War and Independence

Part 8- Understanding the Declaration of Independence

Directions: Use your copy of the Declaration of the Independence to complete the following:

1. The Declaration can be divided into several parts. The first part is the preamble. What is a preamble?

2. What is the purpose of the preamble?

3. In line 2, who are “the powers of the earth”?

4. If a group of people wish to abolish or change their government, according to line 4, what must they do?

5. What does self-evident mean in line 5?

6. What does unalienable mean?

7. What are the three unalienable rights listed in line 6? Are these the only rights that are unalienable?

8. According to the writers of the Declaration, these unalienable rights were given to people by God. Why do you think this was important to them?

9. What is the responsibility of governments according to the Declaration?

10. In lines 7-8, where do governments get their power from?

11. When a government becomes destructive, what two things do the people have the right to do?

12. The Declaration says that it isn’t smart to change long-established governments for just any reason (lines 11-13), so why do the colonists have the right to overthrow the British government? (lines 13-14, 17-18)

13. The longest part of the Declaration Independence is the list of grievances, or complaints, (27 of them) against Great Britain and the king. Choose two that sound familiar to you and explain the story behind it.

14. What do the colonists declare at the end of the Declaration of Independence?

15. What can they now do as free and independent states?