

COMPARING DECLARATIONS

Declaration of Independence

July 4, 1776
Thomas Jefferson

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.--Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States

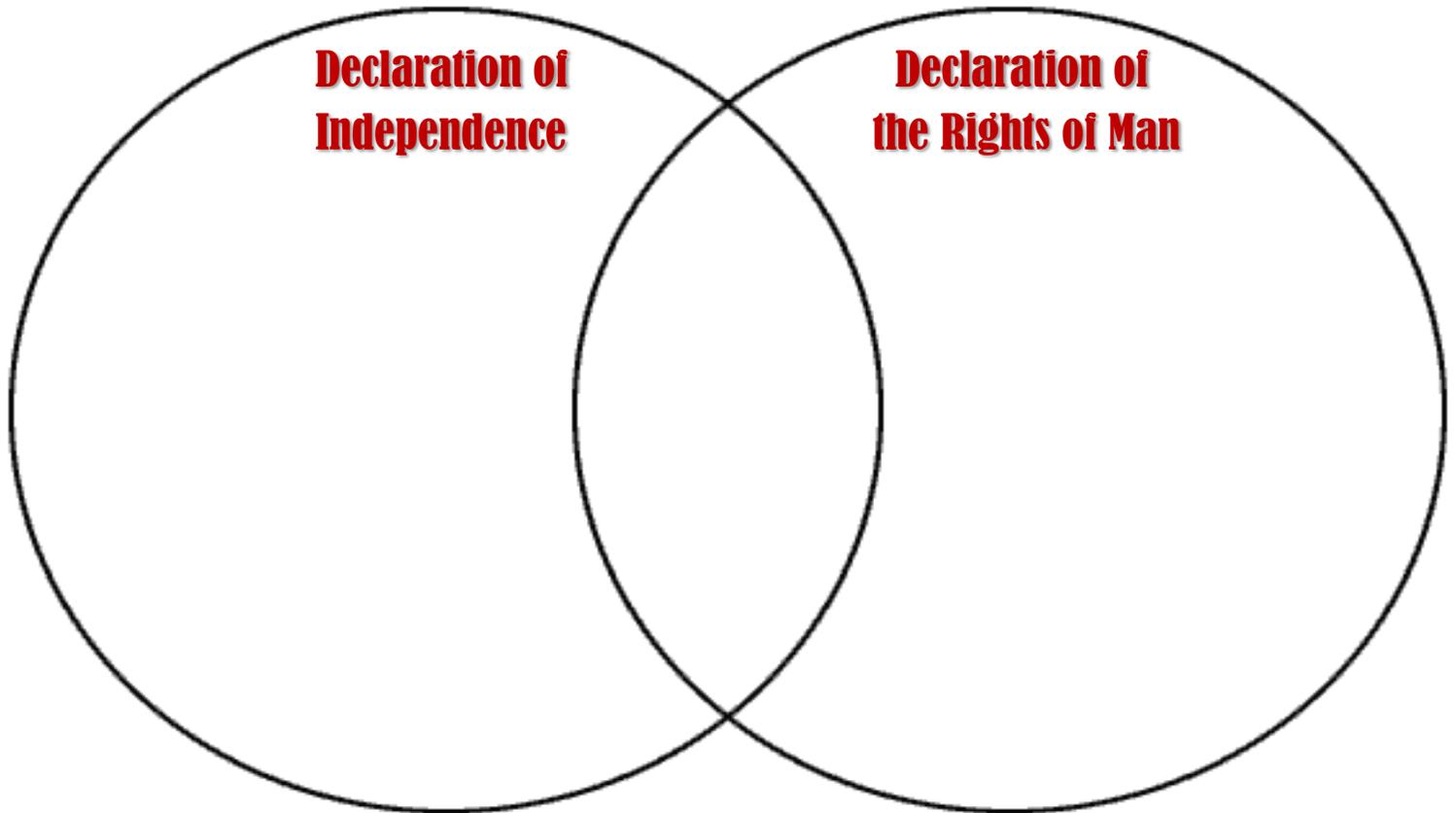
Declaration of the Rights of Man

August 1789
National Assembly

1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good.
2. The aim of all political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
3. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body nor individual may exercise any authority which does not proceed directly from the nation.
4. Liberty consists in the freedom to do everything which injures no one else; hence the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits except those which assure to the other members of the society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can only be determined by law.
5. Law can only prohibit such actions as are hurtful to society. Nothing may be prevented which is not forbidden by law, and no one may be forced to do anything not provided for by law.
6. Law is the expression of the general will... It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in the eyes of the law, are equally eligible to all dignities and to all public positions and occupations...
7. No person shall be accused, arrested, or imprisoned except in the cases and according to forms prescribed by law. Any one soliciting, transmitting, executing, or causing to be executed, any arbitrary order, shall be punished. But any citizen summoned or arrested in virtue of the law shall submit without delay, as resistance constitutes an offense.
8. The law shall provide for such punishments only as are strictly and obviously necessary, and no one shall suffer punishment except it be legally inflicted in virtue of a law passed and promulgated before the commission of the offense.
9. As all persons are held innocent until they shall have been declared guilty, if arrest shall be deemed indispensable, all harshness not essential to the securing of the prisoner's person shall be severely repressed by law.
10. No one shall be disquieted on account of his opinions, including his religious views, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by law.

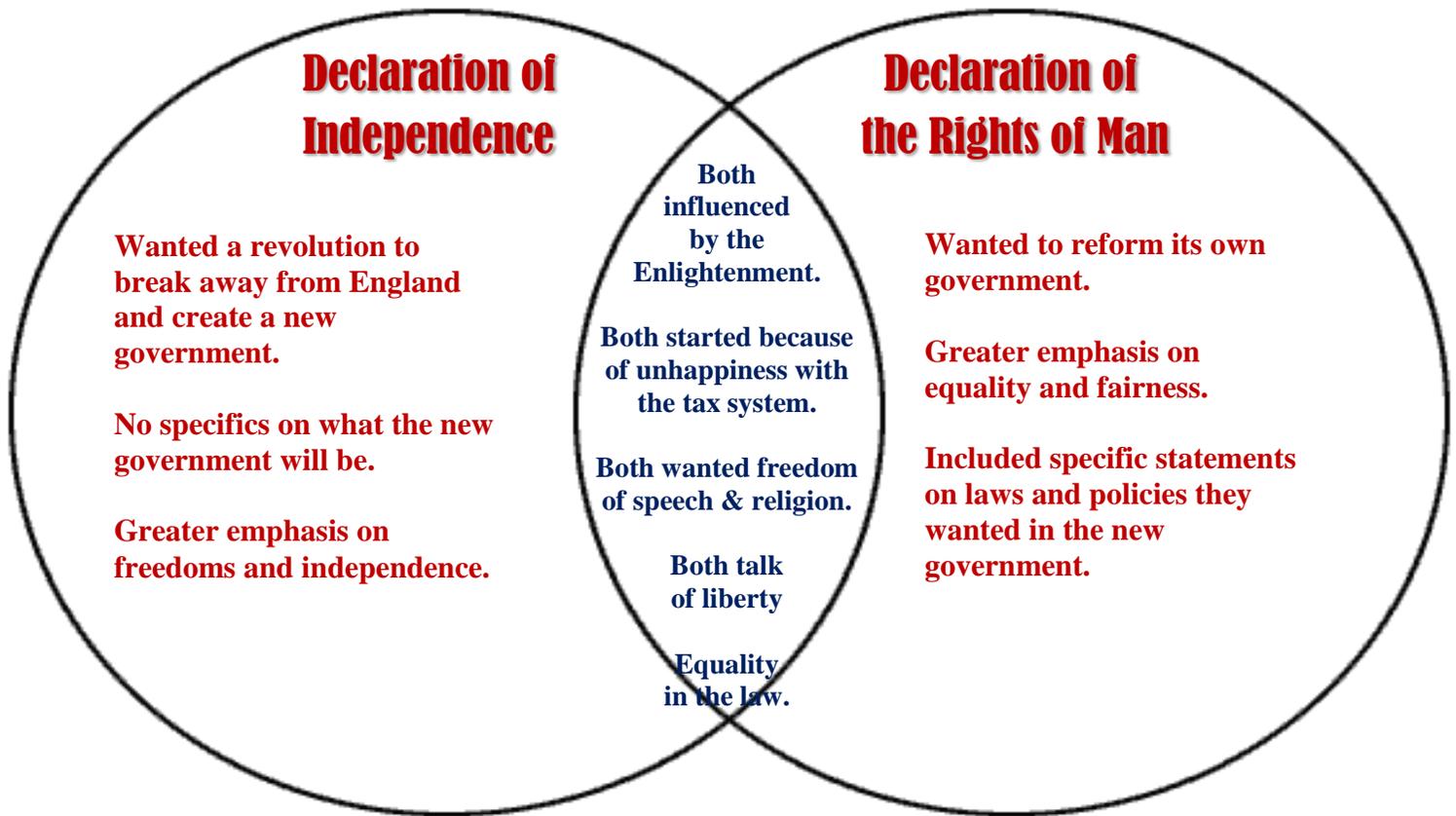
Name _____

Directions: After reading both the American Declaration of Independence and French Declaration of the Rights of Man, fill in this Venn Diagram with similarities and differences that you noticed.



1. What is the purpose of each of these documents?
2. Which aspects of the Enlightenment are reflected in these two documents?
3. How does the Declaration of the Rights of Man define liberty? Do you agree or disagree with this definition?
4. Using this definition, are Americans denied their liberty in any sense today?

Directions: After reading both the American Declaration of Independence and French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, fill in this Venn Diagram with similarities and differences that you noticed.



1. What is the purpose of each of these documents?

The Declaration of Independence was a call for the 13 Colonies to break away from England and form a new government. The Declaration of the Rights of Man was a call to change the way France's government was set up and provide equality for all citizens.

2. Which aspects of the Enlightenment are reflected in these two documents?

Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, democracy, fair taxation, liberty, equality, "life, liberty, & the pursuit of happiness" are all key ideas from the Enlightenment.

3. How does the Declaration of the Rights of Man define liberty? Do you agree or disagree with this definition?

The Declaration of the Rights of Man defines liberty as, "the freedom to do everything which injures no one else." Students will have varying answers for whether they agree or disagree.

4. Using this definition, are Americans denied their liberty in any sense today?

Many possible students answers can be accepted, but there are many laws that protect individuals that don't involve injuring anyone else.