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Jefferson and his committee colleagues presented the Declaration of Independence to the Congress on June 28, 1776. Historians consider this image to be a realistic rendering of that moment. Copyprint of painting by Edward Savage and/or Robert Edge Pine. Online, courtesy Library of Congress.

Mr. Jefferson wrote his draft of the colonies' Declaration of Independence during June of 1776. Most historians think it took him about two weeks.

After he finished his work, he showed the draft to his committee. The Library of Congress notes that eighty-six changes (including slavery deletions) were made to the document Jefferson called the "Original Rough Draught." It was submitted to the Continental Congress on the 28th of June, 1776. Slightly changed, from the original draft, are these words:

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 to 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.

A significant edit changed the meaning of Jefferson's most famous line:

- "We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable; that all men are created equal and independent" became (thanks to a suggestion from Benjamin Franklin) ...
- "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal."

On July 2, 1776, Charles Thompson, Secretary of the Second Continental Congress, penned Lee's resolution severing the ties with Great Britain and put it to a vote:

Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and, of right, ought to be, Free and Independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connexion between them, and the state of Great Britain, is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

All the colonies except New York (which abstained) voted in favor of the resolution. (Follow this link to see the

actual results of the vote - look at the lower right side.)

On July 2, 1776, Congress approved the concept: The British colonies would sever all political ties with Great Britain. John Adams told his wife Abigail it was the greatest day in the history of the country.

More work had to be done on the Declaration itself to make it acceptable to all the colonies. The committee needed two more days to complete the final draft. (Follow this link to see handwritten changes by John Adams, Ben Franklin and others.)

On July 4, 1776, the final version of the Declaration of Independence was ready for a vote. Congress was in session at the State House (now Independence Hall) on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia. This time, even New York approved.

When it came time for the representatives to sign the document - a treasonous action - John Hancock, president of the Congress, signed in huge letters. He wanted to be sure the king saw his name. Today, his is the only signature still legible on the original Declaration.

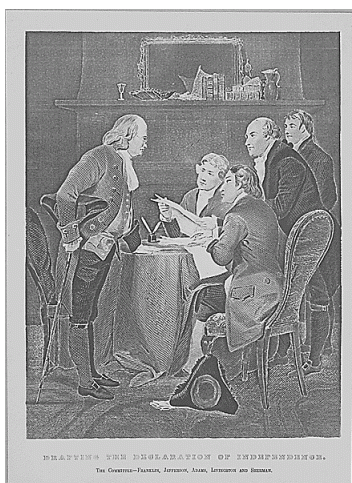
See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DECLARATION-of-INDEPENDENCE-Thomas-Jefferson>

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Media Stream



Drafting the Declaration of Independence

Image, described above, online courtesy U.S. National Archives. NARA image NWDNS-30-N-31(170).

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Continental Congress Voting Independence

Image online, courtesy Historical Society of Pennsylvania via the Library of Congress.

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Committee Submitting the Declaration to Congress

Image online, courtesy the ushistory.org website.

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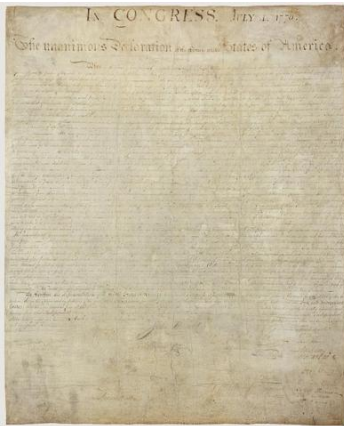
CHARLES THOMPSON ESQ.
Secretary to Congress.
Painted by Wm. Verelsteden, 1776. Engraved by R. Wilson, 1776.

Charles Thomson, Esq.

This engraving of Charles Thomson, by Pierre Eugène du Simitière (1736-1784), is from *Portraits of the Generals, Ministers, Magistrates, Members of Congress & others*, 1783. It is online, courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-44786.

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Original Declaration - July 4, 1776

Image, Courtesy U.S. National Archives

Reference and quoted passage from [Charters of Freedom](#) at the U.S. National Archives.

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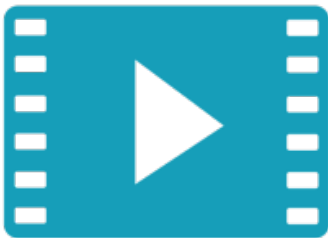
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Presenting the Declaration of Independence

Painting by Edward Savage and/or Robert Edge PineView this asset at:

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Colonial Americans as British Subjects

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