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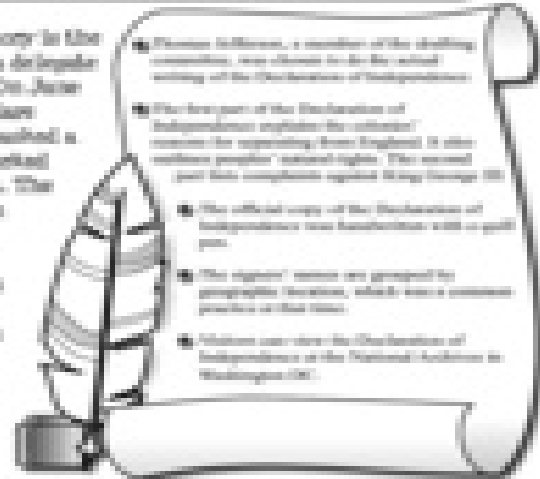
Colonial Era / Independence

From Rebellion to Revolution

John Hancock, one of the colonists most wanted by England's King George III, was the first man to sign the Declaration of Independence.

One of the most important documents in U.S. history is the Declaration of Independence. Richard Henry Lee was a delegate to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia. On June 7, 1776, he proposed that the 13 American colonies declare themselves free of England's rule. The Congress then asked a group of five men to draft a resolution. Those men worked for 12 days and then sent a final draft to the Congress. The Congress debated the resolution for two days and then passed it on July 4, 1776.

The next step was to get all 13 colonies to approve the resolution. This took five days. The Congress then wanted an official copy of the document to be made. Almost a month after being approved, the Declaration of Independence was finally signed on August 2. John Hancock, president of the Second Continental Congress, was the declaration's first signer. In all, 56 representatives signed this important document.



1. Why do you think it took so long for Jefferson's committee to draft the Declaration of Independence? _____

2. What information does the Declaration of Independence include? _____

3. Why are the signers' names grouped as they are at the bottom of the document? _____

4. Why was the Declaration of Independence not signed until August 2, 1776? _____

5. Why was John Hancock the first signer of the Declaration of Independence? _____
