

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

### Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. The Coercive Acts or Intolerable Acts were a series of punitive measures imposed by the British Parliament in response to the Boston Tea Party. They included the closure of the port of Boston, the restructuring of Massachusetts' government, the expansion of British troops' quartering in private homes, and the provision that British officials accused of crimes would be tried in England rather than locally. Colonists regarded these acts as oppressive because they severely limited colonial self-governance and individual liberties. The measures not only punished Massachusetts but also served as a warning to other colonies, leading to increased colonial unity in opposition to British policies.
2. Thomas Paine's pamphlet "Common Sense" played a pivotal role in the drive for independence by providing a persuasive argument for complete separation from Great Britain. Paine's main arguments included questioning the legitimacy of monarchy, advocating for republican government, and stressing the importance of self-determination. His pamphlet resonated with colonists as it effectively articulated their growing discontent with British rule and provided a compelling vision for an independent American nation. "Common Sense" energized the movement for independence, garnering widespread support and inspiring many to join the cause.
3. The Declaration of Independence articulated fundamental principles that would shape the colonists' vision for a new nation. These principles included the belief in natural rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which were considered inherent to all individuals and not granted by government. The document also emphasized the concept of government by consent, asserting that legitimate governments derive their authority from the consent of the governed. Furthermore, the declaration asserted the right to revolution, stating that when a government becomes destructive of these principles, the people have the right to overthrow it and establish a new government that upholds their rights. These principles guided the colonists in their quest for independence and laid the foundation for the democratic principles of the United States.
4. The Revolutionary War played a pivotal role in the American colonies' journey toward independence. It was a protracted conflict that spanned from 1775 to 1783, during which American colonists, fighting as Americans, faced numerous challenges and hardships. The war included pivotal battles such as the Battle of Saratoga and the Siege of Yorktown. The conflict brought to life the principles articulated in the Declaration of Independence and served as the ultimate test of the colonists' determination to secure their independence. The war concluded with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, officially recognizing the United States as a sovereign nation and marking the successful achievement of independence.

