

Reading the Declaration of Independence

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

—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.

What has the king done wrong?

The 13 American colonies have been hurt by a bad king. Our type of government must change. The history of King George III's rule shows that he had wanted complete power over these colonies. To show the world that this is true, here is a list of what he has done:

—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 migration hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

1. He has not let us have laws we needed.

2. He has told his royal governors in America not to make people follow the laws we needed unless he approved them. He has been slow to decide whether to approve these needed laws.

3. To get laws that people in newly settled areas needed, he has told them that they had to give up being represented in the legislatures of the colonies. Being represented is a right people value. Only a bad ruler would want people to give up such a right.

4. He has made his legislatures meet in strange places. Some places have been hard to reach. He knew this made representatives tired so they would agree to his rules.

5. Some legislatures have not agreed with him. He breaks up these lawmaking bodies and sends the members home.

6. After sending members of legislatures home, he has refused for a long time to call elections for new legislatures. However, he cannot destroy the people's lawmaking powers. Meanwhile, the people fear someone's army will attack or that bad people will do things within the colonies because the government cannot stop them.

7. He has tried to keep the number of people in the colonies from growing. He has done this by making it hard for people who are not from England to come here. He has blocked laws that would have made it easy for foreigners to become members of the colonies. He has refused to pass laws that would make people want to come here. He has made it harder for people to get new land to settle by raising the price for it and by not encouraging them.

—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:

8. He has blocked the carrying out of justice. He has done this by stopping laws that would set up courts to help the people.

9. He has kept his judges from being fair. He has done this by letting them hold office and get paid only if they enforce the laws the way he wants them to.

10. He has made his government bigger by sending new people from Great Britain to trouble us. These unwanted government workers are making our taxes larger.

11. He has kept an army here when there is no war. Our lawmaking bodies have not been asked to say this was okay.

12. He has tried to make his army free of our government's control. He has tried to make the army more powerful than the government it is supposed to keep safe.

What things have the king and the British Parliament, working together, done wrong?

13. The king has worked with Parliament to force a government on us. Together, they have allowed its laws to be used when we have not approved of the government.

14. The king and Parliament have made us keep soldiers from their army in our homes.

15. They have protected these soldiers, even when the soldiers kill people. The soldiers are given fake trials and set free.

16. They have cut off our trade with other parts of the world.

17. They force taxes on us that we did not say were all right.

18. They have taken away our right to a trial by a jury in many cases.

—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 ample 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.

19. They have taken our people to England for trials on fake charges.

20. They gave a bad government to the colony [Quebec] to the north of us. They made that colony much bigger. It looks as if they may be planning to give this same kind of government to us.

21. They have taken away our **charters** of government. These are the basis of our laws. Without the charters, the governments of our colonies are greatly changed.

22. They have kept our legislatures from meeting. They say they have the powers to make all of our laws.

What other things has the king done wrong?

23. The king has given up the power to rule us. He says he cannot keep us safe, and he has made war on us.

24. He has attacked our ships and ports. He has burned our towns and killed our people.

25. He is bringing soldiers hired from another country [Germany] to fight us. They are being sent to kill and destroy us. No good government would do such a thing. Therefore, George is no longer worthy of being called a king.

26. He has taken our own people off our ships. These people are then forced to fight against us. They are forced to kill their friends and brothers or be killed themselves.

—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.

27. He has urged people to rebel against the colonial governments. He has tried to get American Indians to attack settlers on our borders.