

The Declaration is Adopted Two days later, on July 4, 1776, Congress adopted the document that proclaimed independence—the Declaration of Independence. John Hancock, the president of the Congress, was the first to sign the Declaration. According to tradition, he wrote in large letters and commented, “There, I guess King George will be able to read that.” The core idea of the Declaration is based on the philosophy of John Locke. This idea is that people have natural and unalienable rights, or rights that government cannot take away. Jefferson stated this belief in what was to become the Declaration’s best-known passage.



CONNECT to the Essential Question

What drove the colonists to declare independence from Great Britain?



All regions and groups

- feared that British troops might be used against colonists
- suffered from tax increases (Stamp Act 1765)
- were angered that the right to tax had been taken away from colonial assemblies (Stamp Act 1765)
- suffered from duty on imports (Sugar Act 1764; Townshend Acts 1767)

Southern Colonies

- Planters were angry that the Proclamation of 1763 restricted them from speculating in land beyond the Appalachian Mountains.

New England and Middle Colonies

- Merchants suffered from interference in colonial trade (Tea Act 1773).
- New England merchants suffered from the Sugar Act of 1764, which raised duty on sugar
- New Yorkers were angry they had to pay to house troops in New York (Quartering Act 1765)

Backcountry

- angered by Proclamation of 1763, which restricted movement west
- Some Scots-Irish had never felt loyalty to Britain.

CRITICAL THINKING Draw Conclusions What issues united the colonists against Great Britain?