

Dear King George

Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Sciences



In the late 1700s the American colonists were unhappy with King George III of England. They didn't think he was doing what a good leader should do. He charged unfair taxes, would not allow trade with other countries and made colonists open their homes for soldiers to live with them. Colonists felt very far away from their king. Something needed to change. The colonists began to rebel.

The Second Continental Congress formed in 1775 after fighting began in the American Revolution. Made up of delegates from the 13 American colonies, the Congress met in Philadelphia to lead the colonies toward independence. In 1776, a committee of the Congress selected Thomas Jefferson to write a letter to King George III. Jefferson had already proven himself to be an honorable and knowledgeable man. He was also an excellent writer.

The letter was a dangerous thing, because it would be considered treason by the king. The Congress was opposing their lawful ruler. People who were associated with this letter could be imprisoned or killed for saying they wanted to be independent from the king.

Jefferson's historic letter became known as the Declaration of Independence. It listed all the reasons that the colonists thought the king was not a very good king. It said that the king and the colonists should break their relationship with each other, and each should go their own way.

Congress approved the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. All the members of the Second Continental Congress signed it at the bottom. One of the men would become famous for his signature. John Hancock, president of the Second Continental Congress, signed in large, bold letters. His name has become a synonym for signature.

Name _____

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?

2) What was the Second Continental Congress?

3) Why would sending the letter be considered treason?

4) Name one thing King George was doing that the colonists considered unfair.

5) What was John Hancock's position in the Second Continental Congress?
