

Name: _____

Class: _____*

Directions: Read both of the historian’s interpretations of the Declaration of Independence. Create arguments based on the inquiry question. Provide evidence and analysis to support your argument.

Inquiry Question: Why did the Founding Fathers write the Declaration of Independence?

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.

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.

Vocabulary:

Deliberate Conspiracy: Intentional plan

Historian #1: Bernard Bailyn	
Argument:	Evidence:
The founding fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence because:	According to the document:
Analysis:	
This shows:	

Historians 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 convince 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, unclear enough to avoid class conflict, and inspiring enough to build patriotic feelings.

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

Vocabulary:

Grievances: Problems

Historian #2: Howard Zinn	
Argument:	Evidence:
The founding fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence because:	According to the document:
Analysis:	
This shows:	

American Declaration of Independence

1) 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.

2) 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. 3) That to secure these rights, governments are **instituted** among men, **deriving** their just powers from the **consent** of the governed. 4) That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of 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.

Vocabulary

Dissolve: disappear bands: connections

Station: place

Impel: force

Self-evident: obvious

Endowed: given

Unalienable: cannot be taken away

To secure: to get

Instituted: established

Deriving: getting

Consent: agreement

Alter/Abolish: Change/Get rid of

In the space below, re-write the Declaration of Independence in your own words:

1) Throughout Human history it is necessary for people to get rid of _____ because they are entitled to _____.

2) We believe in these obvious truths: that all men are created equal, that they _____

3) In order to protect these rights, governments are set up. These governments get their powers from _____.

4) _____.

Comprehension Question:

Based on the Preamble, Why do you think the Declaration was written? Do you agree with Bailyn (historian #1) or Zinn (Historian #2)?