

Declaration of Independence

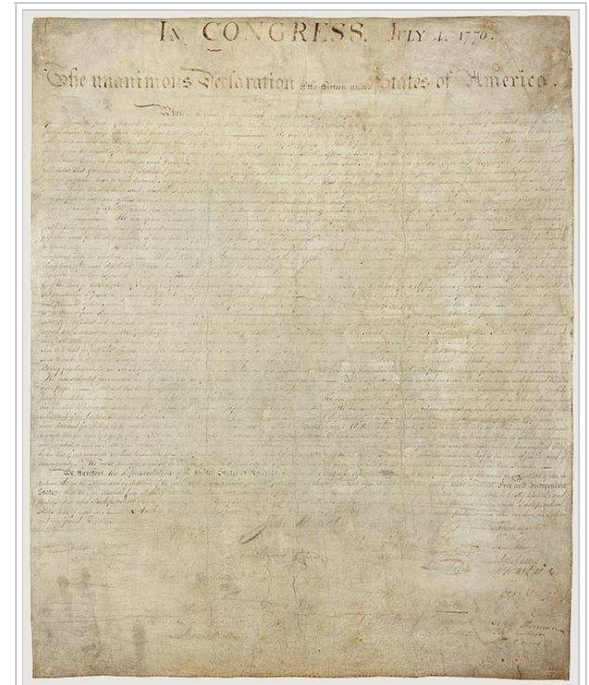
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The **Declaration of Independence**, unanimously approved by the second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776, created a new nation, the "United States of America." Written primarily by Thomas Jefferson, it formally "dissolved the connection" between the thirteen American colonies (which were now using the name the "United Colonies") and Britain. July 4 is still celebrated as the nation's birthday. The document enshrines the basic values of republicanism as the foundation of America; it inspired similar declarations in over a hundred countries.

Progressive historians have attempted to re-write history and leave the impression that *No taxation without representation* (grievance 17) was the only reason for American Independence, when in fact twenty seven grievances against the king were cited. A simplified explanation of the twenty seven grievances can be found below.

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The Declaration of Independence; the original is badly faded

Public opinion

Sentiment for independence was crystallized by *Common Sense*, the astonishingly successful pamphlet by Thomas Paine. It sold over 150,000 copies in spring 1776; copies were passed from hand to hand and read aloud at taverns in every colony. General George Washington was especially impressed and he had it read aloud to his soldiers. Paine's forceful argument convinced the majority that that the Empire was a dead weight on American aspirations, and the time was now to become independent. The Loyalists were left almost speechless. Support for the King, which had been fast dwindling away, evaporated after Americans digested Paine's philippic. Not only was liberty at risk under monarchy, Paine said, but so was peace, as monarchs had little else to do but lay "the world in blood and ashes." His key argument was an attack on the possibility of reconciliation.

Paine convinced his readers that independence was more likely to bring peace and prosperity than continued subservience to the empire. But Paine drove ahead adding a millennial quality to the colonists' struggle. This was not a revolt over taxation. The survival of liberty and republicanism was at stake, he argued and if the American Revolution succeeded, generations yet unborn would owe a debt of gratitude to their forebearers who struggled to defend—and expand—freedom. Paine foresaw an America that would become "an asylum for mankind." Not only would America offer refuge to the world's oppressed, but like a shining beacon, revolutionary America would herald "the birth-day of a new world," the beginning of an epoch in which humankind across the earth could "begin the world over again."^[1]

May 15th resolution

On May 15, John Adams wrote a preamble stating that because of the king's continued efforts to reject all efforts at reconciliation, independence from the crown was inevitable.^[2]

Writing the Declaration

The "Declaration Committee," consisted of five people: Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Robert R. Livingston of New York, and John Adams of Massachusetts. It was appointed by Congress on

June 11, 1776, to draft a declaration in anticipation of an expected vote in favor of American independence, which occurred on July 2.^[3]

At this point the British had been driven entirely from the United Colonies, and independence became increasingly a reality.

Jefferson's role

As delegates to the Continental Congress Jefferson and John Adams took the lead in pushing for independence. On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee of the Virginia delegation authored the Lee Resolution, proposing independence.

Congress appointed a committee of five men to draw up a suitable public Declaration. Shortly after the committee met, Adams and Jefferson were regarded as the two best to do the bulk of the drafting of the document.^[4] Adams, however, deferred to Jefferson, on the grounds of three very shrewd reasonings:

"Reason first, you are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second, I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can"

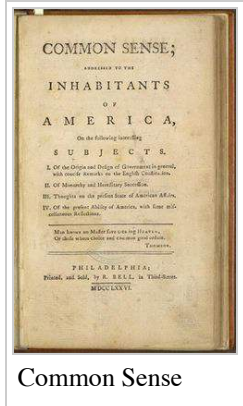
(Jefferson's authorship was largely unknown before 1800.) He incorporated ideas and phrases from many sources to arrive at a consensus statement that all patriots could agree upon.

Early drafts exist dating to June 1776.^[5] Jefferson's colleagues Benjamin Franklin and Adams made small changes in his draft text and Congress made more. The finished document, which both declared independence and proclaimed a philosophy of government, was singly and peculiarly Jefferson's.^[6]

Virginia role

The opening philosophical section is closely based on Virginia's "Declaration of Rights," a notable summary of current revolutionary philosophy, written by George Mason and adopted in June 1776.^[7] Mason wrote:

That all men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life



Common Sense



The Declaration Committee

and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

Jefferson rewrote it:

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.

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Jefferson himself did not believe in absolute human equality, and, though he had no fears of revolution, he preferred that the "social compact" be renewed by periodical, peaceful revisions. That government should be based on popular consent and secure the "inalienable" rights of man, among which he included the pursuit of happiness rather than property, that it should be a means to human well-being and not an end in itself, he steadfastly believed. He gave here a matchless expression of his faith.

The charges against King George III, who is singled out because the patriots denied all claims of parliamentary authority, represent an improved version of charges that Jefferson wrote for the preamble of the Virginia constitution of 1776. Relentless in their reiteration, they constitute a statement of the specific grievances of the revolting party, powerfully and persuasively presented at the bar of public opinion.

The Declaration is notable for both its clarity and subtlety of expression, and it abounds in the felicities that are characteristic of Jefferson's best prose.^[8] More impassioned than any other of his writings, it is eloquent in its sustained elevation of style and remains his noblest literary monument.

The concepts of natural law, of inviolable rights, and of government by consent were drawn from the republican tradition that stretched back to ancient Rome and was neither new nor distinctively American. However it was unprecedented for a nation to declare that it would be governed by these propositions. It was Jefferson's almost religious commitment to these republican propositions that is the key to his entire life. He was more than the author of this statement of the national purpose: he was a living example of its philosophy, accepting its ideals as the controlling principles of his own life. Congress adopted the Declaration on July 4, 1776, which became the birthday of the independent nation.^[9]

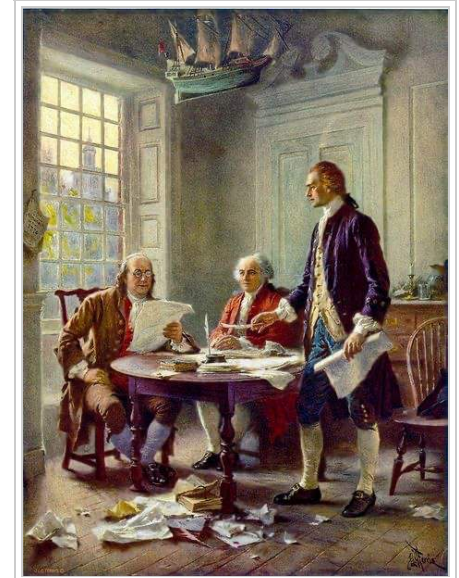
The Declaration of Independence drew upon Christianity and the Enlightenment English philosopher John Locke. In his famous work "Two Treatises of Government" (1690), Locke declared that all men have the natural (inalienable) rights of "life, liberty and estate (property)." Notably the Declaration of Independence does not emphasize a right to pursue property, however, speaking instead in favor of pursuit of "happiness".

Immediate impact

Voting in Congress was by states and the Declaration was not unanimous on July 4 but became so a little later. On July 4, the New York delegation could not sign since its instructions to do so did not arrive until July 9. The original title referred to Twelve States, but all thirteen approved it. Several delegates were opposed at first but later signed.

When the Declaration was signed, the 13 colonies now became the 13 states. The new nation created a national army under George Washington, and sent diplomats to secure recognition in Europe. Most successful was Benjamin Franklin, who won support in France and in 1778 secured a treaty of military alliance with France, by which the entire military and naval forces of France joined in the war against Britain. King George III refused to give up and of "his" possessions, so the war dragged on until the final American victory at Yorktown in 1781 caused Parliament to change the government in London and sue for peace.

Long-term impact on U.S.



Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson drafting the Declaration

Americans celebrated the Fourth of July and often read the Declaration at that event, but paid little attention to it other days of the year.^[10] That changed when Abraham Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address of 1863 stressed its priority over the Constitution. Since then the statement 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" has resounded strongly in the American psyche, though it is not echoed much in other countries.

Global impact

The Declaration was quickly translated into major languages and immediately sparked serious discussion in Europe and Latin America about the legitimacy of empires. By 1826, fifty years after the drafting, twenty nations already had declarations of independence modeled on it, starting with the Flemish 1790 Manifesto of the Province of Flanders and Haiti's 1804 declaration of independence. In the 20th century, the first wave of independence declarations came after World War I and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. The second wave lasted from 1945 to 1993, with the closing down of the Japanese, British, French, Portuguese and other empires.

By the 21st century, over half of the 192 nations of the world have such declarations. Most, according to Armitage (2007), have copied the style and structure of the Declaration. Most important, the Declaration has marked and helped create the "contagion of sovereignty" that has transformed a world of empires into a world of states.^[11]

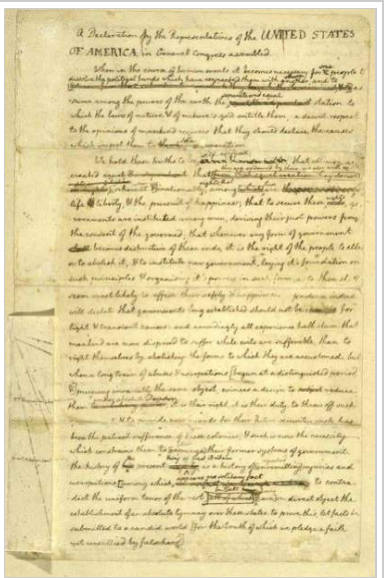
The world was impressed with how colonies broke away from an empire, but it paid little attention to its more controversial metaphysical claims about all men being born equal with certain rights. Translators had great difficulty handling its key concepts. For example, the "unalienable rights" of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were extremely difficult concepts in China, Japan, and Spain (where Catholic teachings placed true happiness only in the other world). The translators' difficulties with the Declaration also indicate that the document's "truths" about human rights were not nearly so "self-evident" as Jefferson believed. In China and Russia, particularly, the political rights of the individual were clearly not self-evident. Although Americans often enthusiastically championed the benefits of democracy throughout the world, not all nations or peoples appreciated the libertarian and capitalist values enunciated in the declaration. They did, however, appreciate its Republicanism, and most new nations declared independence in order to become republics.^[12]

The physical document

Gustafson (2002) traces the various locations where the Declaration, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, (known collectively as the Charters of Freedom), were kept until transferred with great ceremony to the National Archives in 1952. The Declaration was moved from one city to another and was at the Patent Office in Washington from 1841 to 1876, among other locations. The Declaration and the Constitution were in the Library of Congress from 1921 to 1952, amid some rivalry with the National Archives as to their proper location. As part of a new conservation effort, the National Archives constructed new encasements to preserve the documents and return them to public display beginning 17 September 2003.^[13]

Full text of the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence is comprised primarily of five sections: The *introduction*, the *preamble*, the *indictment* of the British Crown, the *denunciation* of the citizens of Britain for turning a blind eye to the King's mistreatment of the colonists, and the *conclusion*.^{[14][15][16]}



The first page of the Declaration of Independence as it began under Thomas Jefferson, with several strikeouts as he formulated his ideas.

Introduction:	IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776 The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America
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Proclaims the right of the colonists, upon the basis of their God-given rights, to separate from the abusive king.	When in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.
Preamble or preface:^[17] An expression of timeless truths that transcend all ages and generations.	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. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. — 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.
Indictment: Lists the 27 grievous acts which the king has repeatedly committed to injure the liberty of his subjects in the 13 colonies.	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 endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands. 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 harass 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 benefit of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offenses:

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 example 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 complete 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.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored 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.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Denunciation:

Denounces the

people of Great Britain for not coming to the aid of the colonists as they were abused by their ruler.	Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred. to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.
Conclusion: Asserts their reliance upon God for protection, as they knew the King would pursue a path of war.	We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States, that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. — And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Grievances summary

The Declaration of Independence contains twenty seven grievances against the British Crown, some of which are explained below. Historians have noted the similarities with Locke's works and the context of the grievances.^[18] For generations, well established traditions as well as proclamations such as the 1100 Charter of Liberties, Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights and others, signify to the people that the King is not to interfere with the God-given Natural Rights of the people. At the time of the founding, such early documents were well known by the people. By opposing laws deemed necessary for the public good and by constantly meddling in the local affairs of the colonists, the King opposed the end or purpose of government.^[18]

Grievance:	Explanation:
Grievance 1: He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.	The Colonial Assemblies, from time to time, made enactments touching their commercial operations, the emission of a colonial currency, and concerning representatives in the imperial Parliament, but the assent of the sovereign to these laws was withheld. After the Stamp-Act excitements, Secretary Conway informed the Americans that the tumults should be overlooked, provided the Assemblies would make provision for full compensation for all public property which had been destroyed. In complying with this demand, the Assembly of Massachusetts thought it would be "wholesome and necessary for the public good," to grant free pardon to all who had been engaged in the disturbances, and passed an act accordingly. It would have produced quiet and good feeling; but the royal assent was refused. ^[19]
Grievance 2: He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be	Similar to the first grievance, this is an indictment for the King's men in the colonies who have refused to assent to laws conducive to the public good. For example, in 1764, the Assembly of New York took measures to conciliate the Six Nations, and other Indian tribes. The motives of the Assembly were misconstrued, representations having been made to the king that the colonies wished to make allies of the Indians, so as to increase their physical power and proportionate independence of the British crown. The monarch sent instructions to all his governors to desist from such alliances, or to suspend their operations until his assent should be given. He then "utterly neglected to attend to them." The Massachusetts Assembly passed a law in 1770, for taxing officers of the British government in that

obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.	colony. The governor was ordered to withhold his assent to such tax-bill. This was in violation of the colonial charter, and the people justly complained. The Assembly Was prorogued from time to time, and laws of great importance were "utterly neglected."^[19] "Neglect" is one of two reasons mentioned by Locke as a valid reason for dissolving government.^[18]
Grievance 3: 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.	As noted in Chapter 19 of Two Treatises of Government, "when such a single person, or prince, sets up his own arbitrary will, in place of the laws, which are the will of the society, declared by the legislative, then the legislative is changed." The changing of the legislature without the people's knowledge or without their consent is another way government is then dissolved. Government for the public good is only by the people, and not what is good for the rulers.^[18]
Grievance 4: 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.	On May 20, 1774, Parliament passed the Massachusetts Government Act, which nullified the Massachusetts Charter of 1691^[20] and allowed governor Thomas Gage to dissolve the local provincial assembly and force them to meet in Salem.^[21]
Grievance 5: He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.	When the British government became informed of the fact that the Assembly of Massachusetts in 1768 had issued a circular to other Assemblies, inviting their co operation in asserting the principle that Great Britain had no right to tax the colonists without their consent, Lord Hillsborough, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was directed to order the governor of Massachusetts to require the Assembly of that province to rescind its obnoxious resolutions expressed in the circular. In case of their refusal to do so, the governor was ordered to dissolve them immediately. Other Assemblies were warned not to imitate that of Massachusetts, and when they refused to accede to the wishes of the king, as expressed by the several royal governors, they were repeatedly dissolved. The Assemblies of Virginia and North Carolina were dissolved for denying the right of the king to tax the colonies, or to remove offenders out of the country for trial. In 1774, when the several Assemblies entertained the proposition to elect delegates to a general Congress, nearly all of them were dissolved.^[19] On May 31, 1765, the Virginia House of Burgesses was dissolved by Royal Governor Francis Fauquier.^[22]
Grievance 6:	

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.	When the Assembly of New York, in 1766, refused to comply with the provisions of the Mutiny Act, its legislative functions were suspended by royal authority, and for several months the State remained "exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without and convulsions within." The Assembly of Massachusetts after its dissolution in July, 1768, was not permitted to meet again until the last Wednesday of May, 1769, and then they found the place of meeting surrounded by a military guard, with cannons pointed directly at their place of meeting. They refused to act under such tyrannical restraint and their legislative power returned to be people.^[19]
Grievance 7: He has endeavored to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.	Secret agents were sent to America soon after the accession of George the Third to the throne of England, to spy out the condition of the colonists. A large influx of liberty-loving German emigrants was observed, and the king was advised to discourage these immigrations. Obstacles in the way of procuring lands, and otherwise, were put in the way of all emigrants, except from England, and the tendency of French Roman Catholics to settle in Maryland was also discouraged. The British government was jealous of the increasing power of the colonies; and the danger of having that power controlled by democratic ideas, caused the employment of restrictive measures. The easy conditions upon which actual settlers might obtain lands on the Western frontier, after the peace of 1763, were so changed that toward the dawning of the Revolution, the vast solitudes west of the Alleghenies were seldom penetrated by any but the hunter from the seaboard provinces. When the War for Independence broke out, immigration had almost ceased. The king conjectured wisely, for almost the entire German population in the colonies were on the side of the patriots.^[19]
Grievance 8: He has obstructed the Administration of Justice by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.	By an act of Parliament in 1774, the judiciary was taken from the people of Massachusetts. The judges were appointed by the king, were dependent on him for their salaries, and were subject to his will. Their salaries were paid from moneys drawn from the people by the commissioners of customs, in the form of duties. The same act deprived them, in most cases, of the benefit of trial by jury, and the "administration of justice" was effectually obstructed. The rights for which Englishmen so manfully contended in 1688 were trampled under foot. Similar grievances concerning the courts of law existed in other colonies; and throughout the Anglo-American domain there was but a semblance of justice left. The people met in conventions when Assemblies were dissolved, and endeavored to establish "judiciary powers" but in vain; and were finally driven to rebellion.^[19]
Grievance 9: He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone for the tenure of	As we have observed, judges were made independent of the people. Royal governors were placed in the same position. Instead of checking their tendency to petty tyranny, by having them depend upon the Colonial Assemblies for their salaries, these were paid out of the national treasury. Independent of the people they had no sympathies with the people, and thus became fit instruments of oppression, and ready at all times to do the bidding of the king and his ministers. The Colonial Assemblies protested against the measure, and out of the excitement which it produced grew that power of the Revolution, the Committees of Correspondence. In 1774, when Chief Justice Oliver of Massachusetts declared it

their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.	to be his intention to receive his salary from the crown, the Assembly proceeded to impeach him and petitioned the governor for his removal. The governor refused compliance and great irritation ensued. ^[19]
Grievance 10: He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.	After the passage of the Stamp Act, stamp distributors were appointed in every considerable town. In 1766 and 1767, acts for the collection of duties created "swarms of officers", all of whom received high salaries; and when in 1768, admiralty and vice admiralty courts were established on a new basis, an increase in the number of officers was made. The high salaries and extensive perquisites of all of these, were paid with the people's money, and thus "swarms of officers" "eat out their substance." ^[19]
Grievance 11: He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.	After the treaty of peace with France, in 1763, Great Britain left quite a large number of troops in America, and required the colonists to contribute to their support. There was no use for this standing army, except to repress the growing spirit of Republicanism among the colonists, and to enforce compliance with taxation laws. The presence of troops was always a cause of complaint; and when, finally, the colonists boldly opposed the unjust measures of the British government, armies were sent hither to awe the people into submission. It was one of those "standing armies" kept here "without the consent of the Legislature," against which the patriots at Lexington, and Concord, and Bunker Hill so manfully battled in 1775. ^[19]
Grievance 12: He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.	General Gage, commander-in chief of the British forces in America, was appointed governor of Massachusetts in 1774; and to put the measures of the Boston Port Bill into execution, he encamped several regiments of soldiers upon Boston Common. The military there, and also in New York, was made independent of, and superior to, the civil power, and this, too, in a time of peace, before the Minute-men were organized. ^[19]
Grievance 13: 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:	The " <i>others</i> " with whom the King is thus said to have combined were, of course, the British Parliament, the existence of which as a legally constituted body possessing authority over them the Americans thus refused even by implication to recognise. ^[23] This was because of the establishment of a Board of Trade, to act independent of colonial legislation through its creatures (resident commissioners of customs) in the enforcement of revenue laws. This was altogether foreign to the constitution of any of the colonies, and produced great indignation. The establishment of this power, and the remodeling of the admiralty courts so as to exclude trial by jury therein, in most cases rendered the government fully obnoxious to the charge in the text. The people felt their degradation under such petty tyranny, and resolved to spurn it. It was effectually done in Boston, and the government, after all its bluster, was obliged to recede. In 1774, the members of the council of Massachusetts (answering to our Senate), were, by a Parliamentary enactment, chosen by the king, to hold the office during his pleasure. Almost unlimited power was also given to the governor, and the people were indeed subjected to "a jurisdiction foreign to their constitution " by these creatures of royalty. ^[19]
Grievance 14:	

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:	In 1774 seven hundred troops were landed in Boston, under cover of the cannons of British armed ships in the harbor; and early the following year, Parliament voted ten thousand men for the American service, for it saw the wave of rebellion rising high under the gale of indignation which unrighteous acts had spread over the land. The tragedies at Lexington and Concord soon followed, and at Bunker Hill the War for Independence was opened in earnest. ^[19]
Grievance 15: For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:	In 1768, two citizens of Annapolis, in Maryland, were murdered by some marines belonging to a British armed ship. The trial was a mockery of justice; and in the face of clear evidence against them, the criminals were acquitted. In the difficulties with the Regulators in North Carolina, in 1771, some of the soldiers who had shot down citizens when standing up in defence of their rights, were tried for murder and acquitted; while Governor Tryon mercilessly hung six prisoners, who were certainly entitled to the benefits of the laws of war, if his own soldiers were. ^[19]
Grievance 16: For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:	The navigation laws were always oppressive in character. In 1764, the British naval commanders having been clothed with the authority of custom-house officers, completely broke up a profitable trade which the colonists had long enjoyed with the Spanish and French West Indies, notwithstanding it was in violation of the old Navigation Act of 1660, which had been almost ineffectual. Finally, Lord North concluded to punish the refractory colonists of New England, by crippling their commerce with Great Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies. Fishing on the banks of Newfoundland was also prohibited, and thus, as far as Parliamentary enactments could accomplish it, their "trade with all parts of the world" was cut off. ^[19]
Grievance 17: For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:	<i>For a more detailed treatment, see No taxation without representation.</i> In addition to the revenue taxes imposed from time to time and attempted to be collected by means of writs of assistance, the Stamp Act was passed, and duties upon paper, painters' colors, glass, tea, etc., were levied. This was a great bone of contention between the colonists and the imperial government. It was contention on the one hand for the great political truth that taxation and representation are inseparable, and a lust for power and the means for replenishing an exhausted treasury, on the other. The climax of this contention was the Revolution. ^[19]
Grievance 18: For depriving us in many cases, of the benefit of Trial by Jury:	This was especially the case when commissioners of customs were concerned in the suit. After these functionaries were driven from Boston in 1768, an act was passed which placed violations of the revenue laws under the jurisdiction of the admiralty courts, where the offenders were tried by a creature of the crown, and were deprived "of the benefits of trial by jury." ^[19]
Grievance 19: For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offenses:	A law of 1774 provided that any person in the province of Massachusetts, who should be accused of riot, resistance of magistrates or the officers of customs, murder, "or any other capital offence," might, at the option of the governor, be taken for trial to another colony, or transported to Great Britain for the purpose. The minister pretended that impartial justice could not be administered in Massachusetts; but the facts of Captain Preston's case refuted his arguments in that direction. The bill was violently opposed in Parliament, yet it became a law. It was decreed that Americans might be "transported beyond the seas, to be tried for pretended offences," or real crimes. ^[19]
Grievance 20:	

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 example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies	This charge is embodied in an earlier one. The British ministry thought it prudent to take early steps to secure a footing in America so near the scene of inevitable rebellion as to allow them to breast, successfully, the gathering storm. The investing of a legislative council in Canada with all powers except levying of taxes, was a great stride toward that absolute military rule which bore sway there within eighteen months afterward. Giving up their political rights for doubtful religious privileges, made them willing slaves, and Canada remained a part of the British empire when its sister colonies rejoiced in freedom. ^[19]
Grievance 21: For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:	This is a reiteration of a charge already considered, and refers to the alteration of the Massachusetts charter, so as to make judges and other officers independent of the people, and subservient to the crown. The governor was empowered to remove and appoint all inferior judges, the attorney-generals, provost-marshals, and justices of the peace, and to appoint sheriffs independent of the council. As the sheriffs chose jurors, trial by jury might easily be made a mere mockery. The people had hitherto been allowed, by their charter, to select jurors; now the whole matter was placed in the hands of the creatures of government. ^[19]
Grievance 22: For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.	This, too, is another phase of the charge just considered. We have noticed the suppression of the Legislature of New York, and in several cases, the governors, after dissolving Colonial Assemblies, assumed the right to make proclamations stand in the place of statute law. Lord Dunmore assumed this right in 1775, and so did Sir James Wright of Georgia, and Lord William Campbell of South Carolina. They were driven from the country in consequence. ^[19]
Grievance 23: He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.	In his message to Parliament early in 1775, the king declared the colonists to be in a state of open rebellion; and by sending armies hither to make war upon them, he really "abdicated government," by thus declaring them "out of his protection." He sanctioned the acts of governors in employing the Indians against his subjects, and himself bargained for the employment of German hirelings. And when, yielding to the pressure of popular will, his representatives (the royal governors) fled before the indignant people, he certainly "abdicated government." ^[19]
Grievance 24: He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.	When naval commanders were clothed with the powers of custom house officers, they seized many American vessels; and after the affair at Lexington and Bunker Hill, British ships of war "plundered our seas" wherever an American vessel could be found. They also "ravaged our coasts and burnt our towns." Charlestown, Falmouth (now Portland, in Maine), and Norfolk were burnt, and Dunmore and others "ravaged our coasts," and "destroyed the lives of our people." And at the very time when this Declaration was being read to the assembled Congress, the shattered fleet of Sir Peter Parker was sailing northward, after an attack upon Charleston, South Carolina. ^[19]

Grievance 25: He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to complete 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.	The hire of Hessian Soldiers as mercenaries for use against the Thirteen Colonies, see the May 15th preamble.^[24]
Grievance 26: 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.	An act of Parliament passed toward the close of December, 1775, authorized the capture of all American vessels, and also directed the treatment of the crews of armed vessels to be as slaves and not as prisoners of war. They were to be enrolled for "the service of his majesty," and were thus compelled to fight for the crown, even against their own friends and countrymen. This act was loudly condemned on the floor of Parliament as unworthy of a Christian people, and "a refinement of cruelty unknown among savage nations."^[19]
Grievance 27: He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavored 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.	This was done in several instances, Dunmore was charged with a design to employ the Indians against the Virginians as early as 1774; and while ravaging the Virginia coast in 1775 and 1776, he endeavored to excite the slaves against their masters. He was also concerned with Governor Gage and others, under instructions from the British ministry, in exciting the <i>Shawnetse</i>, and other savages of the Ohio country, against the white people. Emissaries were also sent among the <i>Cherokees</i> and <i>Creeks</i> for the same purpose; and all of the tribes of the <i>Six Nations</i>, except the <i>Oneidas</i>, were found in arms with the British when war began. Thus excited, dreadful massacres occurred on the borders of the several colonies.^[19]

See also

- Lee Resolution

Further reading

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External links

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