

# Topic of your choice based on thomas jefferson, the declaration of independence

[History](#)



Outline Thesis: The Declaration has power today for two reason: the background from which it emerged and its powerful rhetoric. A The background tothe Declaration gives it emotional power B The emotional power is backed and confirmed by the rhetoric C Without these two elements working together, the Declaration would not be as inspiring Conclusion The Declaration of Independence Few documents in world history have had the significant impact that the Declaration of Independence has had. Throughout the last 200 plus years it has inspired millions of people and showed them that a better way of life is possible. The American colonists refused to be ruled by a distant Parliament that would not even respect its own constitution. They struck out on their own, revolting, and in the process created the greatest country the world has ever seen. But it is impossible to understand that great country, the United States of America, without first understanding the document that led to its founding. The Declaration, at first ignored in the years of the Revolutionary War, is now seen as one of the most inspiring documents in world history. It bears closer scrutiny in order to determine what makes it so unique and such a tribute to the men who wrote it. The truth is that the Declaration has power today for two reason: the background from which it emerged and its powerful rhetoric. In order to properly understand the Declaration, we must understand the background of the document. In a sense it was written with a deep sense of regret (Wills, 40). Many of the Congressional leaders of the time had no real desire to make a permanent break with Britain. They were furious over the way they thought they had been treated by the stamp laws and the tea taxes, and by the massacres, but they also felt there was a way to work past their

differences. But as the Revolutionary War gained steam it became increasingly difficult to find a way to reset relations. Thomas Jefferson himself wrote at the time in a letter to a friend, " Believe me, dear Sir: there is not in the British empire a man who more cordially loves a union with Great Britain than I do. But, by the God that made me, I will cease to exist before I yield to a connection on such terms as the British Parliament propose; and in this, I think I speak the sentiments of America" (Hazelton, 19). Nevertheless, the men who led the nascent America felt compelled to act. They saw the world around them and the viciousness and contempt of the British and they knew that they could not support this empire any longer. They had to revolt. It is that background, the idea of the reluctant revolutionaries that helps to make the Declaration such a powerful document today. This emotional background is very important. One of the most powerful elements of the Declaration is its rhetoric, especially its appeal to natural law. The authors of the document, and Jefferson in particular, wanted to ground the arguments of the Declaration not in the fine points of British or Virginian law, but in something bigger than that. Many of the principles of natural law can be traced back thousands of years and have been found in many societies. These were principles that everyone could understand. The Declaration begins by asserting them. 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 (Declaration of Independence). The appeal to God, respect, and opinions of mankind are powerful rhetorical effects. Elsewhere the use of a long list of indictments against the King is equally effective. Rather than simply saying King George is a bad king and he disrespects us, therefore we must revolt, instead the Declaration scrupulously lists the offences committed by the King, many of which can also be chalked up to violations of natural law. He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation: For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States: For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world: For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent... (Declaration of Independence)

This kind of rhetoric proved to be very effective. As the list continued, the outrage of the people grew more ferocious. The Declaration of Independence was one of the greatest documents ever written by human beings. Even if it was not cared for in the early days of the Republic, it certainly is now (Phillips). It launched America on its path to freedom and justice. Its words still echo in this great country. The main reasons why the document was so remarkably inspiring relate to its background and the rhetoric it employs. Without these two elements, it would not be nearly as important to every American as it is. Bibliography Hazelton, John H. The Declaration of Independence: Its History. New York: Da Capo Press, 1970. Phillips, Heather A., " Preserving America's Documents: Safety and Happiness The Paradox of the Declaration of Independence". The Early America Review, Vol. 7 no. 4,

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