RS Notes: Analysis of the Declaration of Independence

**What date was it signed on?** *July 4, 1776*

**Paragraph 1:**

*Sometimes, it is necessary for people to break away from their government, in order to make one where everyone is equal and they are governed by the people.*

**Paragraph 2:**

*This declaration is based on certain truths. All men are created equal and have certain rights ("unalienable rights") that the government should never take away. These rights include "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."*

*Governments exist to support the rights of men. Governments exist only because people allow them to govern them. When a government doesn’t grant rights to the people and doesn’t let the people get involved, the people have the right to change their government in a way that will allow for their rights to be protected. Governments should not be overthrown for silly reasons; it is not normal for people to change a system that they are used to. However, when the people have suffered many abuses under the control of a totalitarian leader, they not only have the right but the duty to overthrow that government.*

**List the 27 abuses of King George III.**

1. *He doesn’t agree to laws that are good for the people.*
2. *He doesn’t let anyone pass laws without his permission; if they do, he’ll ignore it.*
3. *He won’t pass laws for people unless they give up their right to representation.*
4. *He calls Parliament to uncomfortable places so they just agree with him to leave there faster.*
5. *He dismisses Parliament when they don’t agree with him.*
6. *He won’t let people that disagree with him get elected. This leaves us open for invasion or civil war.*
7. *He doesn’t want people moving in or out of the country.*
8. *He obstructs justice by not passing laws that establish judiciary power.*
9. *He controls judges by threatening their jobs and salaries.*
10. *He made offices that are used to oppress the people.*
11. *He keeps the army ready, without the consent of Parliament.*
12. *The army doesn’t have to answer to the people.*
13. *The king and Parliament have abused their power by:*
14. *Keeping the army among the people.*
15. *Protecting the army by not holding them accountable for their actions.*
16. *Cutting off trade with other countries.*
17. *Taxing us without our permission.*
18. *Not allowing us a trial by jury.*
19. *Bringing us to England to be tried on made up charges.*
20. *Establishing absolute power in Canada and trying to impose it on us.*
21. *Taking away our constitutions and changing our government.*
22. *Getting rid of the colonies’ legislature.*
23. *He abandoned us and waged war against us.*
24. *He plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed our lives.*
25. *His army has been sent to destroy us and re-establish tyranny.*
26. *He is kidnapping our people and making them fight their friends and family. If they don’t, he’ll kill them.*
27. *He has refused to protect us from Native Americans and has caused us to fight each other.*

**Paragraph 3:**

*Every time he has hurt us, we have asked him to change, but he has only answered us by harming us more. A ruler who acts like a tyrant can’t rule free people.*

**Paragraph 4:**

*We have warned British citizens that Parliament has attempted to extend their jurisdiction over us. And, we reminded them of the agreement we had when we settled here. We appealed to our common nationality to try to stop these abuses. They’ve ignored us too, so we’re going to separate from them. We’ll consider them enemies in war, but friends in peace.*

**Paragraph 5:**

*We are declaring our independence. The united colonies have a right to be free and disconnected from the king and Great Britain. As an independent country, we can go to war, negotiate peace, make allies, start to trade, and anything else a country does. We believe God will protect us. We even have the support and loyalty of the colonists to our new nation.*

**Who was the first to sign the document?** *John Hancock*

**What crime were they committing by signing it?** *Treason*