**THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

* The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776.
* The [Liberty Bell](http://www.elcivics.com/liberty_bell_photo.html) was rung before it was read to the people of Philadelphia.
* The Declaration of Independence announced that the thirteen colonies were free from Britain.
* King George III was the King of Britain at the time.
* Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. Benjamin Franklin and John Adams made minor changes.
* Fifty-six delegates signed the Declaration of Independence.
* The [Preamble](http://www.elcivics.com/us_declaration_preamble.html) summarizes a philosophy of government that supported the revolution.
* The Preamble states that all men are created equal and that they have unalienable rights which include life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
* Unalienable rights are natural, individual rights that people are born with.
* Important ideas in the Declaration of Independence include:

1. Natural rights.  
  
2. The power of government comes from the people.  
  
3. People can change their government if it hurts their natural rights.  
  
4. All people are created equal.

**FUN FACTS**

1. The original handwritten copy of the Declaration of Independence does not exist anymore.

2. The first copy made of the original is badly faded. It is on display along with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights at the National Archives Rotunda.

3. Together the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights are called the Charters of Freedom.

4. Thomas Jefferson's first draft criticized the slave trade, but it was changed by Congress.

5. The first and largest [signature](http://www.elcivics.com/john_hancock_signature.html) on the Declaration of Independence is that of [John Hancock,](http://www.elcivics.com/john_hancock_photo.html) President of the Continental Congress.

**COMPREHENSION CHECK**- Answer on a separate sheet of paper

1. When was the Declaration of Independence adopted?

2. What did the Declaration of Independence announce?

3. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?

4. What are three natural rights in the Declaration of Independence?

5. Name four important ideas found in the Declaration of Independence.