

# Pre-Test

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: A FOUNDATION OF IDEAS FOR A NEW AGE

### Quiz

**Directions:** Answer the following questions in the spaces provided. Use the back of this sheet if necessary.

1. What is the Declaration of Independence?
  
2. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
  
3. According to the Declaration of Independence, people are born with three basic rights. Name these rights.
  
4. What were the signers of the Declaration of Independence willing to loose by declaring their independence from England?
  
5. On what date were the thirteen colonies reborn as the free and independent United States of America?
  
6. Even after the Declaration of Independence was signed, which American people were refused their freedom?
  
7. When do people have the right to institute new government?

### TRUE OR FALSE?

**Directions:** Mark the space provided below with a "T" if the statement is true, or an "F" if it is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The the enactment of the Stamp Act was one event that united the 13 American colonies against England.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The decision to separate from England was quickly and easily made by the members of the Continental Congress.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. "All men are created equal . . ." is a belief about how a king and his people are equal under the law.

## The First Continental Congress

Many of the colonists believed that the British government would do anything, even use its army, to make them obey the British laws. So representatives of the colonies decided to meet to discuss ways they might respond to the growing British threat. The first meeting took place in September 1774 at Philadelphia's Carpenters' Hall. Because it was the first of its kind on the North American continent, the meeting was later called the First Continental Congress.

The 56 delegates at the Congress represented the wide range of thought in the colonies. Some wanted to break away from Britain. Others wanted to find a way to get along better with Britain. Following neither extreme, the Congress agreed to develop a statement of rights. The delegates stated these rights in a **petition**, or a signed request, that they sent to Parliament.

In the petition, the Congress said that the colonists had a right to "life, liberty, and property." The Congress also stated that only the colonial legislatures had the authority to make laws "in all cases of taxation and internal polity [government]." The petition concluded by issuing a warning: "We are for the present only resolved to pursue . . . peaceable measures."

The Congress set May 10, 1775, as the deadline for



Figure 1.1



## DEMOCRATIC VALUES

### The Right to Privacy

One of the rights listed in the English Bill of Rights prevented soldiers and other government officials from entering a person's home without the owner's permission or a warrant, or order, from a court of law. As more and more British soldiers were sent to North America, however, the British government needed more places for them to live. Some colonists' homes were seized by British soldiers. These soldiers went into the people's homes and often lived there without the owner's permission.

Today, the right of privacy remains one of the most valued rights in the United States. According to the rights of United States citizens, in most cases government officials must acquire a warrant from a court of law before they can enter a person's home without permission.

#### Analyze the Value

- ① Why did the American colonists believe their rights had been ignored by the British soldiers?
- ② **Make It Relevant** Why do you think privacy is an important right for Americans to have?

Parliament to respond to the petition. If Parliament took no action by then, the Congress would meet again. Before ending the meeting, however, the members of the Continental Congress agreed to stop most trade with Britain.

Meanwhile, in Virginia colonial leaders such as Patrick Henry suggested that the colonists begin preparing for war. He told the House of Burgesses, "I know not what course others may take: but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

**VIEW** Why did the First Continental Congress meet?

## What is a declaration?

The American Revolution was well underway when delegates from the thirteen colonies reconvened in May of 1775 for the Second Continental Congress. Many of the original delegates returned with a few new representatives attending, like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Holding the position of president was John Hancock. One of the first decisions made by the Second Continental Congress was to form an official army, which would be called The Continental Army. George Washington would be the commander in chief. Another topic discussed was whether or not to seek independence from Britain. Among the group of delegates, there were mixed feelings about how to handle the British government. Some delegates wanted to go ahead and declare their independence from Britain and some wanted to keep working on coming to a peaceful resolution with the King. As a result, the delegates decided to draw up another petition for the King. The petition, called The Olive Branch, said that the colonists were seeking peace between them and the British government. The petition was delivered to the King, but he refused to read it. He would later voice that the petition was an act of rebellion. The attitude of the King confirmed to many that the delegates should begin drawing up official documents declaring their independence from Britain. The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776. The

Second Continental Congress  
Declaration of Independence  
Discussion Questions

1. What is a declaration?
2. Why did the Second Continental Congress meet?
3. What petition was drawn up at the Second Continental Congress?
4. What disagreement was there among the delegates?
5. How did the king respond to the petition?
6. What else did the Congress decide to do?
7. What is a resolution?
8. What does it mean if something is prominent?
9. In present day, if someone says, "Give me your John Hancock," what does that mean?
10. When the king did not accept the Olive Branch petition, what did the delegates decide to do?
11. Do you think the king was acting fairly?
12. How might the world be different today if the king had accepted the Olive Branch petition?