

Dua Wednesday (9/25)-odd //
Dua Thursday (9/26)-even

COMMON SENSE AND INDEPENDENCE

In January 1776, Thomas Paine, a political theorist and writer who had come to America from England in 1774, published a fifty-page pamphlet, "Common Sense." Within three months, 100,000 copies of the pamphlet were sold. Paine attacked the idea of hereditary monarchy, declaring that one honest man was worth more to society than "all the crowned ruffians that ever lived." He presented the alternatives—continued submission to a tyrannical king and an outworn government, or liberty and happiness as a self-sufficient, independent republic. Circulated throughout the colonies, "Common Sense" helped to crystallize the desire for separation.

There still remained the task, however, of gaining each colony's approval of a formal declaration. On May 10, 1776—one year to the day since the Second Continental Congress had first met—a resolution was adopted calling for separation. Now only a formal declaration was needed. On June 7th, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced a resolution declaring, "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states. . . ." Immediately, a committee of five, headed by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, was appointed to prepare a formal declaration.

Largely Jefferson's work, the Declaration of Independence, adopted on July 4, 1776, not only announced the birth of a new nation, but also set forth a philosophy of human freedom that would become a dynamic force throughout the entire world. The Declaration draws upon French and English Enlightenment political philosophy, but one influence in particular stands out: John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*. Locke took conceptions of the traditional rights of Englishmen and universalized them into the natural rights of all humankind. The Declaration's familiar opening passage echoes Locke's social-contract theory of government:

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 a 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.

In the Declaration, Jefferson linked Locke's principles directly to the situation in the colonies. To fight for American independence was to fight for a government based on popular consent in place of a government by a king who had "combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws. . . ." Only a government based on popular consent could secure natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Thus, to fight for American independence was to fight on behalf of one's own natural rights.

DIRECTIONS:

* Highlight or Underline the answers in the reading that correspond to the 5 questions on the back.

1. The one document that helped more than any other rally support among Americans for independence was
 - a. John Dickinson's "Olive Branch Petition," July 1775.
 - b. Richard Henry Lee's resolution, June 7, 1776.
 - c. Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" pamphlet, January 1776.
 - d. Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

2. The Declaration of Independence was based on theories of natural rights of humankind and social contract government found in
 - a. Benjamin Franklin's Albany Plan of Union.
 - b. John Dickinson's *Letter of a Pennsylvania Farmer*.
 - c. John Locke's **Second Treatise on Government**.
 - d. Thomas Paine's "Common Sense."

3. Jefferson stated that governments
 - a. do not require the consent of the governed.
 - b. are not instituted to secure the rights of men.
 - c. can be abolished if they do not protect rights.
 - d. cannot be altered or abolished.

4. Jefferson argued that the fight for independence was a fight
 - a. for natural rights.
 - b. for freedom from taxation without representation.
 - c. against a government based on popular consent.
 - d. for the right to vote.

UNLOCKING LOCKE

Task: After reading about John Locke. Pick two of his ideas that you either agree with or disagree with. What are they? Why do you disagree or agree?