peace Friends.

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; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

■ What is the Declaration of Independence?

- The goal of the Declaration was to plainly state the case of the American colonies for the world to see and to judge. It includes a list of 27 complaints against the King of Great Britain. The list demonstrates how he has mistreated the North American colonies and their citizens.
- Starting in 1765, the British Parliament passed a series of acts that taxed the colonists. They were hoping to recover the costs from the Seven Years War.
 - Before this, Parliament collected duties and tariffs from shippers and importers only. The shippers and importers passed the cost on to customers in the colonies. However, the taxes had not directly come from the colonists themselves.
 - Colonists had no representative in Parliament to speak up for them against these taxes.
- Many colonists were outraged at these taxes. They protested the acts through boycotts, petitions, assemblies, and acts of violence. Parliament responded with further, harsher punishments. For instance, they denied trials by a jury of peers and they stationed the British Army in certain cities.
- On April 19, 1775 fighting broke out between the British Army in Boston and local Massachusetts militias in the Battle of Lexington and Concord.
- The Second Continental Congress assembled in May of 1775. They tried to find a peaceful solution with Parliament. However, their petitions were ignored and King George declared the colonies in rebellion.
- By 1776 Congress found no peaceful path forward. They resolved to declare independence. They form a Committee of Five to write the formal declaration. The five representatives were Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman.
- Jefferson did the majority of the writing. Then Congress and the rest of the Committee of Five suggested 86 different changes. This included excluding the paragraph about slavery.

TAKING INFORMED ACTION

- Identify a cause in your community, region, or state that is important to you. Make sure to also identify the person who is in a position to address your cause (a community leader, school leader, or elected official).
- Work with your peers and draft your own formal declaration in support of that cause. Such declarations are often more impactful if they represent a group of people.
- Share it with community or school leaders or elected officials who need to hear your concerns.

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The American Philosophical Society, the oldest learned society in the United States, was founded in 1743 by Benjamin Franklin for the purpose of “promoting useful knowledge.” In the 21st century we sustain this mission in three principal ways. We honor and engage leading scholars, scientists, and professionals through elected membership and opportunities for interdisciplinary, intellectual fellowship, particularly in our semi-annual Meetings. We support research and discovery through grants and fellowships, lectures, publications, prizes, exhibitions, and public education. We serve scholars through a research library of manuscripts and other collections internationally recognized for their enduring historic value. The American Philosophical Society’s current activities reflect the founder’s spirit of inquiry, provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas, and convey our conviction that intellectual inquiry and critical thought are inherently in the best interest of the public.

