

Declaration of Independence Packet

Historian's interpretation #1: Modified Excerpts from *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* by Bernard Bailyn (1967)

The Declaration of Independence represents the colonists' deepest fears and beliefs. The colonists believed they saw a clear pattern in the events that followed 1763. They believed they saw an evil and deliberate conspiracy to crush liberty in America. They saw evidence of this conspiracy in the Stamp Act and in the Coercive Acts.

They also believed that America was destined to play a special role in history. They believed that America would become "the foundation of a great and mighty empire, the largest the world ever saw to be founded on such principles of liberty and freedom, both civil and religious." The colonists believed that England was trying to enslave them, and that they should use "all the power which God has given them" to protect themselves.

Historian's interpretation #2: Modified Excerpts from *A People's History of the United States* by Howard Zinn (1980)

It seemed clear to the educated, upper-class colonists that something needed to be done to persuade the lower class to join the revolutionary cause, to direct their anger against England. The solution was to find language inspiring to all classes, specific enough in its listing of grievances to fill people with anger against the British, vague enough to avoid class conflict, and stirring enough to build patriotic feelings.

Everything the Declaration of Independence was about – popular control over governments, the right of rebellion and revolution, fury at political tyranny, economic burdens, and military attacks – was well suited to unite large numbers of colonists and persuade even those who had grievances against one another to turn against England. Some Americans were clearly omitted from those united by the Declaration of Independence: Indians, black slaves, and women.

1. Briefly describe ONE major difference between Bailyn's and Zinn's historical interpretations of why did the Founding Fathers write the Declaration of Independence?

Directions: Below are most of the grievances from the Declaration of Independence.

- If the grievance seems to be something that would affect only the rich and powerful, write O (for ONLY rich and powerful)
- If the grievance seems to be something that would affect all the colonists, write A (for ALL the colonists)
- If you don't know who would be affected, write '?'

Grievance	Rich (O), All (A), or (?)
(1 & 2) He has refused to pass, and forbidden his governors to pass, important and necessary laws.	
(5 & 6) He has broken up certain legislatures that opposed him, and refused to let others be elected.	
(8 & 9) He has refused to establish courts of justice, and has made judges dependent on him for their jobs and salaries.	
(10) He has sent swarms of British officers to harass our people and eat our food.	
(11 & 12) He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.	
(16) For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;	
(17) For imposing taxes on us without our consent;	
(18) For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury;	
(23 & 24) He is waging war against us; He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.	
(27) He has started fights among us and has also forced us to live near merciless Indian savages.	

1. Do these grievances seem to be things that upset rich people or everyone?
2. Do you think these complaints would give people reason to go to war and possibly die? Why or why not?

Loyalist Document Analysis

Document A (Modified)

The True Interest of America Impartially Stated, 1776 Suppose we were to revolt from Great Britain, declare ourselves Independent, and set up a Republic of our own—what would be the consequence? My blood runs chill when I think of the calamities, the complicated evils that must follow. . .

Devastation and ruin must mark the progress of this war along the sea coast of America. So far, Britain has not exerted her power. Her number of troops and ships of war here at present, is very little more than she judged necessary in time of peace. . .

But as soon as we declare independence, ruthless war, with all its aggravated horrors, will ravage our once happy land. Our seacoasts and ports will be ruined, and our ships taken. Torrents of blood will be spilled, and thousands reduced to beggary and wretchedness.

By declaring independence, we would instantly lose all assistance from our friends in England. They will stop saying anything in our favour, for they would be seen as rebels, and treated accordingly.

The only European power from which we can possibly receive assistance, is France. But France is now at peace with Great Britain; and is it possible that France would interrupt that peace, and risk another war with England, from a disinterested motive of aiding and protecting these Colonies?

Source: Charles Inglis, Anglican minister, wrote a pamphlet in response to Thomas Paine's "Common Sense," entitled "The True Interest of America Impartially Stated, 1776." Impartial means fair or objective.

Loyalists

Document B: Source: The letter above was published by an anonymous writer in a Pennsylvania newspaper in 1775.

My Friends and Countrymen,

This howling wilderness has been converted into a flourishing and populous country. But, is this not due to the way in which the colonies have been treated from the beginning? Isn't our growth a result of Great Britain's willingness to encourage our industry and protect us from foreign countries? If so, surely some degree of gratitude, such as becomes a free and liberal people, would be appropriate.

The peace and security we have already enjoyed under Great Britain's protection, before the mistaken system of taxation took place, must make us look back with regret to those happy days whose loss we mourn, and which every rational man must consider as the golden age of America.

Let us then, my friends and countrymen, be patient and avoid all inflammatory publications that are disrespectful to our most gracious Sovereign. Let us look forward to a happy termination of our present disputes, and a cordial reconciliation with our mother country.

	Document A	Document B
What are two reasons this author gives for why American colonists should be loyal to England?		
Based on this document, what can you infer about what life was like in the colonies in the 1770s?		
Based on these two letters, how did Loyalists feel about England's rule over the colonies? What would people who disagreed with them say?		

Loyalist Dad Letter

Directions: Below is a primary source of a letter that a Patriot wrote to his dad who was a British Loyalist father. You will be writing from the perspective of the father a response letter to your son. I have also included an introduction/overview of the Father and Son as well to provide you with more information to write your letter.

Introduction

In February 1778, Timothy Pickering Jr. received word from Massachusetts that his father was dying. An adjutant general in George Washington's Continental Army, Pickering wrote his father this moving letter of farewell on February 23, 1778, from his post in Yorktown, Virginia. Born and raised in Salem, Massachusetts, a graduate of Harvard, and a successful lawyer, Timothy Pickering Jr. revered his father but disagreed with him on one critical issue: colonial independence from Great Britain. Timothy Jr. supported resistance to British rule, while Timothy Sr. remained a staunch Tory.

The Revolution frequently divided families, but, as this letter indicates, the bonds of affection between Timothy Jr. and Sr. were never broken. "When I look back on past time, I regret our difference of sentiment in great as well as (sometimes) in little politics; as it was a deduction from the happiness otherwise to have been enjoyed," Timothy wrote his father. "Yet you had always too much regard to freedom in thinking & the rights of conscience, to lay upon me any injunctions which could interfere with my own opinion of what was [inserted: my] duty . . . Often have I thanked my Maker for the greatest blessing of my life—your example & instructions in all the duties I owe to God, and my neighbour."

Timothy Pickering Sr. died in June 1778. Two years later, General Washington promoted Timothy Jr. to quartermaster general. He would go on to serve as secretary of state under Presidents Washington and Adams. Pickering prominently opposed US neutrality in European wars—a policy favored by Washington and Adams—which led to his dismissal from the Cabinet in 1800. Later elected to Congress, he became the first US senator censured by the Senate, for publically sharing a classified document in an effort to prove that James Madison had acted unconstitutionally in claiming part of Florida for the United States. Pickering and his wife, Rebecca, had ten children, one of whom wrote his father's biography in 1867. Timothy Pickering Jr. died in 1829 in Salem.

Letter from Timothy Pickering Jr. to Timothy Pickering Sr., February 23, 1778. (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC02325)

York Town Feb.y 23. 1778.

My Honoured Father,

With much grief I received the account of your indisposition; but at the same time was happy to find you rather growing better, & that there was a prospect of your recovery. Not that I deemed you anxious to live; I supposed the contrary: -- but whether to live or die, I know you are perfectly resigned to the will of Heaven.—But for the sake of your family & friends, I wished you to live yet many years: that I too

might again see you, & manifest that filial duty which I feel, & would cheerfully pay, to your latest breath.

When I look back on past time, I regret our difference of sentiment in great as well as (sometimes) in little politics; as it was a deduction from the happiness otherwise to have been enjoyed. Yet you had always too much regard to freedom in thinking & the rights of conscience to lay upon me any injunctions which could interfere with my own opinion of what was [inserted: my] duty. In all things I have endeavoured to keep a good conscience, void of offence towards God and man. Often have I thanked my Maker for the greatest blessing of [2] my life— your example & instructions in all the duties I owe to God, and my neighbour. They have not been lost upon me; tho' I am aware that in many things I have offended, & come short of my duty. For these things I am grieved; but not as those who have no hope.

I am deeply indebted too for your care in my education; I only regret that I improved my time no better.

But altho' the line of action I have pursued has not always been such as you would have chosen; yet (but I boast not) in regard to religion and morality, I hope you have never repented that I was your son. By God's grace I will in my future life aim at higher attainments in those all-essential points; not only from a sense of duty to my Creator—from a regard to my own happiness here and beyond the grave—but that I may never wound the breast of a parent to whom I am under so many and so great obligations.

My love and duty to you and my mother, conclude me your obedient son,

Tim. Pickering junr: