

The Declaration of Independence

The student will be able to...

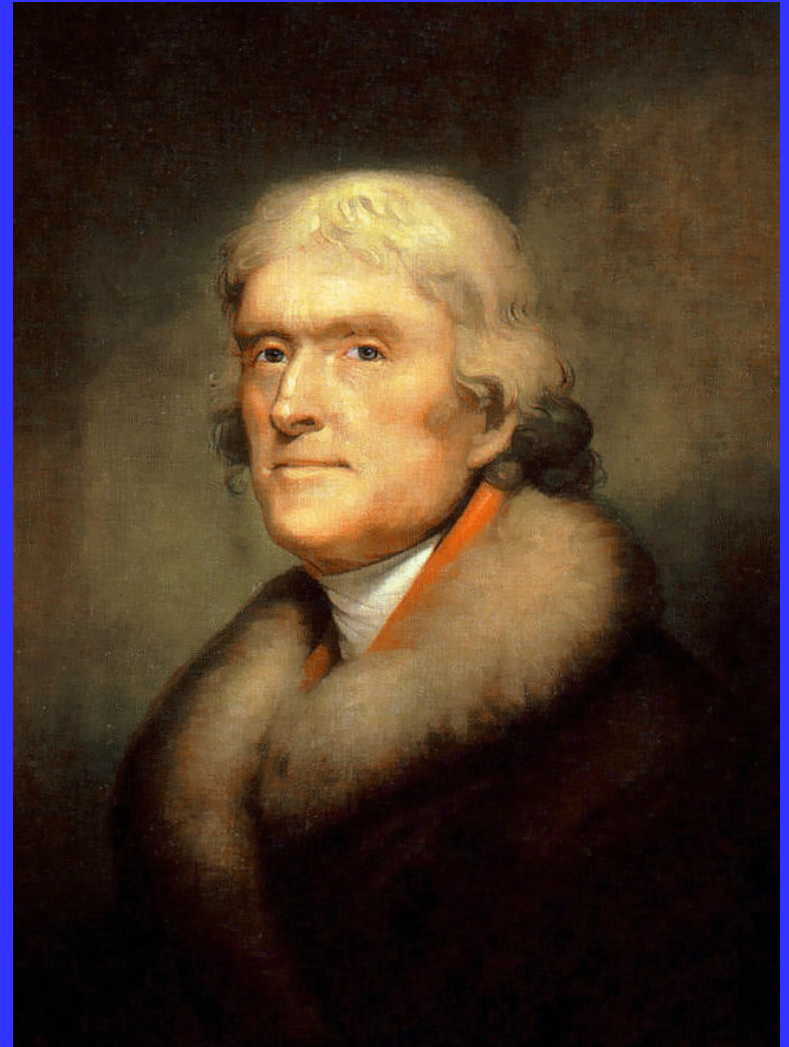
- Explain what ideas and arguments are presented in the Declaration of Independence

Declaring Independence

- June 1776 the Congress decided to cut ties with Britain
- They prepared a statement of the reasons for separation—a Declaration of Independence
- Virginian Thomas Jefferson was chosen to draft the declaration

Drafting a Declaration

- Jefferson's political ideas were influenced by the Enlightenment
 - An eighteenth-century European movement that emphasized science and reason as keys to improving society



The Parts of the Declaration

- Preamble (introduction): explained the Declaration's purpose
- Declaration of rights: Jefferson drew heavily on the writings of John Locke
 - Locke believed that people have natural rights—rights that belong to them simply because they are human
 - Jefferson called these unalienable rights—rights that could not be taken away

The Parts of the Declaration

- Complaints against the king:
Jefferson wrote that public officials must make decisions based on the law not on their own personal wishes
 - He called this a rule of law
- Resolution: declaring the colonies free and independent states

The Declaration is Adopted

- Jefferson's document not only declared the nation's independence, it also defined the basic principles on which American government and society would rest
- Congressional delegates voted to approve the Declaration on July 4, 1776.