Worksheet - The Declaration of Independence

Jefferson's Masterpiece

Directions: Read the Declaration of Independence carefully, and answer the following questions.

1. Copy the words from the first paragraph that best tell why the colonists are publishing to the world the reasons for their separation from Britain.

2. Are countries today still concerned about what other nations will think and say about their actions? Explain.

3. List some words and phrases from paragraph two that make the British king and Parliament appear guilty of great injustice.

4. List some words and phrases from paragraph two that make the American colonists appear justified in their revolution against and separation from Britain.

5. Jefferson lists in detail the colonists' grievances (paragraphs 3-29). List the three you consider the strongest. Explain your choices.
6. After listing the colonists' grievances, Jefferson emphasizes that they have tried using peaceful means to gain just treatment from the king. What is the purpose of these statements?

7. The last paragraph states the rights that the colonies now have as independent states. The tone becomes more forceful and assertive, richer in emotion. "What words does Jefferson use in the first sentence of this paragraph to gain the confidence and goodwill of the people?

8. What words contribute to the strong emotional effect of the last line?

9. One of the most famous passages from the Declaration of Independence is the first part of paragraph two: "We hold these truths to be self-evident . . . deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” Try paraphrasing this passage.

10. Does Jefferson succeed in his purpose to persuade you that the American Revolution was justified and that separation from Britain was necessary? Explain your answer.