

Writing and Thinking

Study the cartoon. Then answer the questions.



- After reading this part of the Declaration, come back to the Writing and Thinking activity. Make any changes that would make your answers better.

Reading the Declaration of Independence

Read this part of the Declaration of Independence. Then answer the questions that follow it.

The 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,

The Declaration of Independence
On July 4, 1776, the 13 states all agreed to what is said here.

Why declare independence?

There are times when one group of people needs to be free from the government of another group. It is only right at such a time that they should tell the world why this had to be.

What rights do all people have?

We believe that some things are always true. Everyone was made to be equal to everyone else. God has given all people some rights that cannot be taken away. Some of these rights are the rights to life, **liberty**, and the chance to look for happiness.

Why do governments exist?

It is to get these rights that people make governments. It is people who give governments their power.

—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 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.

When can a government be changed?

A bad government is one that destroys those rights. People have the right to change or end a bad government. They have the right to set up a new government. The new government should be made in a way that will make the people safe and give them happiness. Of course, no government should be ended for little reason. People usually put up with bad governments rather than change what they are used to. But over a long period of time, a bad government may take more and more of their rights away. At such a time, it is the people's right and duty to overthrow that government. Then they need to set up a new government to be sure their rights are safe.