

Name _____

Breaking Free: Why the American Colonies Declared Independence from Great Britain

Short Answer Key

1. The Coercive Acts or Intolerable Acts were a series of punitive measures passed by the British Parliament in response to the Boston Tea Party. They included the closure of the port of Boston, restrictions on colonial self-governance, and the ability to try British officials accused of crimes in England. Colonists viewed these acts as oppressive because they curtailed their rights and autonomy, making them feel like second-class British subjects.
2. Thomas Paine's pamphlet "Common Sense" played a significant role in the drive for independence by passionately advocating for complete separation from Great Britain. Paine's arguments resonated with colonists as he articulated the idea that it was time for the colonies to create their own government and destiny, rather than being subject to British rule. His persuasive writing galvanized support for independence.
3. The Declaration of Independence articulated several key principles and beliefs, including the idea of natural rights (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness), government by consent (legitimate governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed), and the right to revolution (the people have the right to overthrow oppressive governments and establish a new one). These principles shaped the colonists' vision for a new nation founded on principles of liberty, equality, and self-determination.
4. The Revolutionary War played a crucial role in the American colonies' quest for independence. It was a protracted conflict that lasted from 1775 to 1783 and saw the colonists, now fighting as Americans, facing numerous challenges and hardships. The war was instrumental in securing their independence, as it ultimately led to the recognition of the United States as a sovereign nation through the Treaty of Paris in 1783.
5. The American Revolutionary War concluded in 1783 with the signing of the Treaty of Paris, which officially recognized the United States as an independent and sovereign nation. This marked the end of years of conflict following the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

