

# 1776—The Declaration of Independence

Here is an excerpt from Thomas Jefferson's first draft of the Declaration of Independence. This material was not included in the version adopted by Congress.

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sacred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, capturing & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN king of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to

restrain this execrable commerce: and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished *die*, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which *he* has deprived them, by murdering the people upon whom *he* also obtruded them; thus paying off former crimes committed against the *liberties* of one people, with crimes which he urges them to commit against the *lives* of another. [Draft of the Declaration of Independence, 1776]

## —Questions—

1. What is Jefferson talking about in this passage?
2. Why do you think this section was not included in the final draft?
3. How do you think American history might have been different if the Declaration had been adopted as Jefferson originally wrote it?
4. Look at a copy of the Declaration of Independence as it was accepted by Congress. What do you think was the overall purpose of the Declaration of Independence?
5. State four principles of the Declaration of Independence. Give an example of a recent event in the United States that shows one of those principles in use today.

**GLOSSARY**

**assemblage**—collection  
**capture**—capture  
**excite**—arouse, incite  
**execrable**—terrible, hateful  
**hemisphere**—half of the earth  
**infidel**—not Christian  
**obtrude**—force upon  
**opprobrium**—shame, disgrace

**prostituted his negative**—misused his veto power  
**suppress**—hold back, check  
**thither**—there  
**to want no fact of distinguished die**—to lack no impressive facts  
**violate**—break, disregard  
**wage**—carry on

