Analysis of *The Declaration of Independence*

**Introduction to *The Declaration of Independence*—Hollywood Style Video**

In the video, Morgan Freeman provides an introduction to the Declaration. Listen carefully to the video, and then answer the following questions.

1. Who wrote the Declaration and how long did it take him to finish it?

2. Why did the writers of the declaration have 200 copies printed on large, poster sized sheets and then distributed throughout the countryside?

3. Why does Freeman say that the Declaration was meant to be spoken rather than simply read?

4. According to Freeman, what effect does the Declaration of Independence have on historical events? (Give at least two examples of events that took place because of the declaration.)

**The Structure of the Declaration**

The Declaration of Independence has four main components:

1. A preamble, or foreword, that announces the reason for the document
2. A declaration of people’s natural rights and relationship to government
3. A long list of complaints (27) against George III, the British king
4. A conclusion that formally states America’s independence from Great Britain

**The Preamble**

5. In the first paragraph, the colonies are announcing to the entire world their reasons for wanting freedom. Why would they have chosen a world-wide audience instead of specifically focusing on England?

**The Declaration of People’s Natural Rights and Relationship to Government**

6. In paragraph two, Jefferson identifies rights that all men should have. List them.

7. According to the writer, when would it be right to overthrow a government?

8. When does Jefferson say it is NOT right to change a government?
The Long List of Complaints against King George III, the British King
9. The writers of the Declaration list NUMEROUS complaints that they have against England. Paraphrase at least THREE of their complaints in your own words.

10. Jefferson uses the repetition of the words tyrant and tyranny several times. Define tyrant. Why do you believe Jefferson choose this loaded word? How does it evoke pathos?

11. Is tyrant a word that still carries emotional weight in our language today? Why or why not? Who would we refer to as a tyrant today?

A conclusion that formally states America’s independence from Great Britain
12. In your own words, paraphrase the paragraph. Be sure to include who the colonists believe would be supporting them in their quest for independence.

Analysis and Connecting to Today
13. In what ways do you believe the importance of the Declaration of Independence has changed since it was written?

14. Have you ever wished to declare your independence from someone or something? From whom or what? Why?

15. Do you believe that a Declaration of Independence similar to the original would have the same effect today? Why or why not? What would it take to get the attention of the modern world?