

Participation in Government

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Room 827

Updating the Declaration of Independence

(Typed and double-spaced)

Instructions:

The Declaration of Independence has been judged as one of the greatest documents of humankind. Written more than 200 years ago, it has stood as a source of inspiration and a symbol of freedom to oppressed people throughout the world. The strength of the document today lies in the often-quoted first two paragraphs, but because they are written in the style and language of the time, it is often difficult to understand what is said. Below are those paragraphs. You will update the document as follows:

1. Identify words that have more easily understandable modern replacements.
2. Use those words to determine the meaning of each line. (Identify the basic concept.)
3. Rewrite the first two paragraphs based on the concepts, using the language of today. (Do not attempt to translate the document! Ask yourself: How would I say this today?)

Declaration of Independence

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.

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 shown, 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.

Use the following ideas as a guide:

Paragraph 1

1. Changing of relationship with England (They did not want to be ruled by them anymore.)
2. Assuming the right of Self-government (They wanted to govern themselves)
3. Necessary to state the reasons why. (They wanted the world to know the reasons why.)

Paragraph 2

1. Belief about equality (What did they believe?)
2. Rights of everyone (What rights did everyone have?)
3. Creation of government (Who creates the government?)
4. Source of government's power (Where does the government get its power from?)
5. Primary task of government (What is the most important job of the government?)
6. Failure of the primary task (What should the people do if the government fails at the task?)
7. Reasons to change a government (What kind of reasons would justify a change in the government?)
8. Role and creation of a new government (What is the role of the people if they have to create a new government?)