

## **Colonization and Revolutionary War The Declaration of Independence**

During the years right before the Revolutionary War, more and more colonists wanted independence. Patriots gave speeches urging the colonists to take up arms and fight the British **tyrants**<sup>1</sup>. Patrick Henry, a **patriot**<sup>2</sup> from Virginia, gave a famous speech to the legislature of his state. Patrick Henry **proclaimed**<sup>3</sup>: “I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me **liberty**<sup>4</sup> or give me death!”

As fighting from the war spread, many more colonists became convinced they needed to cut ties with Britain. They still considered themselves British, but the king was not respecting their rights. They stood together as colonists to defend themselves and their interests. Before long they would call themselves Americans.

On May 10, 1775, representatives from every colony met at the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. They gathered in response to the battles of Lexington and Concord. The representatives agreed the time for negotiating with Britain was over. They decided that the Congress should rule the colonies and they should declare independence. The Continental Army was formed, and George Washington was named its leader. Washington came up with a plan to battle the British troops.

Thomas Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence. It took him a little more than two weeks. Although he was only 33 years old, Jefferson **eloquently**<sup>5</sup> wrote why the colonists did not want British rule. He listed all of the rights that every man deserved. He wrote that Britain was denying the colonists these rights. The Declaration of Independence clarified the values of the colonists. The war was not just about taxes. It was about freedom. It was about

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<sup>1</sup> **tyrants** – people who use their power in a cruel or unjust way

<sup>2</sup> **patriot** – a person who loves his country and gives it loyal support

<sup>3</sup> **proclaimed** – declared in a public way

<sup>4</sup> **liberty** – freedom

<sup>5</sup> **eloquently** – expressed in a smooth and clear way

the relationship of any government to its people. Finally, the war was about the responsibility of the government to protect the rights of the people.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long did it take Thomas Jefferson to write the Declaration of Independence?
  - a. It took him seven days.
  - b. It took him two weeks exactly.
  - c. It took him a little more than two weeks.
  - d. It took him a month
2. What caused representatives to meet at the Second Continental Congress?
  - a. The battles of Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts
  - b. They wanted to negotiate with the British
  - c. They wanted to write the Declaration of Independence
  - d. The need to clarify the colonists' relationship with England
3. Why does the author most likely say, "the time for negotiating with Britain was over"?
  - a. The sides would have to fight rather than talk.
  - b. The war for independence was coming to an end.
  - c. The British had run out of time and lost control.
  - d. The Americans no longer wanted to gain independence.
4. Read the following sentences: "The Declaration of Independence clarified the values of the colonists. The war was not just about taxes. It was about freedom."

The word **clarified** means

- a. changed
  - b. made improvements to
  - c. drew pictures of
  - d. made easier to understand
5. The passage "The Declaration of Independence" is mostly about
  - a. famous declarations of independence throughout history and how the United States' was different.
  - b. the Second Continental Congress and the states that were there.
  - c. what led up to the Declaration of Independence being written and what it was about.
  - d. the process of writing the Declaration of Independence and the people who were involved.

6. What did the representatives agree to at the Second Continental Congress?

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7. Based on the passage, explain why Patrick Henry said, “give me liberty or give me death!”

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

The Americans needed to explain their reasons, \_\_\_\_\_ Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence.

- a. because
- b. after
- c. so
- d. although

9. Read the following sentence.

**In 1775, representatives from every colony met in Philadelphia to form the Second Continental Congress.**

Answer the questions below based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

- 1. Who? representatives from every colony
- 2. What did representatives do? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. When? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Where? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** eloquent: well expressed and effective in persuading people.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_