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Episode #023

The American DECLARATION OF
Independence – How the American colonies
became independent.

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Hi, everybody! I am Georgiana, your English teacher and founder of [SpeakEnglishPodcast.com](https://speakenglishpodcast.com). My mission is to help you speak English fluently.

In this episode:

- I'll talk about the Declaration of Independence of the USA and why the 13 American Colonies decided to become independent.
- Later you'll practice your **grammar with a Point of View Story**.

'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'

These famous words are all that most people remember of the **American Declaration of Independence**, but the text as a whole is far more complex and subtle than this piece of liberal rhetoric might suggest.

Thomas Jefferson was given the job of writing the **Declaration of Independence** by the **Second Continental Congress** committee.

He wrote the original Declaration in only four days. He revised it a bit over the next two weeks. When he was done, he gave a copy to Benjamin Franklin and John Adams to read and edit before the next meeting of Congress.

On the 4th of July, the Declaration was formally adopted by Twelve colonies after minor revision. New York, the 13th colony, approved it on July 19th. On August 2nd, Declaration was signed.

Like many ground-breaking documents in the history of government, the Declaration is firmly planted in a

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highly specific historical context. Over sixty percent of it is a **detailed list of grievances** which the American colonists felt against George III and the British government.

The American Declaration of Independence does three main things:

1. It advances a theoretical case for **revolution**, discusses **human rights**, and the nature of **national sovereignty**.
2. It sets out a precise list of the specific **complaints** which the American colonists had against the actions of the **British government** over a decade and a half.
3. It declares the **13 British colonies on the east coast of North America independent** on the 4th of July 1776.

Around 1720, Britain had stopped paying attention to the American colonies. In 1757, the British became involved in the Seven Years War against France.

Britain won the Seven Years War in 1764, removing all French control in North America.

The great issue was that Britain was now heavily in debt. Consequently, Britain started taxing the American colonists.

Not only were the colonists opposed to the taxation because they had **no representation in Parliament**, but they had also become used to managing their own affairs for the past 50 years. And they were now much less dependent on British protection.

They believed they had **taxation without representation**:

- Taxes were imposed on them by the English Parliament, where they did not have a representative to argue on their behalf.

The taxes that were implemented were on items that were **everyday necessities**, not just luxuries.

- The **Stamp Act taxed** any paper, and the paper had to carry a seal proving that the tax had been paid.

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- **Tea** was essential to anyone with a British background, and **it was also taxed**.

British soldiers were often accommodated in **homes of individuals**, whether they liked it or not.

The colonists **couldn't get a trial** by their peers:

Americans who committed serious crimes were **not tried in the colonies** but were **shipped off to England for trial**.

The "**Boston Massacre**" occurred in 1770 when a few **British soldiers** were cornered by a large number of **colonists** who were throwing snowballs, rocks, and oyster shells at them. No one knows exactly who yelled, "Fire," but the British fired and killed a few Americans. (5 of them total).

The massacre became a significant tool for propaganda against the British.

The American War of Independence would last for **five years (1775-83)**.

Battles between British troops and colonial militiamen in Lexington and Concord in April 1775 kicked off the armed conflict, and by the following summer, the rebels were conducting a full-scale war for their independence.

Yet to come were the **Patriot triumphs** at **Saratoga**, or the bitter winter at **Valley Forge**.

France entered the American Revolution on the side of the colonists in 1778, turning what had essentially been **a civil war into an international conflict**.

French assistance helped force the British surrender at Yorktown, Virginia, in 1781.

Though the Americans had effectively won their independence in 1781, fighting would not formally end until 1783.

In 1783, with the signing of the **Treaty of Paris with Britain**, the United States formally became a free and independent nation.

I hope you're enjoying yourself.

Before ending this section, I'd like to share with you some **interesting facts** about the Declaration of the Independence:

1. Sadly, the **original handwritten copy** of the Declaration of Independence **doesn't exist** anymore.
2. Thomas Jefferson's first draft criticized the **slave trade**, but it was changed by Congress.
3. Together the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights are called the **Charters of Freedom**.

Now we'll continue with the next section with a Point of View Story.

Point of view story

(Practice your grammar)

Let's practice some grammar with the Point of View Technique. The main benefit of this technique is that it'll help you to learn grammar intuitively, without boring exercises or memorizing rules.

How does it work?

I'll tell you a **short story** more than one time. Every time, I'll change a grammar point. For example, I can change the tense or the person. This way, you'll intuitively recognize the changes.

Ok, let's start:

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The 4th of July is one of the biggest days on America's holiday calendar.

Politicians make speeches celebrating America's history and traditions.

Many Americans attend daytime celebrations such as picnics, barbecues, and parades.

Jason loves celebrating the 4th of July every year, enjoying the country, and fireworks, and the flag.

It's a family time for him. He usually goes on camping, but this year, he's going to be participating in the local parade.

What he enjoys the most is fireworks.

He believes that fireworks have been associated with the Fourth of July since 1777. It was when citizens of Philadelphia or Pennsylvania celebrated with bonfires, gunshots, and explosions.

Now, let's change the point of view from the perspective of an American in 1783 who imagines how the 4th of July will be celebrated in the future.

The 4th of July will become one of the biggest days on America's holiday calendar.

Politicians will make speeches celebrating America's history and traditions.

Many Americans will attend daytime celebrations such as picnics, barbecues, and parades.

Jason will love celebrating the 4th of July. Enjoying the country and fireworks and the flag.

It'll be family time for him. He'll usually go on camping, but in 2017, he'll be participating in the local parade.

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What he'll enjoy the most will be the fireworks.

He'll know that fireworks have been associated with the Fourth of July since 1777. Right now, we're celebrating in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania with bonfires, gunshots, and explosions.

Awesome! This is the end of this episode. Remember to **listen to it several times. It'll help with your English.**

Visit my website **SpeakEnglishPodcast.com** and **get the full transcript!**

See you soon and have a wonderful week!
Bye! Bye!



Georgiana

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SpeakEnglishPodcast.com