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This Is It!

Each of the thirteen colonies sent representatives to the Second Continental Congress to talk about issues that concerned them. These leaders wanted to help make life better for the colonists. Important discussions took place about the way that England was treating the colonies. Not everyone agreed on what to do. But after a lot of thinking and debating, the Congress asked five representatives, called the Committee of Five, to write a statement that told England's King George III that the colonies wanted to be their own country, not a British colony. The committee decided that Thomas Jefferson should write the declaration.

Look at a printed copy of the Declaration of Independence.

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.02101>

Click on the image to enlarge it.

Look closely at the Declaration and answer these questions.

1. What is the declaration?

2. The Second Continental Congress did not call this document "The Declaration of Independence." What did they call it?

3. What is the date at the top of this document?

4. What does the word "unanimous" mean?

5. Whose large signature is at the bottom of the Declaration?

What was his role in the Continental Congress?

How do you know?

6. At the bottom of the Declaration, each colony is listed with its delegates to the Continental

Congress. Why do you think some colonies sent more delegates than others?

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Read the *introduction* of the Declaration of Independence (the first paragraph) and then answer these questions.

7. What do you think is the main idea of the first paragraph? What do the verbs “dissolve” and “entitle” mean?

8. The second paragraph is about *human rights*. Read the first sentence of the second paragraph. Write this sentence in your own words. Use the context clues to help you understand words you may not know.

The last sentence in that paragraph seems to be saying to the world, “Listen up and we’ll tell you why we want to be free of British rule.”

9. the first two paragraphs are followed by a *list of complaints*. In your own words, write at least five complaints listed in the Declaration that help to explain why the colonists wanted independence from England.

10. The last paragraph states what the Second Continental Congress wanted. What words appear more than once in all capital letters to show that they were *declaring freedom*?

11. The closing sentence states, “...we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honour.” What do you think this meant to these representatives? What were they promising to each other? What problems or dangers might they face because of this promise?
