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Critical Thinking Exercise page 66 We The People

Natural Rights Philosophy in the Declaration of Independence

We the People Lesson 8: What Basic Ideas about Government Are in the Declaration of Independence? Page 63-70

Why was the Declaration of Independence written?

- Continental Congress voted for independence June 7, 1776 DOI was written to let Britain know we were now free and independent
- Committee to write it: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Ben Franklin, Roger Sherman,
- Thomas Jefferson wrote most of it
- July 4, 1776 the Continental Congress approved the DOI

How is the Declaration of Independence Organized?

- Ideals: belief about the purpose of government
- Argument: reasons why they were justified in breaking away
- Complaints: show how colonists' rights were being violated by the King and Parliament
- Conclusion: "that these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States"

What Principles of government does the Declaration include?

- See back

What reasons did the Declaration give for Independence?

- Natural law-no government can violate people's natural rights. The purpose of government is to protect natural rights
- People have the right to abolish (end) a government that violates their natural rights
- The colonists had consented to be governed by the king so long as he protected their natural rights.
- Colonists did not have representation in Parliament so Parliament had no right to govern the colonies
- Because the king and Parliament did not protect the colonists natural rights, it was the colonists right to overthrow the government and create a new one

What complaints against the king did the DOI include?

- Refusing to pass helpful laws, ending colonial legislatures, obstructing justice, standing army in a time of peace, quartering of soldiers, taxes without representation, limiting trade, denying trial by jury

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Directions: Work with your group to read the phrases below and respond to the questions

Declaration of Independence (Paragraph 2)

We hold these Truths to be self-evident [easy for anyone to see], that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed [given] by their Creator [God] with certain unalienable Rights [rights that can't be taken away], that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness-That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted [created] among Men, deriving [getting] their just Powers from the Consent [approval] of the Governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends [purposes], it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish [overthrow and end] it, and to institute [create] a new Government.

1. *We hold these Truths to be self-evident* [easy for anyone to see]
 - a. List 3 things that you think are so obviously true that you don't need to explain why they are true

2. *all Men are created equal*
 - a. Since it is obvious that all people are not equal in many ways, such as height, weight, skills and abilities, in what way do you think the Declaration is saying they are equal? Do you agree? Why?

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3. *all Men are... endowed [given] by their Creator [God] with certain unalienable Rights* [rights that can't be taken away]
 - a. What rights do you think cannot be taken away from people? Explain your reasoning

4. *to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted [created] among Men*
 - a. Explain what you think this means about why governments are created and what their purpose should be

5. *Governments...deriving [getting] their just Powers from the Consent [approval] of the Governed*
 - a. Why do you suppose this says that governments derive their "just Powers" from the consent of the governed?

6. *whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends [purposes], it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish [overthrow and end] it, and to institute [create] a new Government.*
 - a. Under what conditions, if any, do you think people would be justified in changing or overthrowing their government?