Declaration of Independence

In 1776, in the middle of the American Revolutionary War, the rich white men who were leaders of the war got together to write a letter to the King of England. They wanted to explain why they were fighting to be their own country, independent of England. This is what they had to say:

Preamble

Sometimes one group of people decides to split off from another group, and to become an independent country, as the laws of Nature and of God say that they can. But when this happens, if they want other people to respect them, they should explain why they are splitting off.

Natural Rights

We think these things are obviously true:

* That all men are created equal
* That all men have certain rights given to them by God not by men
* That the purpose of government is to protect the rights of the people
* Whenever any government is getting in the way of these rights, people have the right to change it or get rid of it, and to make a new government, in whatever way seems most likely to make them safe and happy.

British Wrongs

People should not change their government without a good reason, but when there have been a lot of problems for a long time, it is their right and their duty to throw off that government, and to set up a better government.

We here in America have suffered for a very long time, and now we should change our government. The king of England has done many bad things to us.

1. He won't let us pass laws we need for everybody's good.

2. Even when we do pass laws, he won't sign them so they can go into effect.

3. He sends lots of English soldiers here when there isn't even a war, and makes us let them live in our own houses.

4. He tells us these soldiers can do whatever they want and don't have to obey the law.

5. He won't let us buy and sell things from wherever we want. We can only buy things from England.

6. He makes us pay all kinds of taxes without asking us about it.

When we ask him to stop, he just keeps on doing more bad things. We have tried to talk to the other people who live in England. We asked them to stop these crimes against us, but they have acted as though they were deaf. So we have to separate from England, and they will be our enemies during the war, though we hope they'll be our friends when there is peace.

**Independence**

So we **declare that the United States are now completely independent of the King of England. We have no more political connection to England at all**.

And we promise that we will fight for our independence with the help of God.

We promise by our lives, our property, and our sacred honor.