

# Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms

## Worksheet

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### Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms

July 6, 1775

(1) A declaration by the representatives of the united colonies of North America, now met in Congress at Philadelphia, setting forth the causes and necessity of their taking up arms.

(2) If it was possible for men, who exercise their reason to believe, that the divine Author of our existence intended a part of the human race to hold an absolute property in, and an unbounded power over others, marked out by His infinite goodness and wisdom, as the objects of a legal **domination** never rightfully resistible, however severe and oppressive, the inhabitants of these colonies might at least require from the parliament of **Great Britain** some evidence, that this dreadful authority over them, has been granted to that body. But a reverence for our Creator, principles of humanity, and the dictates of common sense, must convince all those who reflect upon the subject, that government was instituted to promote the welfare of mankind, and ought to be administered for the **attainment** of that end. The legislature of Great Britain, however, **stimulated** by an **inordinate** passion for a power not only unjustifiable, but which they know to be peculiarly **reprobated** by the very constitution of that kingdom, and desparate of success in any mode of contest, where regard should be had to truth, law, or right, have at length, deserting those, attempted to effect their cruel and impolitic purpose of enslaving these colonies by violence, and have thereby rendered it necessary for us to close with their last appeal from reason to arms. Yet, however blinded that assembly may be, by their **intemperate** rage for unlimited domination, so to sight justice and the opinion of mankind, we esteem ourselves bound by obligations of respect to the rest of the world, to make known the justice of our cause. Our forefathers, inhabitants of the island of Great Britain, left their native land, to seek on these shores a residence for civil and religious freedom. At the expense of their blood, at the hazard of their fortunes, without the least charge to the country from which they removed, by unceasing labour, and an unconquerable spirit, they effected settlements in the distant and inhospitable wilds of America, then filled with numerous and warlike barbarians. — Societies or governments, vested with perfect legislatures, were formed under charters from the crown, and an harmonious intercourse was established between the colonies and the kingdom from which they **derived** their origin. The **mutual benefits** of this union became in a short time so extraordinary, as to excite astonishment. It is universally confessed, that the amazing increase of the wealth, strength, and navigation of the realm, arose from this source; and the minister, who so wisely and successfully directed the measures of Great Britain in the late war, publicly declared, that these colonies enabled her to triumph over her enemies. — Towards the conclusion of that war, it pleased our sovereign to make a change in his counsels. — From that fatal movement, the affairs of the British empire began to fall into confusion, and gradually sliding from the **summit** of glorious prosperity, to which they had been advanced by the virtues and abilities of one man, are at length distracted by the **convulsions**, that now shake it to its deepest foundations. — The new ministry finding the brave foes of Britain, though frequently defeated, yet still contending, took up the unfortunate idea of granting them a hasty peace, and then subduing her faithful friends.

(3) These colonies were judged to be in such a state, as to present victories without bloodshed, and all the easy **emoluments** of **statuteable** plunder. — The uninterrupted tenor of their peaceable and respectful behaviour from the beginning of colonization, their dutiful, **zealous**, and useful services during the war, though so recently and **amply** acknowledged in the most honourable manner by his majesty, by the late king, and by parliament, could not save them from the **meditated innovations**. — Parliament was influenced to adopt the **pernicious** project, and assuming a new power over them, have in the course of eleven years, given such decisive specimens of the spirit and consequences attending this power, as to leave no doubt concerning the effects of **acquiescence** under it. They have undertaken to give and grant our money without our consent, though we have ever exercised an exclusive right to dispose of our own property; statutes have been passed for extending the jurisdiction of courts of admiralty and vice-admiralty beyond their ancient limits; for depriving us of the accustomed and inestimable privilege of trial by jury, in cases affecting both life and property; for suspending the legislature of one of the colonies; for **interdicting** all commerce to the capital of another; and for altering fundamentally the form of government established by charter, and secured by acts of its own legislature solemnly confirmed by the crown; for exempting the "murderers" of colonists from legal trial, and in effect, from punishment; for erecting in a neighbouring province, acquired by the joint arms of Great Britain and America, a despotism dangerous to our very existence; and for quartering soldiers upon the colonists in time of profound peace. It has also been resolved in parliament, that colonists charged with committing certain offences, shall be transported to England to be tried. But why should we **enumerate** our injuries in detail? By one statute it is declared, that parliament can "of right make laws to bind us in all cases whatsoever." What is to defend us against so enormous, so unlimited a power? Not a single man of those who assume it, is chosen by us; or is subject to our control or influence; but, on the contrary, they are all of them **exempt** from the operation of such laws, and an American **revenue**, if not **diverted** from the **ostensible** purposes for which it is raised, would actually lighten their own burdens in proportion, as they increase ours. We saw the misery to which such despotism would reduce us. We for ten years incessantly and ineffectually besieged the throne as **supplicants**; we reasoned, we **remonstrated** with parliament, in the most mild and decent language.

(4) Administration sensible that we should regard these oppressive measures as freemen ought to do, sent over fleets and armies to enforce them. The indignation of the Americans was roused, it is true; but it was the indignation of a virtuous, loyal, and affectionate people. A Congress of delegates from the United Colonies was assembled at **Philadelphia**, on the fifth day of last September. We **resolved** again to offer an humble and dutiful petition to the King, and also addressed our fellow-subjects of Great Britain. We have pursued every **temperate**, every respectful measure; we have even proceeded to break off our commercial intercourse with our fellow-subjects, as the last peaceable **admonition**, that our attachment to no nation upon earth should **supplant** our attachment to liberty. — This, we flattered ourselves, was the ultimate step of the controversy: but subsequent events have shewn, how vain was this hope of finding **moderation** in our enemies.

(5) Several threatening expressions against the colonies were **inserted** in his majesty's speech; our petition, tho' we were told it was a decent one, and that his majesty had been pleased to receive it graciously, and to promise laying it before his parliament, was huddled into both houses among a bundle of American papers, and there neglected. The lords and commons in their address, in the month of February, said, that "a rebellion at that time actually existed within the province of **Massachusetts Bay**, and that those concerned with it, had been **countenanced** and encouraged by

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unlawful combinations and engagements, entered into by his majesty's subjects in several of the other colonies; and therefore they besought his majesty, that he would take the most effectual measures to enforce due obedience to the laws and authority of the supreme legislature." — Soon after, the commercial intercourse of whole colonies, with foreign countries, and with each other, was cut off by an act of parliament; by another several of them were intirely prohibited from the fisheries in the seas near their coasts, on which they always depended for their **sustenance**; and large reinforcements of ships and troops were immediately sent over to general Gage.

(6) Fruitless were all the **entreaties**, arguments, and **eloquence** of an **illustrious** band of the most distinguished peers, and commoners, who nobly and **strenuously** asserted the justice of our cause, to stay, or even to **mitigate** the heedless fury with which these **accumulated** and unexampled outrages were hurried on. — equally fruitless was the interference of the city of **London**, of **Bristol**, and many other respectable towns in our favor. Parliament adopted an **insidious manoeuvre** calculated to divide us, to establish a **perpetual** auction of taxations where colony should bid against colony, all of them uninformed what ransom would redeem their lives; and thus to **extort** from us, at the point of the bayonet, the unknown sums that should be **sufficient** to gratify, if possible to gratify, **ministerial rapacity**, with the miserable indulgence left to us of raising, in our own mode, the prescribed **tribute**. What terms more rigid and humiliating could have been dictated by remorseless victors to conquered enemies? in our circumstances to accept them, would be to deserve them.

(7) Soon after the intelligence of these proceedings arrived on this continent, general Gage, who in the course of the last year had taken possession of the town of **Boston**, in the province of Massachusetts Bay, and still occupied it a garrison, on the 19th day of April, sent out from that place a large detachment of his army, who made an unprovoked assault on the inhabitants of the said province, at the town of **Lexington**, as appears by the **affidavits** of a great number of persons, some of whom were officers and soldiers of that detachment, murdered eight of the inhabitants, and wounded many others. From thence the troops proceeded in warlike array to the town of **Concord**, where they set upon another party of the inhabitants of the same province, killing several and wounding more, until compelled to retreat by the country people suddenly assembled to repel this cruel aggression. Hostilities, thus commenced by the British troops, have been since prosecuted by them without regard to faith or reputation. — The inhabitants of Boston being confined within that town by the general their governor, and having, in order to **procure** their dismissal, entered into a treaty with him, it was **stipulated** that the said inhabitants having deposited their arms with their own magistrate, should have liberty to depart, taking with them their other effects. They accordingly delivered up their arms, but in open violation of honour, in defiance of the obligation of treaties, which even savage nations esteemed sacred, the governor ordered the arms deposited as aforesaid, that they might be preserved for their owners, to be seized by a body of soldiers; detained the greatest part of the inhabitants in the town, and compelled the few who were permitted to retire, to leave their most valuable effects behind.

(8) By this **perfidy** wives are separated from their husbands, children from their parents, the aged and the sick from their relations and friends, who wish to attend and comfort them; and those who have been used to live in plenty and even elegance, are reduced to **deplorable** distress.

(9) The general, further **emulating** his ministerial masters, by a proclamation bearing date on the 12th day of June, after venting the grossest falsehoods and **calumnies** against the good people of these colonies, proceeds to "declare them all, either by name or description, to be rebels and traitors, to **supercede** the course of the common law, and instead thereof to publish and order the use and exercise of the law martial." — His troops have butchered our

countrymen, have **wantonly** burnt **Charlestown**, besides a considerable number of houses in other places; our ships and vessels are seized; the necessary supplies of provisions are intercepted, and he is exerting his utmost power to spread destruction and devastation around him.

(10) We have received certain intelligence, that general Carleton, the governor of **Canada**, is instigating the people of that province and the Indians to fall upon us; and we have but too much reason to **apprehend**, that schemes have been formed to excite domestic enemies against us. In brief, a part of these colonies now feel, and all of them are sure of feeling, as far as the vengeance of administration can inflict them, the complicated calamities of fire, sword and famine. We are reduced to the alternative of chusing an unconditional submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers, or resistance by force. — The latter is our choice. — We have counted the cost of this contest, and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery. — Honour, justice, and humanity, forbid us tamely to surrender that freedom which we received from our gallant ancestors, and which our innocent **posterity** have a right to receive from us. We cannot endure the **infamy** and guilt of resigning succeeding generations to that wretchedness which inevitably awaits them, if we **basely entail** hereditary bondage upon them.

(11) Our cause is just. Our union is perfect. Our internal resources are great, and, if necessary, foreign assistance is undoubtedly attainable. — We gratefully acknowledge, as signal instances of the Divine favour towards us, that His Providence would not permit us to be called into this severe controversy, until we were grown up to our present strength, had been previously exercised in warlike operation, and possessed of the means of defending ourselves. With hearts fortified with these **animating reflections**, we most solemnly, before God and the world, declare, that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers, which our beneficent Creator hath graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with **unabating** firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties; being with one mind resolved to die freemen rather than to live slaves.

(12) Lest this declaration should disquiet the minds of our friends and fellow-subjects in any part of the empire, we assure them that we mean not to dissolve that union which has so long and so happily subsisted between us, and which we sincerely wish to see restored. — Necessity has not yet driven us into that desperate measure, or induced us to excite any other nation to war against them. — We have not raised armies with ambitious designs of separating from Great Britain, and establishing independent states. We fight not for glory or for conquest. We exhibit to mankind the remarkable spectacle of a people attacked by unprovoked enemies, without any **imputation** or even suspicion of offence. They boast of their privileges and civilization, and yet proffer no milder conditions than servitude or death.

(13) In our own native land, in defence of the freedom that is our birthright, and which we ever enjoyed till the late violation of it — for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the honest industry of our fore-fathers and ourselves, against violence actually offered, we have taken up arms. We shall lay them down when hostilities shall cease on the part of the **aggressors**, and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before.

(14) With an humble confidence in the mercies of the supreme and impartial Judge and Ruler of the Universe, we most devoutly implore His divine goodness to protect us happily through this great conflict, to dispose our adversaries to **reconciliation** on reasonable terms, and thereby to relieve the empire from the calamities of civil war.

### **Vocabulary —**

Define the following words. Try to keep definitions as brief as possible!

domination, attainment, stimulated, inordinate, reprobated, intemperate, derived, mutual benefits, summit, convulsions, emoluments, statuteable, zealous, amply, meditated, innovations, pernicious, acquiescence, interdicting, enumerate, exempt, revenue, diverted, ostensible, supplicants, remonstrated, resolved, temperate, admonition, supplant, moderation, inserted, countenanced, sustenance, entreaties, eloquence, illustrious, strenuously, mitigate, accumulated, insidious, manoeuvre, perpetual, extort, sufficient, ministerial, rapacity, tribute, affidavits, procure, stipulated, perfidy, deplorable, emulating, calumnies, supercede, wantonly, apprehend, posterity, infamy, basely, entail, animating, reflections, unabating, imputation, aggressors, reconciliation

### **Geography —**

- (1) Locate the following geographical places on a map, globe, and atlas.
- (2) Compare/Contrast the weather from these areas with your own for one week.
- (3) Make a meal from one or more of these areas for your family.

Great Britain, America, Philadelphia, Massachusetts Bay,  
London, Briston, Boston, Lexington, Concord, Charlestown, Canada

### **Comprehension/Discussion/Research Questions —**

1. Who is "the divine Author of our existence"? Why was this reference necessary?
2. Briefly state the reasons given in this document for civil government?
3. Identify and discuss some of the unlawful or covenant-breaking situations that Great Britain made against the colonies? (Hint: See Paragraph #3)
4. Why was it important for the colonists to insert "We have pursued every temperate, every respectful measure"? (Give Scriptural support if you have time)
5. Paragraphs #7 through #9 identifies some of the ways the civil rights of the colonists have been illegally violated. Discuss.

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6. What were some of the other actions that were to be illegally taken against the colonists that Congress learned in Paragraph #10?
7. What is the purpose of Paragraph #11? Why do you think the colonists included it?
8. Why do you think this passage was included in this legal declaration, "We have not raised armies with ambitious designs of separating from Great-Britain, and establishing independent states. We fight not for glory or for conquest"?
9. Discuss the importance of the last two paragraphs (#13 and #14).
10. Obviously, the colonists did a great deal of soul searching to make this heart wrenching decision to take up arms. Why would such a decision be so difficult? What would you have done?
11. Give Scriptural support for the colonists' Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms.

Note:

Reading and researching events that occurred around source work like legal documents is important.