

A Three-part Structure

Jefferson wrote the *Declaration of Independence* as a three-part structure, beginning with the self-evident truths about human nature, followed by the specific list of abuses and grievances against King George III, and concluding with the resolution Richard Henry Lee had introduced into the Continental Congress.

Part One: These Truths

The Declaration of Independence begins with what have been called the magic words of the American democracy. Here Jefferson explains what people are, what a government is, what is right, and what people may do if their government is harming them. Jefferson had originally written that “We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable,” but it was changed to “self-evident”; we are not certain whether the change was Jefferson’s idea, or whether it was suggested by one of his colleagues.

Part Two: A Long Train of Abuses

The longest part of the *Declaration* is the enumeration of the long train of abuses attributed to King George. There were other comments in Jefferson’s original draft, but these were deleted by Congress before publication, and Jefferson was wounded over the changes, particularly, he wrote in his autobiography, the removal of the clause “reprobating the enslaving of the inhabitants of Africa.”

Part Three: We Do Solemnly Publish and Declare

Jefferson concluded the *Declaration* by incorporating Richard Henry Lee’s resolution, that “these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved of all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connections between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.”