

## ***Understanding the Declaration of Independence***

Thomas Jefferson was asked to write one of America's most important documents. Known as the Declaration of Independence, it was a statement of human rights, a list of complaints against the British, and an announcement of independence. On July 4, 1776, the Second Continental Congress signed the Declaration of Independence. The opening says:

**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.**

**Answer the questions below in complete sentences using the information you learn while reading The Declaration of Independence on pages 164-167 in your book.**

1. In the first paragraph of the Declaration, who were the "People"?
2. What does the phrase from The Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident" mean?
3. What does the word "unalienable" mean?
4. What words mean that governments belong to the people?
5. What words mean that governments should be set up to protect the rights of people?
6. What words mean that all people have the right to live, to be free, and to try to be happy?
7. Use the Declaration of Independence to write and explain the meaning of two grievances against the British government.
8. Write the main idea of the resolution section of the Declaration of Independence using words that you understand.
9. Is the Declaration of Independence as important to people today as it was to people in 1776? Why or Why not?