



*The Founding: From Colonies to
the United States: SS.7.CG.1.6*
Declaration of Independence
READING #1

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.1.6 Benchmark Clarification 1: Students will identify the unalienable rights specifically expressed in the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence (e.g., life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness).

The Preamble of the **Declaration of Independence** describes the **natural rights** of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These rights are **unalienable** (cannot be taken away by government).

The natural right to life means that individuals, and not the government, have control over their lives. Limits on this right exist when an individual tries to deny another person their rights.

Liberty means individuals have the right to be free. Being free would later be more fully explained in the **Bill of Rights** with ideas that included freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religious exercise, and freedom to petition the government. Limits to liberty exist when one person's liberty prevents another person from having liberty.

Finally, "the pursuit of happiness" is whatever individuals define as making them happy. Individuals have the right to try to achieve goals that will lead to their personal happiness. Again, limits to the pursuit of happiness exist when they interfere with another person's natural rights.

Bill of Rights - the first ten amendments of the U.S. Constitution

Declaration of Independence - a document written in 1776 that listed the basis for democratic government and the grievances of the colonists

natural rights - the belief that individuals are born with basic rights that cannot be taken away by governments

preamble - an introduction; the introduction to the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution

unalienable rights - basic rights that cannot be taken away by government